THE ART OF NEGOTIATION: EVALUATING JOB OFFERS

You may be wondering, “Is this the right job for me?” or “Should I just take anything because I need a job?” Careful evaluation of a job offer can enable you to make the best possible decision.

In evaluating a job offer, there are three critical questions you should address:

1. How closely does the offer match your career goal(s)? Think back to when you started your job search:
   - What was important to you?
   - What factors regarding a job, organization, and work environment were on your “wish list”?
   - Have these factors changed? How well does the position fit these factors?
   Consider the following factors in evaluating your offer(s):
   Factors for consideration
   • Nature of the work
   • Salary
   • Benefits
   • Location
   • Work hours
   • Stability of organization
   • Organizational culture
   • Training, development, and advancement opportunities

2. Do you need additional information about the offer in order to make a decision? It is not unusual to discover, as you’re weighing different factors about the offer, that you
   - Have additional questions
   - Lack some data about the position, benefits, start date, and/or salary
   - Need a better sense of what the organization is like
   If this is the case, you may need to call one of your company contacts and ask additional questions in order to make an informed decision.

3. Are there issues you want to negotiate which would bring the offer closer to your goal? Perhaps the issues that concern you can be changed. For example, some start dates are non-negotiable. In some instances, the start date can be adjusted.

CANDIDATE RESPONSIBILITIES

DON’T KEEP EMPLOYERS HANGING.

Determine an appropriate time frame to notify the employer about your acceptance or refusal of a job offer. Employers can then notify other candidates that they are still being considered or that the position is filled. You want to respond promptly but also not feel pressured to make a decision.

ACCEPT A JOB OFFER IN GOOD FAITH.

When you accept an offer, you should have every intention of honoring that commitment. Accepting an offer only as a precautionary measure is misleading to the employer and may restrict opportunities for others. Accepting a job offer under false pretences could damage your professional reputation in the industry.

WITHDRAW FROM RECRUITING WHEN YOUR JOB SEARCH IS COMPLETED.

It is courteous to notify other employers considering you as a candidate that you have accepted another position. This allows those employers to move along in their search process or to make another candidate an offer.

CLAIM FAIR REIMBURSEMENT.

If an employer has agreed to reimburse you for expenses you incur during the interview process, your request should be only for reasonable and legitimate expenses.
SALARY NEGOTIATION

When completing a job application, do not give a specific figure for “desired salary.” Instead, say one of the following: open, competitive, or negotiable. Read individual application instructions very carefully. A prospective employer may require a specific figure or a salary range to be listed on the application in order for the application to be considered “complete.”

• Research the appropriate salary for the intended position.
  - Educate to Career, www.jobsearchintelligence.com/etc/jobseekers/salary-calculator.php

• Look at the entire compensation package. Don’t focus on salary alone.

• Be aware of your strengths and achievements, and demonstrate your value to the employer.

• Let the employer bring up salary first. If asked, say you expect a salary that is competitive with the market or give a salary range you feel is acceptable. Don’t feel obligated to accept the first salary offer (especially if you are unsure whether the company is a good match). Negotiate salary if you believe the offer is inadequate.

• Get the job offer and salary offer in writing.

• Do not continue interviewing for other positions (or accept multiple offers) after accepting a job offer.

• Do not get overly aggressive in negotiating a salary.

• Try to obtain other concessions (better title, better workspace) or benefits (vacation time, bonuses) if you are not successful in negotiating the salary you want.

RESPONDING TO EMPLOYER SALARY REQUEST

If an employer asks for a salary request, you can include it in your cover letter or a separate salary request letter. Never include salary requests on your résumé.

EXAMPLE:

In response to your salary request, national standards for this position indicate $35,000–$40,000 as an acceptable salary range, not including benefits.

SALARY NEGOTIATION: VERBAL AND WRITTEN

Many people wonder if it is best to verbally negotiate or to negotiate in writing. There is no right answer. The choice should be based on your preference and comfort level.

Guidelines for negotiating salary verbally after job offer:

Step 1:
Thank the employer and express how pleased you are to have received an offer. If you want time to consider the offer, ask the employer if that is acceptable and give a specific date that you will notify the employer about your decision.

Step 2:
Discuss how you feel the rate of pay should be higher based on your experience, skills, education, or previous earnings. Provide a specific salary range you find acceptable.

EXAMPLES:

“I am truly excited for this opportunity, but I have several other opportunities in the $30,000 range (don’t say it unless it is true). Is there a way we could work this out?”

“I am excited about being a part of your team, but according to my research, the salary is a bit lower than the industry standard. Would your budget permit $45,000 instead of $40,000?”

Step 3:
Review the employer’s counteroffer. If it is acceptable, respond accordingly. If you are not sure or want to continue to negotiate, ask for some time to think about the new information and confirm a date for your response.

Step 4:
You may also request additional compensation in the form of other benefits besides base pay. For example, bonuses, vacation time, personal time, and retirement packages

Step 5:
Identify the amount acceptable to you and be prepared to accept less if the employer is not willing to negotiate.

Step 6:
Ask for a written offer and carefully check that the rate of pay, bonus, and any other compensation accurately reflects all verbal agreements.
Guidelines for negotiating salary in writing:

Remember to only negotiate those areas that are key to you accepting the job. If not, you may come off as too demanding or high maintenance and any offer may be removed from the table.

This is no steadfast formula for the perfect salary negotiation letter or email, but here are some guidelines.

**Paragraph 1:** The first paragraph should communicate that you are very interested in the position and are positive that your experience will be a great fit for the company.

**Paragraph 2:** This is your first area of negotiation. State the original offer and your counterproposal. Make sure to have any back-up information to support your counterproposal, e.g. the industry average salary. Include how your contribution to the company merits your proposal.

**Paragraphs 3 and onward:** Each subsequent paragraph will deal with another negotiation item and should follow the same rules as paragraph 2. Remember to only negotiate factors that are key to you accepting or rejecting the offer.

**Closing Paragraph:** Restate the fact that you are looking forward to accepting the job offer based on these negotiation items. Close by asking for a meeting time to discuss the letter.

It is a good idea to weave the points that are acceptable to you throughout the letter. This will make the letter more balanced and positive. See the example salary negotiation letter to the right.

*Sources: www.ehow.com and www.collegerecruiter.com*

**EXAMPLE:**

**FREDERICK BRYAN**

543 North Water St. • Platteville, WI 53818
608.345.0121 • bryan@gmail.com

July 10, 20xx

Dr. Julia Edmonds, Director of Financial Marketing
Bank of the World
1220 Warwick Ave.
Newport News, VA 23607

Dear Dr. Edmonds:

I am very pleased to have received the job offer of Assistant Financial Marketing Manager with Bank of the World. I am convinced that my prior internship experiences with the bank, along with my education, will be an asset to the organization. The offer would be acceptable with a few minor modifications.

**Base salary of $35,000 per year.** I have researched the industry norms for the position of assistant financial marketing manager and believe a salary of $40,000 is warranted specifically because I will bring prior knowledge of the bank, the department, and the position due to my time as an intern.

**Benefits package.** The benefit package offered by Bank of the World is very generous. I would only ask that the 6-month waiting period be waived.

**Vacation.** I understand that the company policy allows for one week of vacation, despite industry experience. Would it be possible for me to take another week at my own expense?

The position of Assistant Financial Marketing Manager is of great interest to me. I sincerely believe it corresponds to my professional objectives, as well as my experience in financial product launches. I am confident I will be able to make a strong contribution to the bank. I welcome the opportunity to discuss these modifications with you in the very near future and will contact you to see if a meeting can be arranged.

Sincerely,

Frederick Bryan

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(Updated 06/24/15)