



Articles of Interest

Salary Negotiations

While salary may play a major role in deciding your next job, it must be approached with tact and knowledge. People tend to personalize income and think in terms of what they want or need. *You must remain objective* and take into account your training, experience and skills for the position you want and judge salary offers accordingly. Since very few employees are viewed as irreplaceable by their employers, an unreasonable request will not be considered.

The first step in salary negotiations is research.

Check job listings in the newspapers and on the Internet. Contact different companies' human resources departments to obtain wage ranges for specific occupations. If you are relocating, you must check the cost of living in that area, even if you are staying in the same state. Many real estate and career Web sites have salary calculators that compare wages from different areas. Have a salary range in mind before going to an interview.

Provide requested salary information.

Often, salary history along with anticipated salary are requested on an application. Some employers will immediately discard an application if this information is not provided. At the very least, you should provide your previous salary history and write "negotiable" under expected income. Do not provide salary information if it is not requested.

Do not ask about salary in the first interview.

Show the employer that you are more interested in the position and the company than in the salary. Use this time to promote your skills and qualifications, and wait until a job offer is made before discussing salary. If the employer asks what you expect to earn, inquire what the salary range is for a person in that position, and indicate whether or not that seems acceptable to you. If the interviewer cannot offer a range, do not name a single figure, but rather a salary range. Don't forget to weigh benefits such as investment plans, medical care, day-care, and tuition reimbursement. Sometimes a job with a lower salary is a better fit when you consider all the benefits offered. If you ask for more than an employer's offer, you must defend your request with examples of your expertise, abilities, and salary history. Never qualify a salary figure with your needs - the employer is concerned with paying for your skills and experience, not for your life-style.

Prepare for the negotiation meeting.

Once you have a good feeling for the type of salary and benefits you are willing to accept, it's time to negotiate with the company. Don't sell yourself short during these negotiations. Usually, when a company is ready to make you an offer they have invested a lot of time and money in their search for a qualified employee. You don't want to be overly aggressive with the employer, but you do want to receive a fair compensation package. If the employer makes you an offer that does not seem equitable, discuss your concerns with the employer. Present your concerns about the benefits package in a constructive, non-threatening manner. Focus on the reasons why you have concerns, as opposed to making general statements about what you think you deserve.

For example, it won't be productive to simply state, "I must have more money." It would be more productive to explain that the company's offer is less than you were making previously and you would like them to match your previous salary. In most situations employers do have some flexibility in what they can offer an applicant. They might be able to offer you more money or compensate you with additional benefits (e.g., more vacation leave). Some companies can offer a signing bonus to compensate for other weaknesses in their compensation package.

When you are considering the offer, make sure you are taking the entire benefits package into account. Sometimes excellent benefits can compensate for a lower salary. If you really want the job, but the offer still seems low after negotiations, see if the employer will consider a salary review three to six months from your starting date. Usually, you don't have to make a decision about the offer immediately. Ask the employer for a couple of days so you can carefully consider the position and the offer.

If you do come to an agreement with the employer, find out when you can expect to receive the offer in writing. It is very important to get the official offer documented. An official letter usually means that the management at the company has approved your acceptance of their offer.

Resources for wage information:

- *Connecticut Occupational Employment & Wages*, published by the Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research, offers wage information for Connecticut occupations.
Information is available on-line at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmj.
- *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, offers not only salary information, but also descriptions of working conditions, necessary training, and job growth on a nationwide level.
Information is available on-line at www.bls.gov/oco/.
- *America's Career Infonet* provides statewide and nationwide averages for occupations, along with state profiles and many links to career information.
Information is available on-line at www.acinet.org.