

Salary Negotiations

Discussing compensation is part of the terms of employment conversation which happens *after* an offer has been extended and *before* you have accepted the position.

Before an Offer is Extended

Research is vital when preparing for a job interview. You should already know what you are willing to accept in terms of compensation. Be prepared as some companies will ask for your salary requirements. Your first response could be, "I would like to consider the entire compensation package." (Sometimes you may be more willing to accept a lower monetary package if the additional benefits are substantial.) If this does not prove sufficient, state a range in lieu of a specific number. For example, "Based on my research for an entry level design position in Chicago, the salary range was between \$X and \$X per year."

When researching salary information, take into account the type of position you are applying for, your experience level and education, standard wages for the field, size and location of the organization. Professional salary surveys and research into cost of living will prove extremely helpful. If you know someone in the organization, they may be able to provide additional insight as well.

Evaluating an Offer

Timing is important. Remember that the best time to negotiate is after a serious job offer has been made and before you have accepted it.

1. It is not usually recommended to accept an offer on the spot. Express your appreciation and strong interest in the position, but request at least 24 hours to consider it (even when you plan to say yes). Ask any questions you need clarified.
2. Assess the job offer in terms of your needs, benefits and long-term career goals.
3. Make a list of pros and cons of the job offer. Discuss the offer with someone you respect.
4. Remember, sometimes the best position to support your career goals will pay less than you expected. In the long run it is a strategic decision. The best case scenario is that you negotiate an earlier performance review to discuss your contributions and a possible salary increase before the usual annual review.
5. When deciding whether or not to accept an offer, consider the following factors in addition to salary: health insurance, retirement plans, paid time off, tuition assistance, early performance reviews and other valuable benefits.

Negotiate for a win-win

Do not be the first to discuss salary; wait until the employer starts the dialogue. Remember that the negotiation is not about strong-arm tactics or win/lose. It is a two-way process where you and your prospective employer are each trying to get something you need. Remain positive and understand that in a negotiation, you're both designing the terms of a transaction so that each of you will receive the maximum benefit from the final agreement.

Counteroffers

Counteroffers are expected during the process of negotiation so be sure to remain flexible. Keep in mind that different companies have varying abilities to offer more than the initial offer.

If the offer is less than you expected, express your continued interest in the position, but ask if the employer if there is room for negotiation. If the same offer is on the table a few days later, it is probably the final offer. You may be able to ask for a salary review in 6 months rather than a year to evaluate your performance and contributions. If you decline the offer, do so in a professional manner thanking them for their time and consideration.

Any uncertainties about the job should be discussed prior to accepting an offer. Be sure to discuss all questions and concerns prior to the final offer and acceptance of the position. Careful thought and consideration will only gain you respect.

Finally, when you reach an agreement, request the details of the offer in writing. This would include salary, health benefits, retirement benefits, relocation assistance, education assistance, bonuses, early performance reviews and any other pertinent details.

Resources

<http://cgi.money.cnn.com/tools/costofliving/costofliving.html> - Cost of Living Calculator

www.homefair.com - Cost of Living in Different Cities

www.salary.com - Salary guide

www.coroflot.com/designsalaries

www.aiga.org/content.cfm/salary-survey

www.animationarena.com/video-game-salary.html

www.gag.org - Freelance pricing and negotiations for multiple creative disciplines. Look for the Graphic Artists Guild Pricing & Ethical Guidelines Handbook on this site.