

Negotiating Your Compensation Package

10. Negotiating Your Compensation Package

Prepare Yourself

- There are several things to be aware of and to keep in mind before you enter the negotiation process:
- Organizations and institutions do have resources if they really want the person.
- Organizations want their employees to be happy to join the company, so they are open to negotiation.
- Employers expect the candidates to negotiate and to express their needs. So don't be shy, be politely determined, but also know when to stop.
- Start negotiating only after you received the offer. If they introduce salary before they make you the offer, then you could answer: 'I think it is a little early to talk about salary. I would really be interested in learning more about my responsibilities in the first two months.'
- Compensation comes in many currencies. If there are constraints as far as your targeted salary is concerned, you may want to consider alternatives, i.e. number of vacation days, equity stake, extras such as cell phone or company car, flexible work hours, membership to a gym, tuition, subscriptions, cut short the trial period and therefore earlier reconsideration of salary raise, provision of childcare, possibility of business trips/conference attendance, upgraded title, etc. Be creative and flexible. But think ahead of these things.
- If employer pushes for your salary history before you receive the offer, indicate the lowest and the highest paid job. Always translate your entire compensation package, including health insurance, extras, vacation, etc into numbers.
- Never lie! But be selective in what you will disclose. Be wise with respect to the packaging, i.e. always remain a friendly, polite and

respectful demeanor. Know yourself: what is problematic for you to negotiate, where are your shortcomings and how can they be compensated? Where are your strengths and how do you want them to be rewarded?

- Check what you can expect to be paid:
 - Use the internet, there are very good web sites such as salary.com, careerbuilder.com, jobstar.org, shrm.org.
 - Talk to people in your field and/or to someone in organizations that do similar work.
 - Talk to people who work in this company if you happen to know somebody to understand the company's salary policy as well as to understand the importance of the position to the company.
 - Talk to alumni.
 - Know your level of proficiency (the skills you have) and performance (how well you apply your skills).
 - Question to ask: What could someone like me with my experience and qualifications expect in today's economy?
- Create your own salary bracket. Check ALL your expenses and know the minimum that you need to be able to live. Then add the luxuries that you want to add in your life and know the maximum that you would like to have. Always start out with this maximum.
- Understand that negotiation is NOT about winning and losing. It is about the goals of each party and how they can be achieved best and to the satisfaction for both parties. If you focus on winning, you run the risk of putting off the employer, i.e. not being considered for the job any more. However, even if you stay in the game and 'win' the negotiation on your terms, this will likely lead to a sour tone of your relationship with the employer and might have an effect on future promotion and other career advancing possibilities. If, by contrast, you employ the rule of fairness, then employers are more likely to be open to your needs and to trying to comply with them.
- If possible, find out whether you are the only candidate. If you are the only candidate, then chances are good that your needs and expectations will be met. On the contrary, if there are several

candidates for the job, the company may decide for the one that meets their needs and expectations best; therefore, you will not have much room to negotiate.

The Negotiation Conversation

General recommendations:

- Be confident and assertive, but polite and friendly.
- Come across as an insider. People want to hire insiders. Make yourself as desirable as possible.
- Be positive, energetic and passionate about your field, yourself and the job.

If you receive the offer, you always want to take it home first for at least 24 hours to talk it over with friends and family. If possible, you want to take it home until the end of the week. You should be alerted if they want an instant decision from you. That may tell you something very valuable about the company's style, and you may want to reconsider working for them. You can say the following: 'Thank you so much for the offer, I am really excited and cannot wait to start. When can I get back to you?'

Salary:

If they push you to state your requirements first, give the bracket you have defined from your salary history, always taking the lowest and the highest paying job including all benefits.

If their offer is below your minimum, then you may answer something like this: 'That is interesting. My research shows me that a position like this would be compensated with \$ XYZ. What can we do to get there?' Or '\$ XYZ is really what I need to make ends meet. Is there any way we can get there?' Argue with your accomplishments and that you assume that you will be compensated fairly.

Remember:

If they are not able to meet your requirements, there may be other ways you can be compensated, i.e. number of vacation days, equity stake, extras such as cell phone or company car, flexible work hours, membership to a gym, tuition, subscriptions, cut short the trial period and therefore earlier reconsideration of salary raise, provision of childcare, possibility of business trips/conference attendance, upgraded title, etc.

Vacation:

If they are asking you to start with your requirements, you may say something like this: 'I am really counting on X – Y weeks of vacation. I am assuming you can match that.'

If their offer is below your minimum, then you may answer something like this: 'In my last job I had X – Y weeks of vacation. Is there any way we could get there?'

If they are not ready to match your requirements, you may ask: 'Do you offer unpaid vacation?' This tells them that you value your time.

Whenever you ask the question whether there is any way they could meet your requirements, stop talking immediately after you posed the question. Let them think. If there is an immediate 'no', then this means there is no way of doing it. If there is a pause, then there is always room for negotiation. If it is not them who can make the decision, they will confer with the person who is authorized to decide.

Additional Recommendations for Academic Jobs

Almost all of what has been said so far is also applicable to academics. However, there are some more criteria that should be considered for your negotiation if you are pursuing an academic job.

- Gather as much information as possible regarding your

responsibilities they expect you to take on: teaching load, outreach, administrative, mentoring and academic advising, and supervising honor and master theses as well as doctoral dissertations, and service to the institution. Ask the department chair, faculty of the department, graduates of the program. Also look at written university policies (possibly available on the universities web site). How free are you to allocate resources to these responsibilities at your convenience?

- If you have multiple offers, it is well possible and the standard to ask for an extension of the decision deadline. However, do this only if you are serious about this job. Candor will take you the furthest.
- Understand that universities and departments have constraints. On the other hand, if they offered you the job, they do want you. Therefore, be courteous and ethical, but straight forward with what you need to succeed. Also understand when it is time to stop. Definitely understand the salary standards in your field and in the department.
- Appointment of your spouse: Some institutions are already aware that the spouses of quite a few academicians are also academicians and therefore offer some hiring strategies and plans for those spouses. Some institutions even offer career placement support for non-academic spouses.
- Family related benefits: Can family members take classes at low cost or for free?
- Will you work with Research and/or Teaching Assistants? If yes, how much can you influence the process regarding choosing the candidate, their salary, etc.
- What office, lab or project supplies and equipment do you need? How will this be funded, by the university or your own grants?
- How much travel will be covered by the department, how much do you have to pay out of your own grants? Will you be supported getting / managing those grants?

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