

Salary Negotiation Basics

By WetFeet.com

If you know what you're looking for when you negotiate your salary, you'll be that much more effective in getting what you want.

Many people see negotiation as a process of each party trying to get the most for what they have to give. And that's a reasonable way to look at it when you're buying or selling a car, a computer or a carpet. It's tempting to look at job negotiations in the same way -- but not advisable.

Shoot for fair. When you're negotiating an employment contract, you're negotiating the basis for a relationship and you want to live happily together. This doesn't mean that you have to arrive at a compromise, but that you should come to an agreement that both parties feel is fair.

There are at least four factors that can increase your perceived worth. All of them fit into the context of networking and interviewing, and all of them can be turned to your advantage without alienating potential employers.

1. How You See and Present Yourself

Are you confident? Do you speak convincingly about your accomplishments? Do you have a clear and credible objective? Do you understand and seem to fit in with the company's culture? You will generate more buyer enthusiasm if the company sees you as a long-term asset than if it sees you only as right for this particular job.

2. How the Company Sees the Value of the Work to Be Done

This is your opportunity to put the work in a broader context than the company may see. Instead of talking about providing good customer service, for example, you might discuss retaining valued customers and increasing business activity. If you present some convincing illustrations, the job might seem worthy of a higher valuation -- including, perhaps, a bonus for achieving objectives that you help define.

3. How the Company Perceives Your Appropriateness for the Job

You want to demonstrate that what you've learned and achieved in the past, along with your understanding of the company's needs, makes you more qualified than other candidates.

4. How Your Discussion of Compensation and Benefits Plays Out

Your attention to the first three factors should already have raised the company's estimation of your value. The direct discussion -- often thought of as the whole of negotiation -- is where you apply your skills at recapitulation, listening and politely asserting the value you have established.

Salary Negotiation

How to Negotiate a Compensation Package

Before you start talking pay (and salary negotiations) with a prospective employer, you need to find out how much the job (and you) is worth. You will need to take the time to research salaries, so, you are prepared to get what you're worth and a job offer that's realistic and reasonable.

Salary Negotiations

Once you know what you *should* be earning, how do you go about getting it? Start by being very patient. When interviewing for a new position, do your best not to bring up compensation until the employer makes you an offer. If you're asked what your salary requirements are, say that they are open based upon the position and the overall compensation package. Or tell the employer you'd like to know more about the responsibilities and the challenges of the job prior to discussing salary.

Another option is to give the employer a salary range based upon the salary research you've done up front. Once you've received the offer you don't need to accept (or reject) it right away. A simple "I need to think it over" can get you an increase in the original offer.

And if you're ambivalent about the position a "no" can bring you a better offer too. I turned down a position I knew I didn't want, regardless of salary, and received three follow-up phone calls upping the compensation package. Be careful though, if you do definitely need that new job there's a risk that the employer may accept you're declining the position and move on to the next candidate.