

Five Tactics to Get the Salary You Want
Make the Company Meet Your Compensation Needs
WetFeet.com

When a company starts to consider you seriously, you should begin to think about the negotiation. What do you want? What are you prepared to accept? How badly do you want the job?

Negotiations can conclude in one of four ways:

1. You can negotiate and get everything you want.
2. You can negotiate and get half of what you want.
3. The company can stand firm with its offer and make no effort to negotiate.
4. The company can withdraw its original offer.

Think about which outcomes you are or are not comfortable with. That way when you sit down to talk compensation, you'll know what you will and will not accept.

What else can you do to ensure the best results? Here are some additional tips:

Choose Your Top Offers

If you have more than one or two offers, you may have a few lower-choice offers to turn down. It's not a good idea to test your negotiating skills with a company you don't plan to work for, because word could get back to the companies you do want to work for. Instead, practice negotiating with a friend or a colleague. If you need more time to make a decision on an offer, call your prospective employer sooner rather than later and arrange for another week or two to decide.

Establish Your Priorities and Walk Away

With the offer letter in hand, you need to evaluate the salary and benefits (plus intangibles) in light of your own needs and market value. What are your fixed expenses? Keep in mind that a job in Portland, Ore. might pay less than one in New York, but you'll make more once you factor in cost of living.

Do Your Research

The more information you have about compensation scales for the job and industry you're looking into, and the more you know about negotiation, the better off you'll be in the negotiation. Get your hands on whatever comparative salary data you can find to reinforce your position. Business publications, trade associations and professional organizations publish annual pay surveys and a good college or public librarian should be able to help you find this data.

Understand Your Negotiating Position

One headhunter compares the job hunt with dating: "In the course of your interviews, it will become apparent how much they want you. If they are very prompt with the offer letter, call to see whether you received it, offer to fly you out again, offer a high signing bonus and generally lavish attention on you, it means that they want you and your negotiating position is strong. Conversely, you may be a second or third choice if you get the offer letter some time after your interview, it's obviously a form letter, the signing bonus is low or you have trouble making a follow-up appointment with the hiring manager." The message: Know whether it's an employers' or a candidates' market.

Meet Your Hiring Manager in Person

It's easier to influence the job description and find creative solutions on how to meet your specific needs when you deal with the hiring manager in person. He or she will have more room for flexibility (particularly if the firm really wants you). Besides, this is a person you will be working with later. In the salary negotiation meeting, express your enthusiasm for the job. Then lay out your points (not more than three, unless you have a darned good reason), starting with the most important. Your goal is to present your case for a better package in a rational, non-confrontational way, basing your arguments on industry standards, rather than on your personal needs. If you're serious about going to work for them, tell them that you'll sign on if they can clear up this, this and this point -- and stand by what you say.