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Interviewing 101: Negotiating your salary

Richard Castellini, senior career adviser for CareerBuilder, writes, “You wrote a flawless résumé, applied to what seemed like thousand of jobs, networked ‘til you were blue in the face, dazzled them in the interviews and got an offer for the perfect job. All that hard work has paid off ... well, almost.” You and I know that now it’s time to really talk “turkey,” so to speak. Getting the salary and benefits you desire can be a tricky part of the job-hunting process. Is

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the package going to meet your criteria, or will there need to be a bit of negotiating?

According to a recent survey by CareerBuilder.com, 58 percent of hiring managers say they leave some negotiating room when extending initial offers. With this thought in mind, you need to be prepared to present your case. Here are a few strategies for negotiating a better compensation package:

1. Be prepared. The key to successful salary negotiation is conducting research and gathering information. Two of the best Web sites I’ve experienced to gather information are www.payscale.com and www.salary.com. These sites enable you to learn your worth by

conducting research on current salaries for your specific profession, job title and geographical location; utilize various tools for calculating a salary to meet your criteria to avoiding under- or overselling yourself; and provide numerous other points of interest. Another site to consider that actually offers a salary negotiation tutorial is www.quintcareers.com. In addition, two books I suggest are “Get Paid What You’re Worth: The Expert Negotiator’s Guide to Salary and Compensation” by Robin L. Pinkley and Gregory B. Northcraft; and a book written especially for women by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever, “Women Don’t Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide.”

2. Negotiate for a win-win. In her book, “Job Offer! A How-to Negotiation Guide,” author Maryanne L. Wegerbauer suggests that the negotiation process 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. 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.

3. Salary is not everything. A job is not always about the money. While salary may be the most important element of a job offer, it is by no means the only point of consideration. The total package includes all of the benefits and other “perks” that are provided to you as an employee of the company.

There are many benefits that may be negotiated in addition to salary. Consider extra vacation time, tuition reimbursement, a signing bonus, profit sharing, cell phone, laptop, company car and the list goes on. Always keep in mind that simply enjoying the job and the new possibilities it provides can be extremely important.

4. Act as your own agent. Negotiate for yourself as if you were negotiating for someone else. Think about what you would do if you were advocating on behalf of a person you care about. Then, approach your personal negotiations similarly. Consider your worth, and go over all the reasons why you deserve what you’re requesting. Keep in mind, you are your toughest audience. Once you convince yourself you’re worth the extra salary and benefits, you’ll have no trouble convincing someone else.

The bottom line — negotiating requires gathering information, planning your approach, considering different alternatives and viewpoints, communicating clearly and specifically, and making decisions to reach your goal. Learning to negotiate will empower you. You’ll be able to shape situations to ensure that your needs are satisfied. Once you master the art of negotiating, you will soon recognize that the only real limits to your success are those you place on yourself.

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