



Negotiation without Intimidation

Getting that Raise; or the Salary, Benefits and Job You Really Want

Let's face it, most of us fall into one of the following categories: we're happy in our current position, but feel we deserve a raise; we're dissatisfied, need to relocate or want higher earnings so we're looking to switch to a new company; or we've recently lost a job due to corporate downsizing and we're actively seeking employment. A recent survey among baby boomers born between 1957 and 1964, conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, found these workers held an average of 11 different jobs from age 18 to 44, a 26-year period. That averages out to a new job every two and half years! Needless to say, your career goal attainment and job satisfaction rest upon your skill at negotiating each of these new opportunities.

In both prosperous and tenuous economic times, businesses need to find and retain their best employees in order to achieve their short- and long-term goals. Those companies who have skilled, highly productive, solution-oriented workers want to keep them. Proven proficiency is a valuable commodity and stands to be rewarded, within reason, even in the toughest of times. However, there's a science to negotiation. Those who are privy to its secrets can reap thousands of dollars in higher salary, valuable benefits and increased work-life satisfaction. It all starts with preparation.

Preparation is the Key First: Identify Your Core Criteria

Most career advisors and human resource specialists would agree that preparation begins with an internal inventory that pinpoints your core criteria—what is most important to you. For instance, how do you feel about travel or who you report to? What kinds of responsibilities are you willing to assume and what type of corporate culture allows you to excel? Ask yourself: Where do I want to work? Am I open to relocation? What am I looking for in the way of compensation, vacation, insurance, child care, pension contributions or professional growth? Also, do you work best independently or as part of a team? Do you like established businesses or emerging companies? Do you flourish in a competitive or a cooperative environment?

Mary B. Simon, author of *Negotiate Your Job Offer*, refers to core criteria as “the map for your side of the negotiation.” However, when deciding on core criteria, be mindful of what is not malleable and where there is room for some flexibility, tradeoffs or give and take.

“The core criteria can be the beacons in the negotiation process that indicate the way forward; but too often people get stuck on salary, work/life balance or relocation and default to a very defensive and inflexible stance. You need to be savvy enough to present creative

alternative options to avoid these road blocks.”

For instance, would you be willing to forego the health benefits offered—since you are on your spouse's policy—for an increase in the base salary?

Second: Research the Marketplace

To gain a strong negotiating position it's important that you go into the interview knowing the range the position pays in that city. Conduct an Internet search by job title and city. Be sure to compare several websites (see box) to determine a viable salary range, use your personal network to reach someone inside the prospective organization or make a blind call to HR to inquire about salary ranges.

Internet Resources

Here are a few websites with salary range information:

PayScale.com
GlassDoor.com
Salary.com
HayGroupPayNet.com

Third: Research the Company

“Find out as much as you can about the organization and its key people,” says Richard Deems, CEO of WorkLife Design and co-author of *Make Job Loss Work for You*. If this is a publicly-held company, he recommends checking out the investor's relations and press release tabs on their website or

obtaining a copy of their annual report. If it's privately-held, scour the newspaper archives for reports about the company and its products or services. Get an introduction to someone who works there, buy him or her lunch and get the lowdown on the corporate culture and the company's future plans. Then, during the interview discussions, you'll be able to share your knowledge of the company. It will demonstrate your interest and make them want you more.

Ronald Kaufman, seminar leader and author of *Anatomy of Success*, agrees. "If you come to the interview prepared and knowledgeable, having done your homework, that says a lot about the type of employee you will be. You'll make a very positive impression."

The Interview Process Be Prepared to Ask the Right Questions

"Don't be afraid to interview the interviewer," says entrepreneur Peter J. Goodman, author of *Win-Win Career Negotiations*. Ask about the culture, the company's near- and long-term goals, and what's expected in the position. Come to the interview prepared with engaging questions; be ready to think on your feet when the opportunity presents itself.

The more genuinely interested you are in the position and the company and what you can do to help the company meet their objectives, the more interactive the conversation will be, explains Goodman. "You'll create a back-and-forth that demonstrates your intellectual curiosity—and *that* will set you apart. Be passionate."

"Your aim is to have as many of the unknowns known so that you understand what you'll be stepping

into and what's expected of you," he adds. Find out: *is this a new position* or, if it's not, *then why are you seeking to fill it at this time?* Let them know that you want to be successful in the job; ask more about your prospective responsibilities, as well as what's crucial to the company and its goals.

If the interview is going well, perhaps ask to speak with one or two people from the department. You'll obtain an insider's view of the organization which may help you decide whether the company is a good fit for you.

Be Confident

In the current economy, it's not unusual to feel battered or overly grateful for a job and that attitude undermines your negotiating confidence. "Keep in mind that if you have been selected as candidate, then they want you and that gives you negotiating leverage. Be assertive, but in a professional manner and you won't lose the job in the process," says Eric Kramer, author of *Active Interviewing: Branding, Selling and Presenting Yourself to Win Your Next Job*.

Build a Mutual Rapport

Remember, this is the courting stage and the time when you should be your most cooperative. "Seek to impress by taking a friend-helping-a-friend attitude," says Kaufman. "That type of approach actually creates a constructive shift in energy—suddenly you are seen as the resource they have been looking for."

Keep in mind that the hiring decision is, on many levels, an emotional one. The prospective employer is selecting the individual he or she has the most positive feeling about. The question being asked is *'how will this individual fit in with the team.'* As a candidate, you want to concentrate on creating a comfort zone. Make it clear that you're looking for a career with the

company—and you have what it takes to help them reach their goals, says Kaufman.

"Above all," advises Deems, "remember never to attempt to negotiate anything until AFTER a company has made a firm offer. It could lose you the position."

It's Your Job to Sell Yourself

"Consider the most critical aspects of the job and be prepared to recount specific instances in which you have achieved similar goals," asserts Goodman. "From time to time interject personal stories that correlate to the discussion and that demonstrate your ability to meet or exceed their requirements."

"Before leaving the interview, reaffirm your interest and ask about their decision timeframe or next steps," adds Goodman who suggests that you follow up with a straightforward, "respectful email that afternoon." Tell them you appreciated the chance to meet them and you are pleased about being considered for the job.

Working with a Recruiter

"If the recruiter is truly on top of the process—and you have built a good relationship with them—then you can feel comfortable leaning on them for advice or for help in moving the process forward," says Caroline Ceniza-Levine, a career coach and former recruiter. "Talk things out. The candidate who keeps everyone—including the recruiter—informed throughout the process is better able to bring about the results he's hoping for."

Ceniza-Levine tells candidates, "no one will advocate for your career or salary more than you will." However, recruiters have no interest in "getting you on the cheap." They are looking to make the best long-term match. If a new employee is happy with the

terms of his employment, he will remain with the company longer. On the other hand, if he feels cheated, he may leave as soon as a better opportunity arises. That creates a huge financial loss for the company and tarnishes the recruiter's reputation. It's in the best interests of all concerned to make a few concessions so that the final offer is enthusiastically accepted.

Never Be the First to Talk Money

While you should never bring up salary until after an offer has been made, new studies rebut the conventional wisdom that says never be the first to put a dollar amount on the table, says Kramer. "The latest research in negotiating says it is okay, when asked what you are looking for, to set a high anchor point. Know the salary range the job pays beforehand and then set a realistically aggressive anchor. Give them a figure that is just above the top of the salary range, and then be willing to negotiate down from there," he suggests.

Also, if you can lower risk by working out a performance based compensation arrangement, the employer may be willing to pay a higher overall salary, says Kramer. "When the perceived hiring risk is reduced, the employer is often willing to pay more because hiring mistakes are costly. If you are a sure thing, then their risk decreases and your value increases."

After the Offer Questions to Ask Once You Have an Offer

After having received an offer in writing and prior to negotiating, Kramer suggests you let them know that you are excited about the position and then ask two questions: 1. *why have I been chosen* and 2. *could you please share with me your company's compensation philosophy?* The answer to the first will give you

information that can add to the leverage you have when negotiating salary. "Remember, you are their number one choice. At this stage, the company is eagerly looking to secure you for the position—and they should be open to negotiation."

The answer to the second question can also be extremely useful during the negotiation phase, says Kramer. It gives you insight into whether they typically hire at the middle of the range, pay people top dollar to keep them or start people at the low end of the range and then quickly reward them as they prove their worth to the company.

Remember... NEVER ACCEPT AN OFFER ON THE SPOT! "You can indicate your interest and excitement, but let them know you need time to consider all the factors," says Deems. Ask when they would like to hear back from you. *Does next Wednesday or Thursday work for you? What time is best to reach you?*

Start the Negotiations

As you enter the negotiation phase, first let the interviewer know that you are really excited about the company and the position—and be sure to thank them for the offer. Then, you can begin negotiations with a statement like: my research indicates that in this city, this position pays X dollars, says Deems.

If the salary is below what you were expecting, Kaufman advises candidates to remain neutral and say something like: *because of the responsibilities of the job and because of my (skills, education, experience—choose one), I was anticipating a higher salary.* Emphasize that this is the company you want to work for and you feel it's a good match.

When the salary is acceptable or the company simply can't go any higher,

then you may want to negotiate for extras like an additional week's vacation, a corner office, attendance at an annual conference, or an auto allowance. "Keep in mind that your prospective employer has invested a lot of money in getting to this point and they may happily accommodate your request in order to get you on board," says Deems.

He suggests using an "if then" scenario when negotiating. *I am really excited. This is definitely the kind of organization I want to be part of; now if you could just include my membership in the XYZ association, then we can talk about start dates.* Give considerable thought to what you want before you go into negotiations--and practice role playing.

Take into account that compensation comes in many forms. "You can make concessions by changing the shape of the money. Instead of a higher salary, you might ask for a six-month salary review, tuition reimbursement, stock options, moving expenses, a sign-on bonus, or the opportunity to telecommute one day a week. Remain flexible. In today's economy, those who play hardball will most likely lose out," cautions Kaufman.

When to Turn Down an Offer

If you have made every effort to negotiate a job offer and the employer has been inflexible on some key core criteria, it may be time to walk away from the offer. However, Simon advises candidates to give the offer much careful review and try to buy some time. "It may be that you are not dealing with a person with sign-off authority—and the interviewer may be embarrassed to admit that," she points out. Asking for some time to think things over gives the interviewer time to speak with the actual decision maker. Your

requests may get approved once this higher authority steps in.

On the other hand, if there is a clear sense of limit or boundary in the organization that can't be moved then you may need to walk away from the offer.

Another deal breaker, according to Simon, is when it becomes clear that the culture and values of the organization are not a match for you. "Often, it's because of the corporate culture that people fail when they join a new company," she says. "So, it's important to find out as much as you can about that before making your decision."

If you must walk away, do so in the most diplomatic way possible. Be careful not to burn any bridges. Thank the interviewer for his time and then say something like *I've taken a careful look at what you need to accomplish—and my skills and your goals are not quite a match.* Consider recommending someone you know for the position. Keep the lines of communication open and the relationship on a positive footing.

Getting that Raise or Promotion

Many of the principles outlined above also apply if you are looking for a salary raise or promotion. The biggest difference is in the preparation. In the months prior, be sure to keep a running list of on-going assignments and detail your contributions. Use metrics to quantify your accomplishments. Begin learning new tasks that support your current position. Take on tasks outside the scope of your current job responsibilities. Then, when negotiating a raise or promotion, you can bring all this evidence to bear to demonstrate your enhanced value to the organization.

100% Preparation = 0% Perspiration

Do the advance research, have all of the bases covered, prepare alternative options and know the right questions to ask. This gives you a greater sense of control and builds confidence during the interview process and throughout negotiations. You won't be sweating the surprises—you'll be geared up for multiple contingencies. If you want to take the worry and intimidation out of negotiation and get the salary, benefits, work/life balance and job you desire, you must be willing to put in the hours of preparation. In the end, it will be time well spent.

Deciding Which Offer is Best

When the offer comes in, especially if you are dealing with multiple offers, Mary B. Simon suggests creating a matrix. List your core criteria; then, add two columns. In the first column weight each item with a value between 1 and 10 based on its importance to you. In the next column, decide how satisfactorily that item is represented in the offer and assign a satisfaction rating anywhere from 1 to 10. Next, multiply the two columns for each of your core criteria. Then, add up all of the resulting numbers. This will give you a total "score" for that offer. If you do this for each offer that you are considering, you will see in black and white which one truly comes out ahead. ■