Salary negotiation begins early in the interview process because you are selling your experience, track record and expected contribution level to the employer. Salary negotiation involves (1) knowing your worth, (2) proving your value, (3) learning the employer’s stance on salary and (4) creating a win-win situation.

The goal is to obtain the best possible offer within a competitive salary range for the type of position and level of responsibility. However, the employer’s goal is to stay within pay grades, maintain internal pay equity and avoid bad precedents.

Knowing your worth is an important step in the salary-negotiation process. Below are things to consider:

**Resources.** Many salary data resources are available to help you determine your worth. If your experience is specialized and includes many accomplishments, you cannot rely on average figures listed in salary surveys. Your background will be worth a premium, most likely at the top of pay grade ranges.

**Salary disclosure.** You may be asked for your current salary on the job application form and/or during the interview. Some would argue to never reveal this information. In my opinion, it is best to build trust by giving the employer a ballpark current figure (e.g., $100,000). An explanation may be necessary if your salary does not correlate well to the position for which you are interviewing (e.g., you are in a different field, lower-level role or temporary role). This issue is delicate because once you reveal your current salary, you may be earning either too much or too little in the employer’s eyes.

**Salary desired.** When an employer asks what salary you desire, respond that you are focused on the opportunity and that you will know better at the end of the interview process what the position is worth. Emphasize early that you are looking for financial incentive to make a move. If you are underpaid now, state that you are looking to prove that you are worth significantly above your current salary.

**Pre-Offer Discussions**

When an employer decides to make you a job offer, they may first ask for your desired salary. Two schools of thought exist here. One is to begin discussions with a top salary figure, which then becomes the baseline for negotiations in which the eventual salary offered will be a compromise between your figure and the employer’s lower figure. This strategy can work in many instances.

I believe the second school of thought usually works best (i.e., not stating exact desired salary figures) and letting the employer state their figure or range. You may want to state that you believe you are worth in the top of their salary range.

There are numerous factors that can influence your ability to receive a job offer that is well above your current salary and/or at the top of the employer’s salary range. Depending upon the situation, here are some factors you may want to emphasize to maximize your job offer:

**Position Factors**
- Greater level of responsibility
- More direct reports
- Heavier travel.

**Company Factors**
- High risk (e.g., start-up or turn-around situation)
- Below average benefit package (can be made up for with higher salary).
**Personal Factors**
- Successful track record
- Having another job offer (avoid back-and-forth bidding wars)
- Maintaining your standard living, especially when relocating to a higher cost-of-living area.

**POST-OFFER NEGOTIATIONS**
An employer may make a job offer without first asking about your desired salary. Your initial response will be to thank them for the offer and stress that you want to work for the company because you value the opportunity and see it as a long-term fit.

In response to financial aspects of the offer, obtain information about company benefits and perks before evaluating the compensation package and beginning negotiations. You may need a higher salary if benefits are subpar.

Do not hesitate to negotiate multiple aspects of the compensation package. If requests for a higher salary or additional benefits are reasonable, substantiated and presented professionally in a non-demanding way, they should get serious consideration assuming there are (1.) no violations of company policy, (2.) dangerous precedents or (3.) pay grade or internal equity issues.

**NEGOTIABLE ITEMS**
Besides starting salary, below are other items to possibly negotiate in the job offer, particularly if the overall compensation package is short of your expectations:
- Early salary review
- Specific raise by performance criteria
- Signing bonus
- Performance bonus
- Guaranteed bonus
- Car
- Car allowance
- COBRA payments
- Vacation
- Cell phone
- Laptop
- Company credit card
- Club memberships
- Relocation expenses.

There are tradeoffs in negotiations. What you cannot obtain in one area can likely be made up for in another area. Even if the employer does not accommodate all of your requests, you will most likely accept a job offer if (1.) the opportunity is right, (2.) you want to work for the company and (3.) the employer has been fair in negotiations and has come close to meeting your needs.

Good luck in creating a winning situation for all parties with your next job offer!

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