

EVALUATING JOB OFFERS & SALARY NEGOTIATION

You've been offered a job! Your first reaction is probably somewhere in the range of intense euphoria. Your second reaction, however, should be one of serious consideration. Getting a job offer does not mean you have to say yes right away. Take some time to consider not just the salary, but all aspects of the offer, to ensure you're accepting a position that is the right fit for your skills and interests.

Evaluating Job Offers

Carefully weigh all of the important factors listed below when considering an offer and evaluate how they stack up against your interests, values, and goals:

- Job duties/nature of the work
- Your future boss
- Co-workers and corporate culture
- Salary and benefits
- Opportunities for growth and advancement
- Length and structure of a typical work week
- Geographic location
- Overall health and stability of the company

Job Offer Options

Acknowledge receipt of all job offers right away and pursue one of the following options:

Accept – You Really Want This Job: Be sure you fully understand all aspects of the offer and are satisfied with the salary prior to accepting a position. Show your appreciation for the offer and verbally accept the position. Ask the employer to confirm the offer in writing, if they haven't done so already, and follow-up with a written confirmation of the terms of the offer (by email or hard copy). Cancel any other scheduled interviews and reject all other offers immediately. Report your job to the Office of Co-op and Career Services.

Stall – Not Ready to Make a Decision: You should not need to accept any offer on the spot. Express appreciation for the offer and tell the employer that because this is an important decision you would like some time to carefully think about it. Agree on a reasonable time frame to get back to the company. If you are waiting to hear back from another company with whom you have interviewed, contact that company and let them know you're very interested in their position, but have just received another offer. Let the company know when you need to respond to the offer, and ask if they'll be able to let you know their decision in time for you to consider both opportunities. At the same time, be sure to restate your enthusiasm for *their* offer. Request extensions from employers if you need more time to consider other offers; do not ignore agreed upon deadline dates.

Reject – Thanks, But No Thanks: Express appreciation for the offer and say something positive about the organization, but let them know that the position is not a good fit at this time. You do not need to indicate whose offer you accepted or provide any additional details. Preferably, decline the offer via phone and follow-up in writing (by email or hard copy).

Ethics of Accepting or Rejecting an Offer

Once you accept a job offer, even verbally, you *must not* back out, or renege on the job, to work for another employer. Good employer relations are vital to RIT's relationship with employers, and you are a critical link in this relationship. In addition, renegeing on an offer could damage your chances of future employment with that company. Ever hear the saying, "Don't burn your bridges"?

Therefore, discuss offers thoroughly with employers so you understand the terms and consider carefully before accepting a position. If you have any questions/concerns about this process, discuss them with your program coordinator in the Office of Co-op and Career Services *before* taking action!

Salary Negotiation

Preparation and Research

Many factors determine salary offers including the type of work you perform; your skills, education, and experience level; the industry; company size; and the geographical area. Keep in mind that there is more room for negotiation when discussing full-time offers versus co-op or short-term employment.

Know the following before entering into salary discussions:

1) The duties and requirements of the job and your background and qualifications. Have a solid understanding of what the job entails so you can effectively communicate how your skills and abilities will add value to the organization during the negotiation process. Also, if, for example, a job requires significant amounts of travel or supervisory duties, these factors will impact your salary expectations.

2) The typical salary range, including low, median, and high values, for the job. Salary range information is available from a variety of sources including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, industry organizations, and various websites like Payscale.com, Salary.com, and Simply Hired.com. The Office of Co-op and Career Services' website also has co-op and recent graduate wage information by specific major.

3) Your salary expectations, including:

- Your living wage: Know the minimum amount you need to cover your expenses. Work out a monthly budget incorporating all of your anticipated expenses, "fun" money, and a cushion for emergencies. Remember that taxes come off the top of each paycheck and total approximately 28% of your gross income.
- Your bottom line acceptable salary: This figure will be based on your living wage needs and what your research indicates is the low-end pay range for the position. If you can't negotiate a salary above your bottom line expectation, it may be time to walk away from the offer.
- The amount you really want: Your desired salary should be based on your salary research and assessment of your market value. You can only negotiate down, so never share this figure at the start of salary negotiations - Your initial salary request should include a cushion of about 10% above this figure.

Salary Negotiation Timing

Generally, you should wait for the employer to bring up the salary issue. Ideally, this conversation happens after an offer has been given.

However, early in the process the employer may try to find out if the company can afford you. If you get hit with the salary question at the beginning stages of the interview process, it's best to try to avoid giving a specific figure:

"I would first like to learn more about the position to get a better understanding of your needs and the position requirements. I am flexible about starting salary, but expect to receive competitive compensation."

If the employer insists on a more detailed answer, you can ask:

"What is the salary range that's been established for this position?" Then, format your response based on the range provided – a simple response of "That range is in line with my expectations" is all that's needed.

Finally, if you have to provide a specific dollar amount:

State your salary requirements, but make sure you have done your research beforehand. You should provide the employer with a range and make sure the bottom range figure is above your minimum acceptable salary and the top range figure is about 10% higher than the amount you consider to be a satisfactory offer. For example, "At the present time my salary requirements are negotiable within the range of high thirties to low forties." or, "Given my current understanding of the job responsibilities, I would expect this position to pay in the range of __ to __."

If you've received an offer and would like to negotiate the salary, let the employer know you are in the process of reviewing the offer and have a few items you'd like to discuss. It's best to set up a time to meet with the employer in-person to have this conversation (a phone discussion is the next best choice).

Starting this conversation can be uncomfortable, but keep in mind that you are just trying to come to a mutually beneficial agreement. Avoid being confrontational by reiterating that you are very interested in working for the employer and you want to find a way to work this out:

“Thank you again for the offer. I am very excited about the prospect of working for this organization. However, based on my research, I was expecting a higher salary. Is there any flexibility with it?” Remain silent and let the employer respond.

Factors Beyond Salary

When reviewing offers and evaluating compensation packages keep in mind the benefits and perks the company is offering - They can add as much as 30-40% to your actual salary! These are also items that you may want to discuss during the negotiation process and include:

- Additional compensation: Bonuses, commissions, stock options, and profit sharing
- Benefits: Retirement matching, medical and life insurance, paid time off
- Other perks: Relocation expense reimbursement, company car, tuition assistance

Salary Negotiation Objections

When entering into salary negotiations, be ready for objections. Prepare your responses to possible objections ahead of time. Some common objections include:

Objection: “It’s not in the budget.”

Response: Communicate your value to the employer – Focus on the impact you will make, the knowledge and skills you have to offer, and your experience.

Objection: “Others in our organization in the same position aren’t paid that much”

Response: Emphasize that you would like to be fairly compensated based on your skills and abilities and reiterate what some of those key skills and abilities are.

If you’ve responded effectively to the employer’s objections, but aren’t making progress with the negotiations you can:

- Try negotiating for other perks/benefits (additional vacation time, relocation expense reimbursement, etc...)
- Ask if the employer would be willing to agree to a pay raise at a set time in the future

No matter the result of the negotiations, end the conversation in a professional manner and thank the employer for taking the time to discuss the offer with you further.

Salary Negotiation Do’s and Don’ts

Do:

- Anticipate objections and practice your negotiation skills
- Sell yourself – Highlight your education, skills, and experience
- Base your reasons for requesting higher pay on the job responsibilities and your skills/experience
- Listen actively and ask clarifying questions
- Remain calm, friendly, and professional
- Be realistic with your salary expectations
- Be creative! Be willing to negotiate on benefits/perks beyond salary
- Know when to walk away
- Get your final offer in writing

Don’t:

- Go in unprepared
- Immediately jump at the first offer or give up negotiating too early
- Bring up personal reasons for wanting higher pay
- Use negative body language
- Threaten or use ultimatums
- Get emotional
- Be afraid of silence – that’s often when the other person will agree to your request, revise their position, or reveal helpful information

Negotiation Preparation Worksheet

1) Initial salary offer: \$ _____

2) Typical salary range for this position is:

Source 1: _____ \$ _____ to \$ _____

Source 2: _____ \$ _____ to \$ _____

Source 3: _____ \$ _____ to \$ _____

3) Desired salary: \$ _____

4) My initial salary request will be: \$ _____
(Desired salary + ~ 10%)

5) Bottom line acceptable salary: \$ _____

6) Other benefits/perks I would like to negotiate:

Reasons why I deserve a higher salary (your reasons should be specific and focus on findings from your salary research, your skills and abilities, and your education and experience):

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

