SALARY NEGOTIATION

BELLARMINE
Career Development Center

WHY NEGOTIATION MATTERS: Whether you are just starting out in your career or if you are making your next big career move, salary negotiation can feel intimidating. Your salary can affect long-term earnings as well as your professional and personal goals. Salary negotiation is a common tactic, and it can show your confidence and professionalism.

STEP ONE: Do Your Research

Before you begin negotiating, know what is standard for your position, industry, location, and skills. The best way to know this is through research. Using tools like Futuriti and O*Net (powered by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) can provide valuable information about typical compensation ranges for specific industries and job titles in certain locations.

- GOAL: Identify a reasonable salary **range**, not just one number.

STEP TWO: Recognize Your Value

When negotiating, focus on the value you can provide to the organization rather than simply discussing your personal financial needs. Employers often place value on internships, research projects, leadership positions, part-time employment, volunteer work, and technical skills. You want to connect these experiences to the job description and organization's values and culture. Employers are more likely to respond positively when they understand how your skills and experiences contribute to the organization's success.

- GOAL: Prepare 2-3 examples of experiences that demonstrate your value.

STEP THREE: Timing is Key

One of the most common mistakes people make is discussing salary too early in the hiring process. During interviews, the primary goal should be demonstrating your qualifications and enthusiasm for the position. Negotiation is most effective after the employer has decided that they want you to join their team.

Once you receive a formal job offer, the organization has invested time and resources into the hiring process and has identified you as their preferred candidate. This creates an opportunity for a professional conversation about salary and benefits.

If you receive an offer immediately, it is perfectly acceptable to thank the employer and request some time to review the details. Taking one or two days to evaluate the offer demonstrates thoughtfulness and allows you to prepare for any negotiations.

- GOAL: Get an offer first, take some time to think (and research), and prepare for what to ask.

STEP FOUR: How to Ask

Effective salary discussions are collaborative and respectful, not confrontational. Start by expressing gratitude and enthusiasm for the opportunity before discussing compensation. When you discuss your skills along with the salary range you have in mind, demonstrate professionalism while providing a clear rationale for your request. Avoid making demands or issuing ultimatums. Instead, frame the conversation around market research, qualifications, and mutual benefit. Remember that negotiation is a conversation, not a one-time statement. Listen carefully to the employer's response and be prepared to discuss alternatives if needed.

Here is an example to help you:

"Thank you for the offer. I'm excited about the opportunity to join your organization and contribute to your team. After reviewing the offer and researching the market for similar positions, I was hoping we could discuss a salary closer to $[x]. Based on my internship experience and relevant qualifications, I believe that figure reflects the value I can bring to the role."

- GOAL: Start with appreciation, have data to demonstrate your skills, and give the employer time to respond.

STEP FIVE: Consider the Whole Package

Compensation includes much more than a paycheck. If an organization cannot increase the salary, there may be flexibility in other areas of the offer. Other things that may be included in a compensation package:

- Healthcare benefits
- Retirement contributions
- Flexible work arrangements
- Relocation assistance
- Professional development funding
- Additional vacation time
- Tuition reimbursement programs

When evaluating an offer, consider the entire compensation package rather than focusing solely on the salary figure.

- GOAL: Evaulate the offer and see how it fits into your personal and professional goals and needs. If it is what you want, accept the offer! If not, it is okay to kindly and professionally decline.

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Negotiating

1. **Accepting the first offer too quickly** - While enthusiasm is important, taking time to review the offer demonstrates professionalism and allows you to make an informed decision.
2. **Not doing your research** - Employers are more likely to consider a request that is supported by market data rather than personal opinions or generalizations.
3. **Being overly aggressive or apologetic** - Confidence and professionalism create a stronger impression than either excessive hesitation or demanding behavior. Remember that salary discussions are a normal part of the hiring process.
4. **Sharing personal details** - A job offer is not a time to share personal financial struggles or to compare your offer to that of someone else. Focus on objective information, your qualifications, and industry standards.

Building Your Confidence for the Future

Negotiation is a skill that improves with practice. The first salary discussion may feel uncomfortable, but learning to advocate for yourself is an important part of professional development. Preparing talking points, practicing with your dedicated career advisor, and conducting thorough research can help reduce anxiety and improve your confidence.

It is also helpful to remember that an employer has already expressed interest in hiring you by extending an offer. The organization sees potential in your contributions and wants you to join the team! Approaching negotiations as a professional discussion about mutual expectations can help you feel more comfortable throughout the process. Negotiation is not about winning or losing. It is about ensuring that both you and your employer begin the working relationship with clear expectations and mutual respect.

"Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate."

– PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY