

California State University Northridge Career Center

Negotiation Tips

Negotiating Your First Job Offer: Do's and Don'ts

- When you do get a job offer, try to get as much information about what the job really entails and then ask for a salary range; choose high, trying to get as much as you can get in salary and benefits.
- Don't take what's first offered just because you're grateful. Don't worry-you'll more than earn your salary. Try to get an appropriate salary first even if you have to bite the bullet and negotiate for it. The best way to negotiate a good salary is to make your prospective employer state the range first; don't be the first to throw out a number. Then you can counter with fifty percent more than what you want. The usual compromise is somewhere in between, so you have to aim high.
- The truth is that most people don't start out making much money. It helps to check into the average amount or at least know the range; you'll get such information at the Career Center. You'll be a better negotiator if you know the going rates. Even though you would like more and need it to repay loans or to buy a new car, you still have to have some patience.
- Don't think that you should accept anything to get in, hoping that once you're there and they recognize your talent, they will raise you to what you're really worth.
- You don't have to respond immediately to an offer. You can always say, "Let me think about this and see what is best." Then run like mad to check with your counselor and friends. It doesn't always work, but it's worth trying.
- Make sure you've talked to the person you'll work for. If there's bad chemistry, ask for another interview to get a second impression. You don't have to love your boss, but it helps if you respect him or her.
- Sometimes you will suffer from the best kind of problem: two competing offers to choose from. If one employer offers more opportunity to learn and grow but less money to start, you might risk it after checking with others who've been there before you. Or if an employer is in a new field or one that is so compelling to you, then take a chance. Most often people choose the larger, more comprehensive company that has name recognition and a respected training program.
- Write a thank-you note to show your appreciation and reiterate your interest in the job, as well as a few of your strongest assets that make you the best candidate.

From Jumpstart Your Career in College by Adele Scheele, Ph.D., Kaplan/Simon & Schuster, 2000.