

Negotiating Salary with a Potential Employer in Today's Market: Yes, It's Really OK

By Accountemps

You might think that while all professionals want to be paid appropriately for their skills and experience, most are willing to accept whatever they're offered in this challenging market. You may also believe that most job seekers would be nervous about broaching the subject of compensation with a potential employer.

Actually, neither is true – at least, for more than six in 10 Canadian financial professionals. A [recent survey](#) by Robert Half International revealed that the majority of today's workers are comfortable negotiating salary or benefits when speaking with a hiring manager.

True, some people fear asking for a better offer because they think it could damage their relationship with a new employer. However, if you're among them, you may be doing yourself a great disservice by not speaking up. It doesn't hurt to ask, especially if you cover the following bases:

Conduct research

Don't ask for a specific salary simply because you think it sounds like a good number. You need data to support your request. To determine your market value – what your skills and experience are worth to today's employers – review the latest surveys and publications about compensation, such as Robert Half's annual [Salary Guide](#) for the accounting and finance fields. Insight from colleagues and recruiters can be useful, as well. And don't forget to consider your geographic area – it plays a significant role in determining pay levels.

Show them your value

Be prepared to demonstrate your "ROI" to a potential employer – that is, how the company's investment in you can deliver returns to the organisation. Provide quantitative examples of your contributions to previous employers. For instance, maybe your quick identification of a payroll problem saved your company thousands of dollars. Results like this help put you in a stronger position to negotiate compensation.

Look beyond salary

You've heard it before: Money isn't everything. If an employer is unable to meet your request for additional compensation, consider asking for other perks. What would make the difference for you? The opportunity to telecommute? Tuition reimbursement for earning payroll certifications? More vacation time? An above-average health plan? More firms are willing to provide such things to secure top talent, especially when they can't offer the desired level of pay.

Say 'no' when you need to

If an offer is less than you think it should be, point it out politely then counter with your desired salary. If the employer can't or won't move, it's down to you to decide whether or not you can accept the terms. This will depend on your need for immediate employment, as well as how excited you are about this particular opportunity. (Note: If you're desperate to leave your current job, don't tip your hand, as it will weaken your position in negotiations.)

Get it in writing

Once you agree to the terms, ask that a letter be drawn up, outlining the specifics of the offer – salary, benefits, the position's title and key responsibilities, and any special arrangements that resulted specifically from negotiations. Having everything in writing will prevent any potential misunderstandings later.

And remember, few salary negotiations are positively swayed by being overly aggressive. Regardless of how the compensation negotiations play out, remain professional and courteous at all times. While you may not get what you ask for, you can still walk away with a potential employer's respect – and in the long run, that may prove far more valuable to you and your career than a larger paycheck right now.

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