

Achieve the Job Offer You Deserve by Avoiding These 10 Salary Negotiation Mistakes

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Whether you're new to job-hunting or a seasoned pro, whether you love the art of salary negotiation or dread it, the truth is that knowing salary negotiation tactics – and avoiding salary negotiation landmines – are key to obtaining the job offer you seek and deserve.

While much is written about the tactics of salary negotiation, this article focuses on negotiation techniques you want to avoid – salary negotiation mistakes that could result in a much lower job offer – or worse – losing the job offer you worked so hard to obtain. These 10 mistakes can be easily be avoided by following the advice in this article.

1. **Settling/Not Negotiating.** Probably the biggest mistake you can make is simply deciding to settle and accept whatever offer you receive. Research shows that younger job-seekers and female job-seekers often make this mistake – either from not completely understanding the negotiation process or from a dislike or discomfort with the idea of negotiating. Settling for a lower salary than you are worth has some major negative financial consequences – you'll earn less, receive smaller raises (because most raises are based as a percentage of your salary), and have a smaller pension (since pension contributions are usually a percentage of your salary). But settling for an offer that you feel in your heart is too low will not only set you back financially, but also eat at you until you finally begin to seriously dislike your job and/or employer. Of course, in certain professions (like sales), it is expected you'll negotiate your salary.
2. **Revealing How Much You Would Accept.** Information is the key to any kind of negotiation and a common mistake job-seekers make is telling the employer what you'll accept. Sometimes it is hard not to offer this information – especially if the employer asks for a salary history or salary requirement. Some employers will also ask – in a preliminary interview – what salary you're looking for. In all these situations, you need to carefully decide how you'll handle the situation. The earlier you give up this kind of information, the less room – if any – you'll have for negotiating a better offer when the time arrives. Always try to remain as noncommittal as possible when asked about your salary requirements too early in the interview process.
3. **Focusing on Need/Greed Rather Than Value.** A very common salary negotiation error is focusing on what you feel you need or deserve rather than on your value and the value you bring to the prospective employer. Employers don't care that your salary won't cover your mortgage or student loan payments or even your living expenses. If you plan to negotiate a job offer, do it based on solid research (see next mistake) and a clear demonstration of your value to the organization. Don't ever tell the employer that you need a certain salary.
4. **Weak Research or Negotiation Preparation.** With the number and variety of salary resources available online – from <http://salary.com> and www.salaryexpert.com to professional associations – there is no excuse for you as the job-seeker to not know your market value. Of course, you should also attempt to conduct research on your prospective

employer their historical salary levels, negotiation policies, performance appraisals. Even if you decide you don't want to negotiate salary, you'll have a better understanding of the market for your services – and your value in that market.

5. **Making a Salary Pitch Too Early.** The longer you wait, the more power you have. Yet, there are many job-seekers who jump in too early in the process and ask about salaries and compensation. The ideal time for talking salary is when you are the final candidate standing – and you get the job offer. It's at that point when you can ask more specifics about salary, bonuses, commissions, health insurance, and other perks. Asking at any point earlier in the process can be perceived as being too focused on money – and can also lead to you having to reveal what you would be willing to accept.
6. **Accepting Job Offer Too Quickly.** The job-search these days drags on longer and longer, and when you finally obtain that offer after weeks and weeks (and in some cases, months), it's not unusual to want to accept it right on the spot. But even the best offers should be reviewed when you have a clear head – and without the pressure of your future boss or HR director staring at you. Most employers are willing to give you some time to contemplate the job offer – typically several days to a week. It's when you get the job offer that you have the most power because the employer has chosen you, so use that power to be certain it's the job and job offer for you – and consider negotiating for a better offer if you feel that it should be better. Just remember that whatever amount of time you ask for is the amount of time you have to make your decision.
7. **Declining Job Offer Too Quickly.** Many job-seekers reject job offers very quickly when the employer offers a salary much lower than expected, and while in many cases you would be correct in rejecting the offer, it's still best to ask for time to consider it before rejecting it outright. If the money is simply far below the average, you may have no choice but to reject the offer. However, if the money is good – but just not as good as you would like – take a closer look at the benefits. A big mistake is declining a job offer too quickly without looking at the entire compensation package. For example, some firms that have lower salaries offer larger bonuses or stock options or pay the full expense of health insurance. Remember, too, that you should be able to negotiate one or two elements of the offer to make it even stronger.
8. **Asking For Too Many Changes in Counteroffer.** If you have a strong interest in the job and the employer is a good fit, but the offer is not what you expected, you can consider making a counteroffer proposal. If you decide to make a counterproposal, remember that you should only pick the one or two most important elements; you can't negotiate every aspect of the offer. If the salary is too low, focus on that aspect in a counteroffer. If you know the firm will not negotiate on salary, then focus on modifying a few of the other terms of the offer (such as additional vacation time, earlier performance reviews, signing bonus, relocation expenses). Just remember that you cannot attempt to negotiate the entire offer; you need to choose your one or two battles carefully, conduct your research, and write a short counterproposal. ([Find specific guidelines for counteroffers in this article.](#))
9. **Taking Salary Negotiations Personally.** Whatever you do in this process, always stay professional in handling the negotiations. If the employer has made you an offer – then you are their choice, the finalist for the position – so even if negotiations go nowhere, or worse, keep in mind that you did receive an offer, even if it is not what you expected or deserved. And if negotiations break down between you and the employer, move on

graciously, thanking the employer again for the opportunity – because you never want to burn any bridges.

10. **Not Asking for Final Offer in Writing.** Once everything is said and done – and you have received a job offer that you find acceptable, the last thing you should do is ask for the final offer in writing. No legitimate employer will have issues with putting the offer in writing, so if yours balks at your request and accuses you of not having any trust and tries to bully you to accept the verbal agreement, take it as a MAJOR red flag that there is something seriously wrong.

Final Thoughts

Following the advice in this article – and using other proven job-hunting and salary negotiation tactics – should result in a new job and job offer that is just what you were seeking.

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