Evaluate, Negotiate, and Accept the Offer

UC Irvine
Division of Career Pathways
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Evaluate the Offer(s)

Congratulations! You received an offer or perhaps received more than one. Before you accept or decline, take time to evaluate the offer(s). Beyond salary, consider the entire compensation package. Companies offer various benefits - some are negotiable, and others are not.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER RECEIVING THE OFFER

- First, show gratitude and excitement for the offer.
- Avoid accepting the offer immediately. Even if it is the perfect job, consider the entire offer before responding. Ask the recruiter to send you the offer in writing and for time to review the full compensation package before making your decision. Once you accept the offer, you will not be able to negotiate.
- Read the entire offer to make sure you understand all the details. If you have questions, email the person who sent the offer to ask for clarification. Many companies have benefit specialists in Human Resources who can guide you through the process.

Some Benefits to Consider: Salary/base pay, Bonuses or commissions, health insurance, Retirement plans, i.e. 401(k) matching, Paid time off (PTO), stock options or equity, relocation assistance, tuition reimbursement, wellness stipends, i.e. gym membership, transportation stipends, i.e. train/bus pass, remote or flexible work options.

This is a big decision, so take your time with the process. Meet with a Career Educator at DCP, and ask your employed family, friends and mentors for their insight and perspectives.

Negotiate a Job Offer

Negotiating an offer ensures you feel fairly compensated for your skills and experiences, and a strong starting salary sets a good foundation for your future earning potential.

RESEARCH SALARY RANGES AND DETERMINE YOUR LIVING WAGE

Research salary information during your job search and before the interview. Do not ask about the salary during the interview but be prepared to answer a question about your salary expectations. Provide a salary range instead of an absolute number.

Use tools such as Payscale.com, Glassdoor.com and Salary.com, generative AI with cited sources, etc. to find salary ranges and averages for specific positions and companies. Be sure to research by region as cost of living can impact salary.

ARTICULATE YOUR VALUE

Develop 3-5 Value Statements to help you articulate the value you add to the company and support your request that you are worth more:

1. Identify and write down as many accomplishments, skills, strengths and experiences you have that are of value to the company. Think of what you have on your resume and/or what you have already shared during the interview process.
2. Think of a specific time when you brought value and/or made an impact during a job or internship, for your student organization, etc. that may be related to the position.
3. Put it together in a Value Statement: “As a result of my effort to do [ACCOMPLISHMENTS] using my [SKILLS], I have achieved [RESULTS] which provided the following specific benefits to the organization.”

Example Value Statement:

> “I led a marketing campaign to promote our student organization using my leadership and communication skills which led to a 45% increase in event attendance and a 30% increase in membership in 6 months."

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PREPARE FOR THE CONVERSATION

- Do not begin negotiations until you are ready to accept. Once you enter negotiations, the company will expect you to accept the offer once you have agreed on the terms.
- Examine other elements of your offer and prioritize them. Consider which elements of the offer you would like to modify and place them in order of importance. You may be able to negotiate things other than salary.

DURING THE CONVERSATION

- First, express gratitude for the offer and the time to consider the offer.
- Once you begin the negotiation, you can adjust your strategy as necessary. For example, if the salary is not negotiable, move to the next item on your list. Do not ask for too many things; if you get a higher salary and a larger signing bonus, you may want to reconsider asking for additional considerations.
- Present your strongest Value Statements first to justify your request and continue to share additional Value Statements as needed.
- Negotiation is a process, not a demand, so be open, positive, and flexible. Have a salary range that you feel comfortable asking for and be ready to negotiate other elements if salary is non-negotiable.
- A negotiation conversation can be emotional so be sure to check your emotions throughout the conversation and be okay to politely end the conversation for the time being to think about what was discussed and set up another time to finalize.

NAVIGATING MULTIPLE OFFERS

- Carefully compare each offer by looking at the strengths and weaknesses, pros and cons, not just salary.
- If the offer from your second-choice company is better, you can try to use that offer as leverage to bargain for a better offer with your first choice.
- Be careful about how you approach the negotiations and be prepared for your preferred company to say they cannot match the other offer. Do not misrepresent the other offer, since the company may ask to see it before responding to your request.
- Proceed with caution and do not attempt to pit companies against each other to create a bidding war. You want to start your new job on a positive note.
- If the negotiations are not handled correctly, the relationship can be soured and potentially result in the company withdrawing your offer.

Accept or Decline the Offer

ACCEPT THE OFFER

- Once you accept an offer, you have made a commitment to work for that company, and you should STOP interviewing at other companies. If you are not ready to make that decision, then ask the company making the offer to give you more time to consider before responding.
- Once you make your decision, call your contact to accept, state the terms you agreed to and your start date. Ask them to send a letter outlining your agreement.

DECLINE THE OFFER

- Thank the company for their time and interest in you. You want to maintain a positive relationship with the company in case you decide to work for them in the future.
- Give a brief explanation of why you are declining and avoid saying anything negative about the company as your reason for declining. You also do not have to share details about the offer or company you decide to accept with.