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TIPS ON NEGOTIATING YOUR SALARY

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Top negotiators show you how to ask for what you're worth -- and get it.

By Brittany Taylor - June 22, 2015



Let's talk shop about one of the biggest hurdles you'll be dealing with during the job hunt: money. Both sides of the table know that's the end game -- and always will be, at least until your landlord agrees to barter blog posts or infographics for rent -- but nobody wants to bring it up first. And if you're a woman, that's especially true. "We don't always think we should be negotiating things and when it comes to compensation, we also tend to be paid less," says **Fatimah Gilliam**, CEO of [The Azara Group](#), a consultancy company that focuses on negotiation and diversity services. The thing is, when you don't negotiate, it has major financial repercussions. Over the course of your career, the \$5,000 you may have left on the table when accepting your first job offer, no questions asked, can add up to hundreds of thousands. Raises are pegged to your baseline salary, as are bonuses. Remember learning about compounded value in high school math? Here's where that idea comes into play.

It doesn't matter if you're a recent college grad or a media veteran making a lateral move. "No matter what stage of your career you're in, accepting whatever offer comes your way is a big mistake," says **Diane Domeyer**, executive director of [The Creative Group](#). Per **Katie Donovan**, founder of [Equal Pay Negotiations](#), 84 percent of hiring managers expect you to. "What that means is that at least 84 percent of offers do not have all of the money available in that offer," Donovan shares. "They're proactively low. It's on purpose. They expect you to come back and say, 'Hey, wait a minute, that's not right.'" So how do you play the game without flinching, folding or showing your cards too soon? Take a deep breath, steel your nerves and read on.

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How to boost your job offer

The most power you'll ever have throughout your relationship with an employer is before you accept a job offer. Your goal during the interview process is to make the hiring managers fall in love with you. The more they want you on their team, Donovan says, the more power you hold. In an ideal world, they'll be the ones to bring up salary terms. If you handle it right, you can get them to do just that. Leave "desired pay" fields on applications blank (or fill them in with placeholder text). When they bring up how much you want to make, swallow your "a cool million, thanks" retort and try responding with one of Donovan's favorite lines: "I don't know enough about the job to know what it should pay," or, "Well, what's it budgeted at?"

"Make it about the market, not about you."

Whatever you say, make it about what the job's market value is. To establish market value, you'll need to do some research. "You can never negotiate in a bubble and say, 'OK, I want X more just because,'" Gilliam tells us. "You need to speak to your friends. You need to speak to people in different industries." Salary.com, Glassdoor.com, and job sites with listings that offer salaries or ranges are all great places to start your investigation. Try salary calculators, too, and be on the lookout for consistent answers rather than outliers. When you present your research, suggest a number from the higher end of the market range. Chances are you won't get the number you throw out -- the company will want to get you down lower. If you aim on the higher side of what's reasonable, you and your prospective employer will probably agree on an average salary.

The right way to ask for a raise

Asking for a bump in pay is all about timing -- and we don't mean when you need more moola in the house-renovation fund. "The best time to ask for a raise is not necessarily when you need the money; it's when you're most likely to get your request approved," Domeyer says. "This could be after you've finished a successful project and your valuable contributions are top of mind, or a positive time for the company, such as when the business lands a deal or realizes an upswing in quarterly revenue." Don't wait for your annual review, Donovan warns, because your company has already allocated money for that season. Set it up earlier, she advises, like three or four months before. And when you do, Domeyer urges you to schedule a meeting with your boss and let him know in advance that you want to talk about your compensation. You want him to be ready to talk money, not be caught off-guard.

Once you're face-to-face, "start talking about how you're doing in the job. You want them to agree that you're doing good [work]," Donovan says. "Then, once they say that, you say, 'Well, that's why I was so surprised to find out that I'm underpaid for the market.'" Make it about the market, not about you, and keep the tone along the lines of "how do we fix this problem" rather than "I want \$10,000 more a year." If your manager asks you for a number, pull out your research and say something like, "Based on what I'm seeing, it should be..." And just as you would do at an interview, quote the higher end of the range rather than the median.

What to do when the answer is "no"

One of Donovan's biggest pet peeves is when employees take the first "no" as their final answer. "The negotiation actually starts with 'no,'" she shares. "Keep going. Don't walk away." If you're told that the company can't afford to pay you a higher salary, try coming back with details supported by your research (yep, here it is again). "Say, 'I'm surprised to hear that because I know our company has doubled profits the last four years -- whatever the data is,'" Donovan urges. "Have a response so that 'no' is thrown to the side and you can move to, 'So, can I get my \$10,000 raise?'"

"The negotiation actually starts with 'no.' Keep going. Don't walk away."

Often, employers will set certain qualifications on discussing and approving a raise -- perhaps you can talk about it in six months, or you need to hit certain sales goals. Never take that "no" at face value. "Try to find out what conditions would qualify as a better time to approach the subject. If your boss tells you that he or she doesn't think you deserve more money, find out why," Domeyer says. "Ask for guidance on what you need to do to warrant the raise."

And finally, Gilliam says, you have to know when it's time for you to walk away. Ask yourself if you're comfortable with a smaller raise, or returning to the topic during the next quarter, or jumping through various hoops to be eligible. As you ponder these questions, keep in mind this is about you, not about what your significant other thinks you should settle for or when your mother thinks it's time for you to take a stand and quit.

Negotiating beyond money

Job titles, health care, company-paid training, vacation time -- there are all sorts of other extras that are part of your compensation package that a lot of candidates think are set in stone. And you know what? They're not. While your prospective employer might not have a lot of wiggle room, money-wise, "that doesn't mean that there aren't other things you can negotiate for," Gilliam says. Do you want a more flexible start or end time? Do you need to move your start date? Would you like to telecommute a few days a month? Would you really like to work for so-and-so rather than whoever? All of these options tend not to change the bottom line for the company, but they can make a huge difference to your job satisfaction.

If you think asking for these sorts of extras just isn't done, think again. Domeyer tells us that a survey conducted by The Creative Group found that more than one-third of advertising and media execs worked with candidates to make things like flextime a possibility. Remember, a new job isn't (just) about making more money. You want to be successful, whether you're moving to a new company, starting in a different industry, or working your way up the corporate ladder. Being successful has a lot to do with being happy. If you know what would make you look forward to coming to work in the a.m., there's only one way to get it: Ask.

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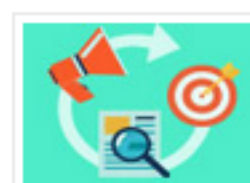
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