

You don't have to be an executive to ... Negotiate what you're worth

Workwrite Resumes
Jeri Hird Dutcher
Jeri@WorkwriteResumes.com
www.WorkwriteResumes.com
(218) 791-4045

Q&A

Technical difficulties prevented these questions from being asked and answered during the Salary Negotiations Webinar. We are providing them here for your information. Thank you for listening!

Ugonor: Suppose you need this job desperately and the employer is taking advantage over high demand for the job due to high rate of unemployment without considering experience level and would want to give lower than benchmark, what will one do in such case?

Jeri: When you need a job desperately, your negotiation strength is considerably compromised. You might consider taking the job temporarily to get on the other side of desperate and then keep looking for a better job. This employer doesn't sound like the negotiating kind.

If you still want to work there, and they're not paying for experience, you might have to wow them with an extra skill. Make sure they know about any "value-added" experience you have that could be useful to the company.

Tracy: What is your negotiating leverage if you're over qualified for the position but willing to take the job anyway?

Jeri: Your leverage in the case of being overqualified is your depth and breadth of skills. The downside is whatever is making you willing to take the job anyway.

Sometimes, an employer will call someone overqualified if they don't want to say "old." If you are fighting ageism, then you need to do all you can to prove your level of energy is up to the job. That may mean polishing your technology skills and being extra personable.

Other times, employers use overqualification as a reason not to hire because they think you will continue to look for a position that fits your qualifications better. In this case, you must convince them you are there to stay.

In both cases, finding out what the employer is worried about is the first step.

Sharon: Do these same strategies apply when negotiating with the VA?

Jeri: If the VA is the Veterans Administration, then in general, yes. You might want to talk with someone who specializes in federal employment. I recommend Camille Carbonneau at CCCareerServices.com. (I'm not stuttering. There really are three Cs at the beginning of that url.)

Diane: I have been with the company for over two years. How can I ask for a raise? I feel like I didn't negotiate well enough at the hire.

Jeri: That's a really common problem. Luckily, the process is the same as when you negotiate for a new job:

1. Use the budget handout to decide how much you want.
2. Use the Career Values handout to decide what is important to you.
3. Use the Comparables handout to determine the range your and other companies are paying for your job.
4. Use the Goals handout to figure out what the company wants.

Then, use a professional resume writer and interview coach to help you pull together your marketing plan and documents. If you don't know any, email me at Jeri@WorkwriteResumes.com, and we will figure out together if I am the best person to help you. If not, I can recommend someone.

Anonymous: What compensation amount should you provide during negotiations?

Jeri: It's usually best if you can get the company to make an offer or give you a range rather than telling them how much you want. If they ask you for an amount, ask them what range they have in mind.

Sometimes, they absolutely will not tell you, which is why it's best to have done your research ahead of the negotiation. That way, even if you don't know how much this company has in mind for you, you will know what other companies pay people who do your job.

If you have to say a number first, go high. You can always negotiate down, but almost never up.

Mark: How do you close the deal? How long can you continue the discussion when you are eager to work?

Jeri: Closing the deal is usually a meeting of the minds or a logical conclusion to the conversation rather than one party saying, "We're done here."

What might be of more concern for you is your eagerness to work. You may need to get out of desperation mode to be able to leverage your strengths in the negotiation. One way of doing that is to take a lower-paying temporary job while you look for a better job.

Another way is to do some soul-searching about what is making you so eager that it has become an obstacle to negotiations. Sometimes, it's as easy as telling yourself that there will be more job opportunities. Other times, you have to think and talk deeply about your fear (because there truly will be more opportunities).

Mark: Trial offer, like an intern ship.

Jeri: Yes, great example of offering the employer a sample. I usually think of a sample as a shorter-term project, but if you have the time for an internship, get in there and make yourself indispensable!

Anonymous: How do you manage applications that specifically ask for your last salary, avoiding the opportunity to negotiate?

Jeri: First, find out if filling out the application is mandatory. Can you get around it if you hand carry your resume to them in person, for example?

If the application is required, find out if you can leave the salary blank.

If it is required, then fill it in accurately.

Just because they now know your last salary doesn't mean you can't negotiate.

Your job is still to persuade them that the expertise on your resume is worth what you're asking in salary. Talk about how your skills match the requirements of the job description. Talk about the value-added skills you bring to the table.

If you have to start at a lower salary than you desire, are they willing to schedule a 3-month or 6-month review? What criteria would make it possible for you to receive a raise at that time to bring you up to the level you desire?

Anonymous: How do you negotiate vacation time if you used to have 4 weeks off?

Jeri: Figure out what they are offering that you don't want, and tell them that you will trade that benefit for 4 weeks off. You will have to do the math to figure out a benefit that has an equivalent value to them.

Or you can find out what they want more and offer it to them in return for more time off.

My husband and I used to work for the same company. When I started there, one of the stipulations of my employment was that I could take my vacation at the same time he did. Since we agreed to work weekend evenings, they said OK.

Mark: Percentage of the company - enter into a partnership.

Jeri: Good example of a benefit that could be offered or negotiated for.

Anonymous: What if the salaries listed are below what I have made in the past?

Jeri: You could try searching on equivalent titles to see if the results are any different.

Barring that, you will need to present evidence that you are worth the higher salary. Your resume should be doing part of this work for you by giving examples of your best accomplishments. Think of and rehearse more accomplishment stories that you can use during an interview to show how well your skills match their requirements.

Moving to a different country or region can result in radically different salaries for the same job. If that is the case, compare cost-of-living numbers in each place. You may find that the lower salary will buy as much in the new place as the higher salary did in the old place.

Anonymous: Can you talk a little bit about the difference between children's expenses and family obligations?

Jeri: You can certainly use the categories in whatever way you wish. In my mind, children's expenses might be something outside the normal food-clothing-medical expenses, such as private school tuition. A family obligation might be chipping in with other family members to pay for Grandma's car repair. These categories aren't set in stone. Change them to fit your family's situation.

Lavonda: Should people ask for salaries that meet the market? Even if you total all your needs, the salary for the position may not meet your needs.

Great question! This is where you have to use a combination of common sense and research. Your research is going to tell you the range of salaries paid for the position you want. Let's say for the sake of argument you're a mid-career administrative assistant in Minnesota. The salary range is between \$45,000 and \$59,000. But you're a single parent with four teenagers, and your annual family budget is \$65,000.

You can make the best argument you can for a salary of \$65,000 (which includes nothing about your four kids or your mortgage and everything about how smoothly your last office ran because you took on all sorts of extra duties.)

If that doesn't work, you need an additional job, another type of job that pays more, or to cut your annual expenses.

Sometimes, this is the time people get more education. That decision usually hinges on the return on investment:

- Will you actually make more money with more education? When I considered it a few years ago, the answer was no. I was already making more money than some of my colleagues with more education than I had.
- Is there enough time left in your career to pay off college loans and still have a good income? In your 30s, this may be a no-brainer. After that, it depends.
- Are there grants and loans available to me? Some educational institutions have very attractive tuition assistance plans.

Mark: Possible Commissions, Part Time Job Income

Jeri: Good additions to the Income column!