

Tips from a former recruiter on how to negotiate salaries

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I learned a lot about salary negotiations when I was a recruiter. My job was to negotiate a win/win situation for both the hiring manager and the person wanting the job. It is easier to negotiate on behalf of someone else, because it can be done objectively. But there are some guidelines which everyone can use for doing their own negotiations.

What is the salary range for the position?

Every hiring manager has a salary range in mind for hiring someone. Sometimes it is set by the Human Resources department based on certain criteria. Sometimes the hiring manager does his/her best to find a range that is competitive in the local market and suitable in comparison to the existing salary ranges within the company.

Your ability to negotiate a starting salary depends on how flexible the company's policies are. A typical range will cover \$5,000 to \$10,000, such as \$50,000 - \$60,000. You may or may not be able to get information on the specific range for the job you want. This is where inside information from someone you know at the company can be helpful!

What are the criteria for high and low positions in the range?

The hiring manager will consider different factors in deciding what salary is appropriate within the available range. Here are some examples of factors to be considered:

Education

Professional training / certifications

Number of years relevant functional experience

Number of years relevant industry experience

Number of staff previously supervised

Special abilities such as being fluent bilingual

Where should I be in the salary range?

When you are interviewing, ask questions that may help you get an idea about what the hiring manager considers to be the most important for someone to be successful in this position. If you have experience you believe is comparable to formal education, you will want to be clear about this. What criteria do you think are relevant for this position, and how do you compare?

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How do I answer the questions “What salary are you looking for?”

You don't need to answer with a specific number. Instead, you can say, “Well, I know you must have a salary range you are considering for this position. I believe I should be at the top of your range because I bring x, y, and z.”

Or, if you don't think you should be at the top of the range, you can say, “Well, I probably wouldn't be at the top of your range, because I don't have insurance industry experience. But, I know I have everything else to do this job well. So, I would like to request a salary review in six months, because I will have learned about the insurance industry during that time.”

So, think about the salary range rather than a specific target salary. Then you can discuss what you bring that justifies your placement within that range. Don't forget to ask for a 6-month review if you are lacking something that can be quickly learned.

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