

# Negotiating a Job Offer? Here's How to Get What You Want.

by

• [Kristi DePaul](#)

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I was in the backyard when my cell phone rang with my first-ever, full-time job offer. It was summer 2007, a few months before the U.S. would enter the Great Recession. On the other end of the line was my hiring manager, sharing the happy news: I'd been selected to join the communications team at a university I admired.

He gave me a brief rundown of the salary and benefits. My head was spinning in all directions. This was my moment to ask for exactly what I wanted. I had read *Women Don't Ask* cover to cover and had even studied with negotiation experts in grad school. But in the excitement of landing an offer, all that faded away.

In the end, I made a naïve move. I took the job without asking for a noticeably higher salary or even a signing bonus. Looking back, I realize money was only one part of what I could have negotiated.

Sadly, this is something many of us botch in the early stages of our careers, and often, it's because we aren't suitably prepared.

To help you champion what matters most the next time you find yourself pondering a job offer, I've spoken with four experts and have some advice from my own experience as well.

## Know That Salary Is Not the Only Negotiable

Whether explicitly mentioned or not, compensation packages always come with other benefits woven in. It doesn't matter if you're negotiating a job offer or trying to wriggle in benefits during a performance appraisal — know that there is almost always more up for grabs.

The perks that are available to you will vary based on your experience level, role, and the company. Here's a sampling of what you can potentially negotiate for beyond salary:

- A different start date (if you want a little break before you begin)
- Greater 401(k) contribution (in the U.S.)
- More vacation or paid time off (PTO)
- Flexible hours or work-from-home days (post-Covid)
- Relocation to another branch or office
- A signing bonus (this may be tied to relocation, if that isn't covered)
- A performance bonus later in the year
- Equity percentages or stock options
- Home office set-up stipends
- Phone, Internet, or co-working space reimbursements
- Professional development or external training opportunities

- Ability to present at industry conferences
- Onsite child care
- A direct report or budget for freelance talent
- A better job title (to boost your resume)
- Reimbursement of travel expenses

## Do Your Homework

Now you know what you can ask for, but you're not ready to jump into a negotiation just yet. If you want to walk away with more than you had, there is some pre-work to be done.

Start by researching your prospective employer. Sites like Glassdoor or Fishbowl can give a glimpse into what it's like to work at most organizations, including salaries for various roles, benefits, and culture. But if you put in a little more effort, you can learn much more about what factors into a job offer.

Fotini Iconomopolous, a negotiation coach and author of the forthcoming book *Say Less, Get More*, emphasized the importance of personal outreach. "Prior to going into the negotiation, try to get advice from a diverse group of professionals," she told me. "If you are a woman, don't only seek advice from other women about salary ranges. You want to learn what a variety of people are making to avoid further widening the gender pay gap. If you come from academia, find someone with corporate experience to give you a few tips. It will add another angle to your strategy."

If you don't have immediate connections that you feel comfortable seeking advice from, consider looking into your university alumni network. Fellow alumni may be willing to help you practice your negotiation skills and can recommend others who'd be relevant for you to chat with as well.

Career and negotiation expert Alexandra Dickinson added that getting good at negotiating is like building a new muscle — the more you do it, the better you will become. She suggested speaking to three men and three women in a role similar to the one that you're seeking. The more knowledge you have, and the more you practice, the more confident you will become.

This is key because confidence will help you stay calm and centered should your stress levels rise during the actual conversation.

## Identify Your Negotiables and Non-negotiables

Knowing what you are and aren't willing to compromise *prior* to entering a negotiation can help you make clearer asks, and sometimes, figure out if a role is right for you in the first place.

Here's a simple task: Make a Venn diagram to figure out where your personal and professional goals converge. Whatever objectives lie in that area of overlap are your non-negotiables. These are your dealbreakers, your red lines where no agreement can be reached. It could be staying geographically close to your loved ones, flexible work hours, onsite child care, or a salary over 70K. Whatever they are, it's best not to compromise on these points.

"I've seen early career professionals who think that they have a lack of leverage accept low pay or conditions that leave them little trajectory for growth," Dr. Shira Mor, an executive educator at Mona Lisa Consulting, told me. "Those decisions have an exponential impact over the course of their career."

For instance, if an employer requires you to work weekends or is only willing to offer you minimum paid time off (PTO) — and that will cause serious complications for you — it's what Mor calls a "no-go," or an indicator that it's time to walk away.

"If you don't set the walk-away number or precedent, you could wind up negotiating yourself down," Dickinson said. While you may not be a superstar in your field (yet), you also need to be your own biggest supporter out of the gate. "Don't assume that your age or experience level mean you shouldn't advocate for what you want," she said.

Accepting circumstances that make you miserable can have a negative impact on your wellbeing, productivity, and performance.

## Start from a Place of Agreement

We most often fail to get what we want when we enter a negotiation with the wrong mindset. "Ninety-eight percent of the time, we begin by pushing, believing it'll lead to the other side budging," said Dr. Jonah Berger, a professor of marketing at the Wharton School and author of book *The Catalyst*. "But people aren't furniture. They push back, dig their heels in."

Catalysts, Berger explained, create change by mitigating obstacles. In your own negotiation, think about how you can be a catalyst. What barriers can you remove to make it easier for the hiring manager to change course and agree with you?

The first step, Berger told me, is to emphasize the things you have in common. You might start by saying, "I'm thrilled about this offer and I really want to work with you. I know you've interviewed dozens of people and chose me, so it's great to be in a place where *we both want the same thing*." This removes you from an adversarial footing and invites the hiring manager to be more candid, viewing you as part of the same team.

The next step is to determine what the other person cares about. The hiring manager has stakes in the conversation too, Berger explained. Ask yourself: What do they need to achieve right now? Maybe it's filling a much-needed skills gap in an overburdened

marketing team or demonstrating to company leadership that they're able to source specialized technical talent.

Knowing that, how can you get what you want? "For example, you might care a lot about choosing your work hours throughout the week," Berger said, "and if you understand where the hiring manager can give you leeway and where they can't, you can more easily suggest a compromise — like trading off travel opportunities, a gym membership, or another stipend for more flexible hours."

Whatever you're after, make the ask. Then, listen actively to the hiring manager's response. If they shut you down, reply in a non-defensive way, such as, "Oh, that's interesting. Can you tell me more about the reasoning behind that?" By asking the right questions, you can start to guide the discussion, understand limitations, and possibly use that knowledge to come to a compromise.

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## **Take Culture into Consideration**

Finally, Mor advises to remember that not all negotiations occur in a Western context. In multinational corporations, these exchanges can look really different. In Israel and other parts of the Middle East, for instance, your relationships and reputation matter most. Emotions take center stage, and showing respect is paramount.

Jobseekers in these regions or in negotiations with those from this part of the world need to focus first on building trust and a relationship. During your initial conversation, expect you and the hiring manager to focus on learning more about each other's careers, aspirations, and generally getting to know one another. Mor advised to avoid launching into specifics on that first call, as it can be jarring to jump into granular details before laying down an interpersonal foundation.

Above all, remember that the moment you've been selected for a job, you need to think about how you will advocate for yourself in the new role. Salary may initially seem like the most important thing, but use the above advice to get the most out of your offer. There are ways to collaboratively unearth ideal outcomes — both for you and your next employer.

Reference

(HBR) Harvard Business Review

<https://hbr.org/2020/12/negotiating-a-job-offer-heres-how-to-get-what-you-want>