

The Salary Question and Negotiation

The general rule is that you should not be the one to first mention salary. Prior to the interview, you should have an idea of the salary you are expecting and/or are prepared to accept. If you are new to a field and have no real idea what would be an appropriate salary, there are some ways to gather this information:

- Speak to other students or people in the same or similar occupations
- Review the graduate survey data and other resources available in the Career Centre
- Conduct Internet research and scan newspapers for salary listings for similar jobs
- Review the salary information available at the following websites:
 - Service Canada website is a good source of salary data
www.labourmarketinformation.ca
 - Job Futures - www.jobfutures.ca
 - www.workopolis.com, click on 'Find Salary Info'

If you are asked 'What salary are you expecting?', you do not want to simply blurt out a number. Your initial response should be to subtly 'throw' the question back to the interviewer. You are not avoiding the question and you do not want to respond, 'What are you offering?' or 'My salary is negotiable.' An employer may actually want to gauge your salary range and/or determine if you have realistic expectations. Before you 'throw it back' you want to establish that you are professional and have a salary in mind, but you also want to hear what they have to offer first. A simple way to 'throw it back' would be:

'Although I am new to this field, I have done some homework (**you must be prepared to briefly indicate what this homework entailed**). I have an idea of the salary range I think is appropriate. I was, however, wondering what you were offering?'

At this point, the employer may decide to let the topic drop and/or indicate this is something you could discuss at a later date. If the employer does indicate a salary, you could simply respond by saying 'that is interesting' or 'that is certainly something to think about' and that you would be 'interested in discussing salary when there is an offer on the table'. If the interviewer insists that you 'name your price', you may request additional information (hours, benefits, responsibilities) and ask for some time to consider all the information (24 - 48 hours is generally appropriate).

When actually indicating a salary expectation, it is best to have a range in mind. Below are very basic guidelines to help you select salary ranges.

For summer or part-time positions which pay an hourly wage,

- Under \$15 per hour, select a range differentiated by three to four dollars per hour
- Over \$15 per hour, select a range differentiated by four to five dollars per hour

For ongoing, full-time positions with annual salaries:

- Under \$35,000, you could select a range differentiated by \$4,000 - \$5,000 per

annum

- \$35,000-\$50,000, select a range differentiated by \$5,000 - \$6,000 per annum
- Over \$50,000, select a range differentiated by \$5,000 - \$8,000 per annum

If you know the minimum salary you are willing to consider, use that salary as the base during salary negotiations (do not state this base to the employer, simply use it as a guide for your negotiations). For example, if you are not willing to work for less than \$30,000 and you think the job will pay \$32,000 - \$35,000, you could suggest a salary range from \$31,000 to \$36,000.

Apart from salary, there may be other factors or 'benefits' you are equally interested in negotiating. Listed below are some common areas often considered as negotiable:

- Money
 - Salary (about a 5% range)
 - Signing bonus and/or performance bonus
 - Stock options and/or shares
 - Severance packages
- Perks
 - Accelerated salary review
 - Flexible hours
 - Relocation expenses
 - Additional vacation time
 - Training and education reimbursement
 - Expenses (clothing allowance, Internet access, vehicle leasing)
 - Professional membership fees and club membership fees

Prior to any negotiation, you should identify and prioritize the items most important to you. Ask yourself, 'Is an extra week of paid vacation more important than an additional \$1,000 in base pay'? If you are unhappy about the salary offered, but decide you still want the job, negotiating an early salary review or a performance bonus can compensate for a lower salary.

Generally, two rounds of negotiations are considered appropriate. The initial offer, a counter offer, (round one), a follow-up offer and one final negotiation (round two). Dragging negotiations on and negotiating over small details can appear petty and may, in the long run, leave a mutually bad impression.

If you are negotiating with two employers at the same time, it is appropriate to indicate this. Avoid 'playing one employer against the other'. You may want to be careful about the impression that 'ping-pong' negotiations might leave on all involved. Determine an opening offer from each employer, then approach one employer and negotiate a counter offer. You may then approach the other employer and negotiate a counter offer. You want to avoid more than two rounds with each employer.

Before accepting an offer, inform the employer whose offer you are rejecting, that you have decided to accept another offer (do not use this as a negotiating tactic unless it is true). If this employer makes a third offer you may consider it, but do not enter the discussion trying to elicit yet another offer.

There are many relevant books on this topic available in the Career Centre and related information on the Web. In addition, the Career Centre has an excellent video on salary negotiation. If you are not certain how to conduct a salary negotiation, you are welcome to arrange an appointment with a Career Consultant and discuss your options.

or her. Therefore, when facing a structured interview, you must know your agenda (what it is you want them to know about you) and present your strengths and accomplishments wherever and whenever possible.

Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews are a common type of interview and tend to be less formal and more conversational in nature. While an interviewer may have the latitude in this type of interview to examine certain issues more freely, the onus is on the candidate to effectively communicate his/her strengths and interest in the position.

Telephone Interviews

Because of the absence of visual contact between you and your interviewer(s), telephone interviews pose a unique challenge. You must sell yourself with only your voice and your words. On the other hand, there are some advantages to telephone interviews. You can keep a copy of your résumé in front of you to help you summarize your most relevant skills and achievements. You can also write out answers to anticipated questions and any questions you have ahead of time. This way, you will be sure to include all the information you want to address during the interview.

All the guidelines for a face-to-face interview apply to telephone interviews. Tips for telephone interviews include:

- Be prepared and plan for the call. Set up your environment to be quiet and free from distractions.
- You should be ready with quick, interesting statements indicating the benefits of hiring you.
- Keep your résumé, answers to anticipated questions and a list of questions in front of you (but be careful not to shuffle papers noisily).
- Have a pen and paper handy to write down any comments or questions.
- Answer questions in short sentences. Short sentences are usually more readily understood as opposed to long, rambling explanations.
‘Check in’ with the listener more frequently by asking a question such as ‘would you like me to expand on that’ or ‘would you like another example?’
- Shorter replies also allow for more interchange between you and the employer, keeping the interview more lively and interesting.
- Just as in a face-to-face interview, answer questions concisely and courteously. Give the interviewer your undivided attention.
- Avoid the use of cellular or portable telephones.
- Smile. Smiling tends to make you sound energetic, enthusiastic and relaxed.
- At the end of the interview, invite the interviewer to call you if there are any further questions he/she may have.

Second Interviews

Many offers of employment are not made until after a second interview. This is especially true of on-campus interviews. Second interviews vary in terms of their content, purpose and structure.

Being granted a second interview means that you are one step closer to getting the job. These interviews may be more intense because you will likely be meeting with people who are more closely involved in the decision-making process. However, a second interview is not a sure sign that an employer is going to offer you a position. In fact, second interviews can serve a variety of purposes.

- To give the organization an opportunity to assess the candidate more thoroughly
- To permit the organization to delve more deeply into possible areas of concern raised during the previous interview
- To allow the organization to sell itself to the candidate so an offer of employment will be accepted

When arranging a second interview, it is both acceptable and recommended that you inquire as to whom you will be seeing, the length and format the second interview will take and the nature of any testing that might be included. On-site interviews may include:

- An initial interview with someone from the office
- A tour of the office, plant or facility
- Interviews with the supervisor to whom you would report if hired and more senior executives of the organization
- Tests and/or simulations
- A chance to talk with someone recently hired by the organization (sometimes a Laurier graduate) and lunch and/or dinner with a representative of the organization. (If the representative orders an alcoholic beverage with his/her meal, it is acceptable for you to do so as well. However, it is advisable to avoid alcohol.)

Some organizations reimburse candidates for any travel, lodging and meal expenses incurred by attending the second interview. Therefore, it is recommended that these expenses are kept to a minimum. Some candidates have experienced multiple interviews with the same organization. Keep receipts of all expenses incurred throughout the interviewing process. If the organization does not offer to reimburse your expenses, it is not a good idea to ask them to do so.

A second interview held on site may take as little as an hour or as long as a full day. You should only book one second interview per day, even if it is only scheduled to take a couple of hours. The process can be exhausting and you want to be fresh for every interview.

The following are some tips for second interviews:

- Be aware that you may be asked the same questions by several of the people you

- meet during the second interview session. Always respond as if it is the first time you have heard the question and always be consistent with your answers.
- At some point you may be discussing salaries; have an idea what the job is worth. If it is a contract position, calculate your acceptable range in yearly, monthly and hourly rates (i.e., \$42,000/year = \$3,500/month = \$23.00/hour).

Receptions and Dining Interviews

Many employers are opting to meet candidates in less structured environments to gauge a candidate's interpersonal skills and their ability to deal with novel situations and people. Subsequently, it is not uncommon, particularly during on-campus recruiting, for candidates to be invited to attend a reception or dinner. These events may occur prior to a first interview or between a first and second interview.

Generally, you will be invited to attend an event which may include a presentation, a casual reception and/or a sit-down dinner. The key to success at these events is to be prepared to mingle and initiate contact with others. To assist you in preparing for these events, the Career Centre offers a workshop on etiquette appropriate for receptions and dining situations. You may also review related books in the Career Centre, search for information over the Internet or meet with a Career Consultant to discuss these situations.

Part V - Interview Follow-up

Follow-up

Immediately following the interview, you should contact your references. Inform them of the points which seemed to be of particular interest to the interviewer and details of the position. This allows your references to provide potential employers with the most relevant information.

It is strongly recommended that follow-up occur within 24 to 48 hours of the interview. Make a follow-up 'check-list' and record items such as:

- Interviewer's name (correct spelling) and title
- Telephone number, fax number or email
- Organization, division or department
- Time, date and length of interview
- Next steps to take (include a due date after each heading)
- Follow-up letter to interviewer(s)
- Follow-up telephone call
- Thank-you letter, card or telephone call to the person who referred you to this position (if applicable)

On a separate sheet of paper, write down details about the interview itself. This information can be used in writing a brief follow-up letter and to strategize about future actions to take.

- Most important aspects of the job as presented by the interviewer
- Interviewer's key concerns and how you responded to them
- Any questions for which you were unprepared
- Things you wish you had said, but did not
- Things you said, but wish you had not
- How you could have improved the interview
- Questions you forgot to ask about the position and the organization (may be a potential follow-up question)
- Issues raised by the interviewer which may help in re-writing or clarifying your résumé

Tip - Remember to appreciate your network. If a colleague, friend, family member or other person referred you to the organization or arranged a personal introduction with an interviewer, be sure to drop that person a note of thanks.

Interview Follow-up Letter

Consider the follow-up letter an extension of your interview. A typed or handwritten (if you have exceptional handwriting) letter is a professional way to follow up. Express your thanks for having met with the interviewer and stress your interest in the position. Mention something specific from the interview so that your letter does not have that 'form letter' feel. Clarify any points which you feel are particularly relevant or that you did not articulate well in the interview (one or two points maximum). Send the letter within 24 hours of the interview and keep it interesting, relevant and brief. Remember, this is not another cover letter or letter of application. (Please refer to the Career Centre's **Résumé Guidebook** for sample letters.)

Follow-up Telephone Call

Often the interviewer will tell you when a hiring decision will be made. If you have not received any information from the employer by the date stated (or within 10 working days if no date is stated), a follow-up telephone call is quite appropriate. Confirm that the follow-up letter was received and then inquire as to the status of the employer's decision or the scheduling of second interviews. Ask any questions which you may have developed since the interview (make sure that they are intelligent and relevant) and suggest the possibility of a second meeting.

The Job Offer

Accepting an Offer

If you wish to accept a job offer, advise the employer as soon as possible. Often the offer will be verbal and followed up by a written offer. If you receive a verbal offer, it is appropriate to request a written copy of the job offer. Read the written offer carefully. If it is acceptable, either sign the form provided or prepare a written response in letter format which outlines your understanding of the terms of the offer and your acceptance. Return it to the employer at your

earliest convenience. If you have any questions about the terms, check with the employer or a lawyer before signing the offer. If you are interested in negotiating any items in the job offer, this should be undertaken prior to agreeing, either verbally or in writing, to a job offer.

Postponing an Offer

Chances are you may want some time to review a job offer or to complete interviews with other organizations before making a decision on a job offer you have received. If you require some time and the offer has been extended verbally, thank the employer and ask if he/she will be sending you a written offer. If yes, you have bought some time. If not or if the offer has been extended in writing, let the employer know you are very interested in the position but ask if you could have some time to think it over to ensure you are making the right decision. It is certainly acceptable to request 24 to 48 hours to consider a job offer. However, if you require more time, be sure to specify a date by which you could reply. A request for time to consider an offer is common and most employers will be understanding of this.

Most employers who participate in on-campus recruiting adhere to CACEE (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers) guidelines on acceptance dates. Employers are requested to provide a reasonable amount of time for students to respond to job offers; that is, three to four weeks from the date of the offer for positions available upon graduation.

Rejecting an Offer

Should you decide to reject an offer, be tactful. You never know when you will come in contact with the organization again. Express your appreciation for the job offer and decline gracefully. Decline in writing and keep a copy of your letter.

Rejection

While it often feels like the end of the world, not getting the job offer should be taken in stride. The reality is that you may have done nothing wrong and were a strong second-place candidate. So be kind to yourself. Always ask the interviewer if he/she has time to provide you with feedback on the strong points and the weak areas of your qualifications and your interview performance. Then use the information gained to improve your résumé and future interview skills. While this information may be primarily important for you to improve your skills, it also conveys to the employer a sense of interest and professionalism which might make them remember you in the future -- hopefully when another position is available. Keep your follow-up checklist and interview notes on this organization for future reference.

Final Tips

- **Know yourself, the organization and the position**
- **Prepare an agenda with relevant STARR examples**
- **Offer clear, focused, informative, logical and concise answers**
- **Demonstrate that you understand the components of key skills**
- **Clearly outline your skills and indicate how and why they are relevant**
- **Demonstrate enthusiasm, interest and knowledge**
- **Never offer anything negative, but if asked about something negative, always end your answer on a positive note.**

While this booklet covers many of the important aspects of how to succeed at an interview, please visit the Career Centre if you still have questions or want more information.