

CBAT CAREER SERVICES: SALARY NEGOTIATION

For Entry Level Job Seekers:

- Accept that you are typically not in a “good place” to negotiate salary. Many companies have rigid starting salaries and candidates have little opportunity to negotiate.
- If employers bring up salary early in the interviewing process, tactfully suggest that you are excited about learning more about the position and the company at this stage in the process. If the company really wants some sort of salary data from you, provide salary ranges in lieu of a specific salary. Industry salary ranges are helpful here.
- Evaluate the risk. If you hope to negotiate, recognize that no matter how careful and tactful you are, your efforts could backfire with the company withdrawing any previous offers.
- Look at the “big picture.” If you cannot negotiate salary, you may be able to enhance your benefits package. Or maybe you will be the recipient of a “signing bonus” which enhances your base salary. Ask if the company will pay moving expenses if you are relocating to a new city.
- Look at the “big picture” again. Are there other incentives that “silently” raise your salary like tuition reimbursement, membership to fitness centers, or onsite daycare centers?
- Evaluate your candidacy honestly. Did you engage in a co-op while attending college, completing a year of work experience—or two!—by the time you graduated? If so, you may be in a better position to negotiate than the student who just completed a three month summer internship.

If you decide to proceed with negotiation, you must

- Research salary for your position very carefully. Use tools such as Salary Wizard on Monster.com or other salary calculators on Collegegrad.com or on Salary.com. Most of these tools will take geography, industry, and position level into consideration. In general, salaries for the tri-cities region are about 10-12% below national averages. (If you review figures from the National Association of Colleges and Employers Salary Survey, keep in mind that these numbers are national averages and are far higher than salaries we typically see in East Tennessee.) Also consult salary calculators which may be offered by professional organizations in your field. Talk to faculty who may have insights into fair salaries for your specific position.
- Talk to new professionals in your chosen field for anecdotal salary information.
- Work with salary ranges as you have more room to negotiate with a range. (Most companies will have a high end and a low end for each particular position. **Your ability to command a higher salary will correlate with where you are in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities for the position in question.** For example, if you have fairly basic skills, then be realistic in recognizing that you will most likely command a salary at the lower end of the range for your position.)

- Assemble your “case,” providing evidence to support your pursuit of a higher starting salary. How do you add value to this organization in ways that your peers cannot? What unique skills can you bring to your position? How have you added value to previous organizations? Point to quantifiable results if you have them.
- Cut your losses. If the company indicates that they are not willing to negotiate, accept this or run the risk of having the offer withdrawn.
- **Recognize that you will be in a much better position to negotiate your salary after you have been on board with the company for a year.** Hopefully, your work performance and commitment to the company will produce real results for the employer which you can parlay into “salary results” for you.
- If you have navigated the salary negotiation process successfully, ask for the newly agreed upon offer in writing. (The company may simply amend your original offer letter.)

A Script for Negotiation (copied verbatim from “The Salary Negotiation Process,” Crummer Rollins Career Management Center):

Candidate: *“I want to say again how extremely pleased I am to have the opportunity to work with you and this organization. However, I would like to discuss the compensation, as it is less than I had expected.”*

Employer: *“What did you have in mind?”*

Candidate: *“First I’d like to know how you arrived at this compensation to make sure I understand the salary structure. I want this to work for both of us.”*

Employer responds and the candidate answers: *“I understand the organization prefers to bring new college graduates in at the lower end of the range for this position because they typically lack the experience which warrants a higher salary. However, I feel my four co-op experiences within this industry plus my leading edge technical skills command a higher salary.”*

To summarize, be prepared by doing your research; be realistic based on your knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience; finally, and most importantly, be diplomatic, respectful, and deferential throughout this process.

RESOURCES:

“Entry-Level Salary (Probably) Isn’t as Negotiable as You Think” by Peter Vogt at <http://career-advice.monster.com/salary-negotiation/entry-level-jobs>

“Step-by-Step Guide to Negotiating a Great Salary” by Kim Lankford at <http://career-advice.monster.com/salary-negotiations/Step-by-Step-Guide-to-Negotiating>

“Salary Negotiation” by Crummer Rollins Career Center at http://www.crummer.rollins.edu/career_management/skills/salary.PDF

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