



Salary Advice

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By Kevin Paul

Some lawyers will go through their careers never having to talk about salary. They may be accustomed to negotiating large business deals but have no idea how to handle salary discussions when looking for new jobs. Many people fall into the trap of not planning for the salary questions. This is a huge mistake, and if you make it, you could end up accepting a job that pays less than you are worth. Along with the typical interview preparation, it is imperative to take some time to get ready for salary talk. A few minutes of preparation can add thousands of dollars to your eventual offer.

If you are interviewing with large firms, chances are there won't be much guessing when it comes to pay. However, for mid-sized to small firms, or even in-house positions, salaries offered can be all over the place. When looking for a job in a small to mid-sized firm or in a company, it is particularly important to remember the number-one rule of salary negotiation: whoever mentions a figure first loses. This is a well-recognized rule that has been cited in several career counseling books. When there is a guessing game to be played, you always want the other person to reveal his or her cards first.

As the candidate, you will want to put off mentioning salary for as long as possible. The goal is to let the firm or company see how wonderful you are first. Sometimes this is easier said than done. Oftentimes the sooner salary is mentioned by an interviewer, the less flexibility you will have in negotiations. This does not mean you cannot make an attempt to put things off. If the issue comes up early, it is completely reasonable to request more information about the position, the duties, etc. Also, if you are comfortable, it is fair to ask what salary the employer had in mind. At the very least, if you can get the employer to mention a range, you will have something to work with. Based on the employer's response, you can create your own range, taking a figure in the middle of the range suggested and making that the lowest figure you will accept. Then, find a reasonable number above the range, and make that your highest figure.

There are certain employers who will be less inclined to negotiate. Because of this, you will want to have an absolute minimum in mind or a range of your own. This can be determined by doing research. There are countless websites devoted to listing average salaries for certain professions. It may be helpful to check job search websites to get an idea of what similar firms or companies are offering for similar levels of experience. Of course, you still need to keep in mind your bottom line. Inquire about bonuses, vacation, and other benefits that have an impact on the value of the salary offer, as well.



After all is said and done, there are a few people out there for whom negotiation is not an option. They may have maximums in mind, and you may walk into “take it or leave it” situations. In these rarest of rare cases, negotiations are simple. You simply have to evaluate whether the salary offered is acceptable to you.

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In the end, salary negotiation is never fun. There are those out there who will be fortunate enough to never have to sit down and discuss salary during an interview. However, it only takes a few minutes to prepare for the discussion. People will prepare answers for every interview question in the book and forget to think about the salary being offered. For some, salary negotiation seems to be an exercise in futility. However, it's wrong to think you have no power to determine the salary you are offered. A successful negotiation can yield positive results. You only have no power if you don't plan ahead.