

NEGOTIATING YOUR OFFER

While lawyers are trained to be great negotiators for their clients, very few are prepared to negotiate their own salaries and employment offers upon graduation from law school or when changing employment. This is made more complicated by the fact that there is no standard employment package in the legal field, so offers will vary greatly depending on the type, size and location of the employer. This guide attempts to highlight things you should consider when negotiating your offer for legal employment.

I. Know the Market

In the legal profession doing adequate research is essential before addressing any issue. This is also true for negotiating your offer. It is vital that you first research and get to know the market especially compensation levels for your type of employer.

In addition you need to know what someone of your skill level and years of experience is making in the market. You must also know what you can afford. Make a budget for yourself taking into consideration expenses, student loans and bills. Then determine the absolute minimum salary you can afford.

Also, you need to research your particular employer and determine that employer's history of making offers, what the benefits package includes and what approach is used in making offers. You need to figure out if they have a set package based on years and experience or if they negotiate each situation differently.

II. Know the Deal

It is important to remember when you are negotiating that salary is not the only thing on the table. You want to be sure that you are getting a complete and fair benefits package. Having done your research you should be somewhat familiar with what your employer might offer. However, below is a list of things to consider in your deal:

1. bar exam fees
2. annual bar/license fees
3. bar membership fees
4. malpractice insurance
5. continuing legal education expenses
6. pension plan
7. health insurance
8. disability insurance
9. bonuses (end of year, quarterly)
10. loan repayment benefits
11. partnership track (equity, non-equity)
12. paid vacation

13. paid sick leave
14. moving expenses
15. social events
16. parking
17. stock options
18. termination/severance
19. profit sharing plan

III. Know the Skill

Negotiating is a skill that must be executed carefully and knowledgeably. When negotiating a job offer be sure to negotiate from a position of strength (knowing the market and knowing how to market yourself) and know how to approach the issues you must resolve. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. **Discussing Compensation:** Do not discuss compensation until you have received the offer. Never ask during an interview the salary for the position.
2. **Throwing out Figures:** Do not be the first to offer an expected salary. Let the employer give the first figure. If you are placed in the position where the employer forces your hand on the issue be sure to give a salary range based on your research.
3. **Asks questions:** Do not be afraid to ask for particular details about your package and do not take for granted that things you believe to be standard will be included.
4. **Accepting the Offer:** Although you may be eager to get a job and start working, resist the urge to accept offers on the spot. Ask for time to consider your offer. During this time be sure that all your questions have been answered. Also, you do not want to look desperate by accepting immediately.

IV. Resources

For more information on negotiating offers and salary please visit the following:

1. www.attorneyjobs.com
2. www.abanet.org/careercounsel
3. www.nalp.com
4. www.usajobs.opm.gov
5. www.greedyassociates.com
6. www.salaryexpert.com
7. www.salarysurvey.com
8. www.vault.com