

# Navigating Job Offers

This may be your first offer for employment that you have ever received, or just one of many in your professional life. If you are one of the lucky ones, you may be trying to compare multiple offers. In either case, it is important to know how to evaluate a job offer.

## Things to Consider

Consider the work that you will be doing, organizational culture and fit with your interests and values, geographic area, salary, and other factors before making your decision to accept or reject an offer. Below you will find some aspects of an offer which should be given thought; you must determine how those aspects will be weighted to produce the job acceptance that will provide you satisfaction.

- **The Industry:** History of growth; Degree of dependence on business trends or cycles.
- **The Organization:** Prestige and reputation; Growth potential; Size; Financial stability; The management team.
- **The Job Itself:** Training program; Day-to-day activities; Amount of stress or pressure; Requirements to relocate, travel or work long hours; Responsibility, autonomy, room for advancement; Salary and benefits package; Involvement with good supervisor, peer associates; Physical environment; Social significance of work.
- **Lifestyle Factors:** Comfort with goals, philosophy of organization; Geographic location (see the cost of living comparison calculator on the right); Recreational and educational facilities, cultural opportunities; Proximity of educational institutions for further study.

Few, if any, organizations will provide all that you would like to have in your "ideal" job, and you should know the factors where you can make comfortable compromises as opposed to those that must be met. You will make a number of changes during the course of your career; while it is important to you and to the organization that you

choose as wisely as possible, it is more important that you commit yourself to solid and consistent performance on the job once you are there.

Most employers do not consider a salary offer to new college graduates to be negotiable. However, graduate students, especially those with work experience, may have some latitude in negotiating salary or other benefits.

Some employers make identical offers to all new college hires or will differentiate slightly within a salary range based on the caliber of the university attended, relevant experience, major, GPA, and similar factors. An employer does not know which new hires will be successful and will often prefer to start all recent graduates at the same or very similar salaries and reward them later with raises or promotions based on performance.

Employers expect students to base their acceptance decision on the job responsibilities and opportunity for advancement in addition to entry salary. Still, it is possible that the salary offer from your first choice organization is substantially lower than other offers you have from similar organizations. If this is the only obstacle to your acceptance, you may want to discuss it with the person making the offer. You may say something to the effect of, "I'm very excited about this opportunity, but I have higher offers for the same type of position. Is there a possibility that you might match the offer?? If told that the organization cannot do that, you might then say, "Of course, salary is only one of the factors I'm using to make a decision. Could you give me more details about the salary package? With good performance, when would I be eligible for my first increase, and what amount might I expect?" This gives the employer an opportunity to tell you about rapid salary progression or to explore whether the salary can be increased.

Those who have significant work experience (full-time for at least one year), may want to approach the employer with "My previous experience has prepared me to do accelerated work with your organization. Because of this added value I am bringing, I would like to you to consider increasing the offer by .? Alternatively, you could say "Having researched salary averages and ranges for similar positions in this geographic market, I was hoping that you could match the average at .?"

If you have questions about the reasonableness of your offer, you can research averages through resources available online and UCS' First Destination Survey, as well as scheduling an appointment with a UCS counselor. The counselor can help you to review salary averages of recent UNC-Chapel Hill graduates and graduates nationwide. The counselor will also encourage you to take cost of living differences into account.

## **The Job Offer Process**

A job offer is usually made to you over the telephone or by letter. Often it is extended by telephone from the person who will supervise you on the job, and you will receive a

follow-up letter to confirm the details. It is not typical to be offered a job in person, such as at the conclusion of a second interview, although this occasionally occurs.

When offered a position, be enthusiastic and composed. Do not act so nonchalant that the employer doubts the sincerity of your interest. Also, don't respond as if you are surprised to receive the offer. However, it is not advisable to make a decision immediately. Find out when the organization needs you to respond to the offer. If you still have some possible interviews or offers pending, tactfully request more time. You may say, for example, "I'm very excited about this position, but this is a big decision and I have several more interviews scheduled. Could I have until (date) to make a decision?" If this employer is your first choice, you may choose to request a day or two before your final decision.

## **Accepting an Offer**

It is important to be professional and enthusiastic in accepting a job offer. You may accept it over the telephone, but follow up in writing (and ask that the offer be sent to you in writing as well). Send the letter to the person who extended you the offer. Thank him or her and demonstrate your sincere interest in the opportunity. Confirm the terms of the offer (job title, salary, starting date). Concisely summarize what has impressed you most about the position or organization. Close by stating that you look forward to joining the organization.

Once you accept an offer, please complete a follow-up survey, notifying UCS of your plans after graduation.

## **Commitment and Ethics of Accepting An Offer**

Consider carefully before accepting a job or internship offer. It is unethical to continue to interview or accept another offer (?reneg?) if you have given your word that you will work for an organization. A student who has interviewed with UCS who renegs on a job or internship acceptance will be denied further use of University Career Services. Make an appointment with a UCS counselor if you are having trouble with your decision.

## **Rejecting an Offer**

Be gracious when rejecting a job offer. It is possible that some day you will want to change jobs and may be interested in this employer. Thank the person extending the offer and give a brief reason for your rejection. For example, you may have decided to attend graduate school, accepted an offer in your hometown, or taken another offer that you feel is a better fit.

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