

The Salary Issue

What is the right time to bring up the salary issue in an interview and indeed how do you know what salary you should be pitching yourself at? These days all of the traditional rules have been thrown out the window. It is no longer possible to accurately assess what salary you can command in the market place. The uncertainty in the economy has resulted in some job seekers lowering their expectations, thus depressing salaries on offer. Yet bizarrely, employers are finding it difficult to get top quality candidates, with the right mix of experience and the interpersonal skills and are prepared to pay a premium when they find what they want.

What is the right salary?

When starting your job search, you should be as flexible as possible on the salary front. Your aim should be to get in front of clients, impress them so much that salary becomes a secondary issue, thus creating an opportunity for you to negotiate.

If the role is of a contract nature, and you are enhancing your skill set, take a view on the salary. You will be building on your CV and will be moving much closer to getting that perfect permanent role. If the role is permanent and is in a secure sector, then it may be wise to take a little bit of a hit. Look at all of the factors in consideration, before making a decision.

When is the right time to bring it up?

In general terms, salary should be brought up as late as possible in the interview process. Your aim is to get the employer to buy into you and to convince them that you have unique skills that would be an ideal fit to their organisation. Once you have this emotional buy in, then money matters can be discussed. If you are asked your salary expectations in first interview, try to side step the issue by saying that this is an important career move for you and that salary is not the key driver.

Salary negotiation

What should you do if you are offered a salary which falls below your expectations? Just because the opening offer is not what you had hoped does not mean that a mutually beneficial arrangement cannot be reached. As many companies are struggling financially, there may not be much movement on the basic salary but you *could* ask for other concessions. Perhaps you could ask for shorter working hours or more holidays. Would there be a possibility of you working from home? You could ask for a salary review after 6 months? What about structuring a bonus based on your hitting certain targets?.....the possibilities are endless!

Conclusion

When entering the interview arena, keep your focus on what you are offering the employer and why you are the best candidate for the job, saving the salary discussions for the final round. When making your decision, always look at the bigger picture. A small salary decrease in an up and coming company could end up being a very shrewd long term investment in yourself!

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of [Interview Techniques](http://www.interviewtechniques.ie), a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with *Recruit Ireland* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

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