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### JOB HUNT 101: NEGOTIATING THE RIGHT OFFER

By Patricia Kitchen

#### KNOW THE DETAILS, DO YOUR RESEARCH AND BE FLEXIBLE IN STRIKING A DEAL.

*One of these days all the hard work you're putting into your job search will pay off. You'll get a phone call from a prospective boss or a human resources representative who, hopefully, will say some nice things about you and offer you the job.*

*But before you sing out "yes, yes, yes," assuming you want the job, you are wise to get all the details of the offer and ask for a little time to evaluate it. Don't worry. Most employers expect you to take overnight at the very least.*

*So, before you hang up, be sure to find out or confirm the following: just what the job is – title and responsibilities; your direct supervisor; the location; your work hours; the date they're hoping you'll start; the benefits; the salary. Learn all that, as well as a time frame for you to give your response.*

*Now is the time for you to consider the pros and cons of the offer, as well as the possible need to do some negotiating in the hope of making it more attractive.*

*Salary, of course, is what people think of first when it comes to negotiation. And a few years ago, salary and bonus negotiation was almost the automatic "next step after an offer," says Marianna Savoca, career-center director at Stony Brook University. Not so today, especially, she says, when the potential employer is a large organization that has already done its own sophisticated compensation analysis, so is most likely on target with market conditions. It's with smaller, less clued-in employers that you may have more leeway to up the ante, assuming you've done your own salary research.*

*Following are some resources to help with that: professional association, salary surveys you can find on the Web, help-wanted ads, Salary.com, your own networking contacts. And know this: While the National Association of Colleges and Employers projects campus hiring to be up by 12.7 percent for next spring it also reports that employers will be keeping entry-level salaries flat – or just a tad above flat.*

*To help students see "the bigger picture value," Savoca says she and her staff also help them analyze their offers so they see that health insurance, 401(k) contributions and other benefits are usually worth another 80 percent beyond the annual salary.*

*Indeed, that bigger picture value may also include the peace of mind that comes with having an offer. Chaitanya Attaluri, 21, says that when she got her offer to join Lehman Brothers next year as an information technology analyst, "I just jumped at it... There's no point in trying to get more money*

*when I was happy with the offer they me,” says Attaluri, who’ll graduate in May from Stony Brook with a computer science degree. Plus, she already knew plenty about the job – she interned this past summer in the same department and for the same boss. “I’m very grateful I do have this offer in my hand.”*

But, let’s say you have good reason to believe the money being offered is below the going rate. “It’s critical for candidates to know their worth,” says Nancy Friedberg, president of Career Leverage, a Manhattan-based coaching and consulting firm. But it’s just as critical to call the prospective employer and present your case in an upbeat way – no “drawing lines in the sand,” she says.

Show enthusiasm about the offer and the potential for joining the team. And then you might say something like this: “The only glitch is that, given my research into market salary rates, with my qualifications I feel I should be placed at the higher of the range. Could you see if it’s possible to make that adjustment?”

And, if the answer is no? Ask when the first salary review would be and see if that could be accelerated.

Of course, there are plenty of other things to ask for along with –or in lieu of– more pay, such as a later start date if you want to sneak in a vacation; a company-paid laptop computer and cell phone so can better serve customers during off-hours; paid membership in your professional association, plus the time and expenses for the annual convention and special training that would be good both for your present assignment as well as for your resume.

This is the time you have the most leverage in negotiating for such things – just don’t go overboard, Friedberg says. Remember, too, that if it’s a good company, there’s a value, too, to getting your foot in the door.