Evaluating Job Offers

Receiving a job offer is what you aim for in a job search, but it is not always wise to take the first offer that comes along. It is tempting to do so, particularly if your search has been long and rejection-filled, but remember that you have to live with a job day-to-day, so you want to make sure it's the right one for you. Therefore, it is worth the effort to evaluate any offer carefully before accepting it. Few employers expect you to give them an answer on the spot, so you usually have at least a few days, if not a week or two, to make up your mind.

The basic rules of evaluating job offers

- Don’t panic and accept an offer on the spot. Realize that if you are employable enough to get one offer, you will probably get other offers.
- Carefully evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each offer.
- Talk to someone who can be objective about the decision you have to make.

Questions to ask yourself when evaluating an offer

1. **Am I ready for an offer?** Don’t be afraid to turn down an offer if you are not at least 99% sure that it is right for you. If you think the job might be right for you, but don't feel comfortable accepting the first offer, see how long you can put off giving an answer. If you are interested in the job, convey enthusiasm for the job and appreciation for the offer so that you won't close off any doors if you decide later that you would like the position. Explain that you have just begun your search and have other interviews scheduled and need a little time. Employers want to know that you are making as careful a decision as they are, so they usually will respect your position.

2. **Do I have other offers in the works?** Frequently job searches don't progress in an orderly fashion. You might get an offer from an organization that is second or third on your "wish list," and not have heard from your first choice. There is a way to juggle job offers successfully.

   First, evaluate your priorities. If you feel very strongly about working for a particular organization or getting a specific type of job, then it may be worthwhile to turn down offers until you get the job you want. It's not easy to turn down offers, but if you have evaluated your priorities, you will know you are doing the right thing and will be happier in the long run. Be aware that you have control over the situation. Use the offer you have as leverage with places you haven't heard from. If you really want to work for Organization A, but they haven't made their hiring decisions, call them and say that you...
have an offer from Organization B, but would rather work for Organization A. This shows that you are genuinely interested in Organization A and may help speed up their decision-making. Whatever your situation, actively communicate with all parties involved, rather than passively wait for offers.

3. **Is there room for negotiation?** If you are not happy with the offer, there may be room for negotiation. Negotiation usually involves salary issues, but may also have to do with job responsibilities, title or benefits. The key is demonstrating your value to the prospective employer. They won't give you more money just because you need it. They might pay you more, though, if they see that you are worth it. To know what salaries are typical for the position you are considering, you can consult various sources of information on salaries. These include:

   - people who know the field or industry
   - surveys that professional associations frequently conduct
   - Bureau of Labor Statistics publications (e.g. the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* )
   - job listings in newspapers or other publications which can give you a sense of typical salaries
   - career guides for various fields

Be sure to consider your whole compensation package – benefits, vacation time, profit-sharing, etc. – when deciding if you want to negotiate for a higher salary.

4. **How much do I know about all of these factors?**

   **The Job:**

   - What are my responsibilities?
   - What percentage of time would be spent on each of these?
   - Is this job a good match for my talents/skills/interests/personality style?
   - Who would supervise me? Would I supervise anyone?
   - Who would I work with?
   - How would I be trained?
   - What would my hours be? How many hours per week would I work?
   - Where would this job lead? Is it promotable? Could I transfer to another area?
   - Is the job location convenient? Is there any chance of being transferred or relocated?

   **The Organization:**

   - Do I respect the organization's philosophy and goals?
   - What is the organization's management style or "culture"?
   - Is it financially stable?
• Are they growing? What has the past growth rate been?
• Have they had any lay-offs of employees?
• Who are their competitors and how are they doing?

The Compensation Package:

• Is the salary offered in line with typical salaries for this type of job?
• When is salary reviewed? What are the typical increases?
• How are the benefits – medical/dental/life insurance?
• Are there retirement or profit-sharing plans?
• How much sick leave and vacation time would I have?
• Is there tuition reimbursement?
• Do I get an expense account or company car?