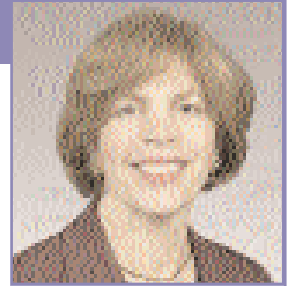


The Art of Negotiating Compensation

by Terry Pile,
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Terry Pile

I've got all the money I'll ever need if I die by four o'clock.
Henny Youngman

Negotiating your salary for a new job can be an emotional issue. When it comes to attaching a dollar amount to your worth, it is difficult to separate ego from the marketplace. It doesn't have to be that way if you have done your research and follow the Five O'Clock Club's strategic approach to negotiating compensation.

The challenge is to save the salary discussion until you have received an offer. With an offer on the table, you know that the employer wants you and will be more amenable to negotiating. One senior consultant at an executive search firm advises, "Don't give them the advantage of knowing your salary. It's like playing a game of poker, but the employer won't bet until he sees your hand."

I've dubbed these strategies the A.R.T. of negotiation.

Easier said than done? Here are some tried and true strategies successful Five O'Clock Club members have used to delay the salary discussion. I've dubbed it the **A.R.T.** of negotiation which stands for: **A**void the subject; **R**everse the question; **T**ell a range. The strategies work like this:

Avoid the subject: When asked about your salary requirement, a simple response such as, "My requirements are flexible," or "My salary is negotiable," may be enough to move the conversation along. However, most interviewers will push a little harder for a response. You may explain that it is difficult to answer the salary question until you know more about the scope and responsibilities involved. If you are asked specifically what you made in your last job, you might point out that the salary you made in your previous position isn't applicable to the one for which you are interviewing. It may be the market has changed or the responsibilities are quite different.

Reverse the question: Many interviewers will continue to probe for an answer to the salary question. Don't fall for the bait. Your next course of action is to get the employer to state a number. Respond by asking, "What is the range you normally pay for this position?" or "What do you consider this position to be worth?" If the interviewer does offer a range, conceal your joy or dismay and simply acknowledge that the

range is "within the ballpark." If the range is higher than you expected, you don't want to appear too eager. If it is lower, there may be aspects of the job or benefits that you can negotiate to make the compensation package work for you.

The Five O'Clock Club stresses that you do your research and know what you're worth in the market before the interview. This way you will know if the employer's first offer is a lowball or fair and well thought out.

Tell a range: In some cases you will be forced to mention a salary figure first. Know what you are worth in the marketplace for a specific job. There are many good online resources recommended in the Five O'clock Club resource center such as www.salary.com, www.careerjournal.com and www.salaryexpert.com. Most give you national, regional and local comparisons. Many professional and trade associations conduct salary surveys among their members every year or two and should be consulted as a part of your research. Better yet, call the human resources department and ask for the salary range of the job for which you are considering. Many will give you that information up front. By talking to current and former employees you will also find out whether the company's salary and benefits are above or below market rate.

A job isn't always about money. There are many other benefits that may be negotiated in addition to salary. Consider a signing bonus, extra vacation time or telecommuting one day a week. If you are covered under your spouse's or partner's medical plan, some employers will allow you to waive your medical benefits and increase your base salary. Consider asking the employer to pay for additional training, professional dues and subscriptions or attendance at conferences and workshops. This is not only a generous perk, but will enhance your career. Relocation expenses, a company car, parking, dues to a health club, cell phone, laptop computer are additional items to negotiate.

Most important, consider the job itself and the career potential. Having a job that gives you great satisfaction may be worth more than any employer can afford to pay. ●

Terry has been a Five O'Clock Club certified career coach since 2001. She brings nearly twenty years' experience in corporate, non-profit and entrepreneurial settings. She specializes in working with people who want to make a career change, are entering the workforce after a long break or who want to work from home. Her areas of expertise include, but are not limited to, healthcare, marketing, education, hospitality, the arts and social services.