Negotiating

by [Jack Wilson](#)

ACM's career consultant, Jack Wilson, answers questions from students about their forthcoming careers in computing and information technology.

Q: I read your article on the ACM web site regarding ``Working with Recruiters'' and was wondering whether there were any differences if I'm planning to work as an independent contractor instead of a corporate employee.

A: Even if you plan to work as a consultant or contractor, recruiters can play an important role in helping to place you with one of their clients. The practices in working with them are generally the same, and you can find some specific suggestions in the premier issue of *Contract Professional, The Magazine for Career Contractors and Consultants* (**conpro@tiac.com**) in an article entitled ``Bridging the Gap, 10 Surefire Strategies for Working with Recruiters.'' This magazine is source of valuable information for any computing professional who is now or is contemplating working as a contractor or consultant.

Q: You mentioned some points about negotiating in an earlier issue of Crossroads, but I'm not sure just what things other salary are possible to negotiate as a newly graduated student. Can you give me some ideas?

A: Yes. I think you will find that the company's benefits package, e.g., medical, dental, insurance, pension, etc., will be a standard offering with little or no room for negotiation. These benefits are the kind that apply to all employees and are generally set forth in a company brochure or handbook.

The things that may be negotiable are those that are under the discretionary control of the hiring manager, director, or executive who heads your department. For example, they may be able to offer specialized or advanced training programs, flexible working hours, job rotation for career development, telecommuting, newer workstation, computer for working at home, etc. Your ability to get favorable consideration of extra ``perks'' is likely to be based on how much in demand you are and whether more

than one company is competing for your talents. The ``hotter'' skills, the higher academic performances, and the more relevant work experiences serve not only to increase your attractiveness but also to enhance your competitiveness for both salary and perks.

Q: I keep getting different advice on whether I should have a one-page or two-page resume. What do you think?

A: The resume is one of those documents on which you can probably get as many differing opinions as the number of people you ask, regarding content, style, length, paper, type font, etc. My own experience in the past two years has been that a one-page version tends to work better with people who are not pre-disposed to read it, i.e., when you are using it as means of initially introducing yourself to someone who has not specifically asked to see it.

In the other case when someone has asked you for it, a more expansive, more detailed two-page version works well (assuming you have enough information to fill more than half of a second page). Some people are now using both versions, the one- pager for unsolicited mailings to create interest and a two-pager for follow-up in a meeting or interview. Many recruiters, for example, are now asking for more details after seeing the initial one-page resume. If you find this idea workable for you, I recommend you write the detailed version first, then begin the process of condensing to one page.

Q: I am a high school student and an ACM member planning to apply to colleges, but I don't know which ones have what kind of programs. Where can I get some basic information on the subject?

A: The best source I have come across is *Peterson's Guide to Colleges For Careers in Computing*, 1996, ISBN 1-56079-527-1. The book has some introductory articles on evaluating and selecting a career in computing, along with profiles of more than 1200 college programs. As a bonus, it includes a PC diskette with free College Search Software and expanded information. Peterson's has a web site at **http://www. petersons.com**