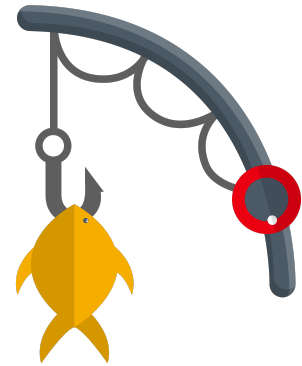




Dodge the Ball

Learn how to politely decline questions asked by recruiters that may impact your compensation negotiation with the company down the road.

Most recruiters would want to know your current salary. This gives them an estimate of what financial compensation (among other factors) would motivate you to make a change. Some companies factor in your current compensation when making an offer, while others don't. The practice varies across the industry with no set rules. Recently, some states in the US have outlawed asking for current compensation from potential candidates.



What a candidate is worth, is unfortunately not easily quantifiable. It is subjective. We can weigh ourselves and say; I am 185 pounds, but we don't have a yardstick that will tell us if I am worth 185K USD per annum. Performance in interviews, name and prestige of the current company, career stage (i.e., level or title) in the current role, and present compensation are all signals to the hiring company/manager of what a candidate may be worth to the company. However, the problem with this approach is that a really good candidate might be employed at a company whose stock has tanked since the time they joined, bringing their net compensation significantly below the market rate for their role. Or that a candidate has been at a company for a while, but reorgs or shelved projects have stalled their career and, in turn, their compensation. In such and other cases, it is not advisable to disclose your salary to a recruiter. Though there is one niche

scenario, where if you are already earning at the very top of your market rate, you may share your current compensation. We will discuss this case in depth in the chapter “Defense with Current Compensation.”

Letting a recruiter know what you make gives the recruiter a bargaining chip come the time of making an offer. Your goal should be to get compensation at the very top end of the market rate for your role. However, some recruiters will not relent and will press you for compensation information. Below are some sample conversations derived from our real-life experiences that you can use as guidance in such situations:

Recruiter: Hey, so how much do you make at your current position?

You: I am sorry, but I think it's premature to discuss numbers at this time. Let's revisit this topic after the interview and if there's a mutual interest in moving forward.



The other curve ball a recruiter can throw at you is rather than ask how much you currently make to how much you would like to make.

Recruiter: What compensation are you looking at to make the move?

You: I am not sure at this point as I am not aware of the market trends. But I would expect a competitive package in line with my role and number of years of experience.

If the recruiter persists, learn to throw the ball back in his court:



You: I would expect the same compensation that folks at company X are making in my role. In fact can you give me some details on what that number looks like?

At this, most recruiter balk, and the usual retort is:

Recruiter: There are different roles and levels we are hiring for so there's no one target range.

You may come back with:

You: I think, then in that case, it would make more sense once we are past the interviews and leveling has been determined to discuss comp.

Giving out a number X will more often than not hurt your chances of maximizing your compensation, especially if you are underpaid. Your current compensation should not define your current professional worth. You may be worth half a million dollars to an AI company because of your Ph.D. in the subject, but to a WordPress development outfit, that knowledge may be worth only a hundred thousand.

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