



Spill the Beans

This lesson enumerates the scenarios when it may be prudent to disclose your compensation to the recruiter.

Does it make sense to ever reveal one's compensation? Yes, it does in some cases. For instance, if your compensation is already at the top end of the market rate for your role and career stage, you may want to save yours and the recruiter's time and let them know what financial compensation would be acceptable for you to even begin the interview process. It may happen that a recruiter incorrectly levels you and sets up an interview loop not congruent with your current or aspired level.



At one time, this was common at LinkedIn, where staff level engineers were put through senior software engineer loops. You don't want to go through the interview circus, only to be disappointed at the end when the offer comes up short of your expectations.

Some companies do not have the firepower to pay big money to employees, and you may broach the topic at the start or after an initial phone screen to clarify your expectations. Below is an actual series of email exchanges between a candidate and Credit Karma regarding compensation before scheduling an onsite. Credit Karma was a startup and not known to be a paymaster, which made its ability to pay top dollar uncertain.

Hey - Thanks for checking-in, I am pretty clear on the next steps, but to save time on both ends, I wanted to clarify the comp range for the position I would be interviewing for? Frankly, for the move to make financial sense to me, I would be looking at \$415K or higher. I don't want to waste our time if the comp range is below that. I have had experiences before where after doing the full loop the offer didn't match expectations and wasted time for party, so I wanted to get that out of the way.

Regards

And the reply received was:

Hi **** Thank you for being open. I am not sure what level you would land in as it is entirely dependent on how you interview. I would say if you meet the expectations for a Staff Software Engineer (these are very senior folks in our org), the total comp is about \$326K. I think you are right, we should cancel the interview as our offer will not be close to 415k.

Are you ok to cancel?

Cheers,

As you can observe from the email thread, it would have been a waste of time and effort to schedule an onsite. The author was slotted for the staff engineer level, and even if he cracked that level, the compensation would have been below what he was making at the time, which was around \$350K per annum. An important insight you can glean is how the author circumvents the question of salary by preemptively setting a baseline number for the recruiter to work with. Furthermore, notice that the

recruiter leaves room open for the author to still continue the process by asking if it is ok to cancel the onsite. Ideally, you would want to bring up this salary question after the company has already made a bit of investment in your candidacy, e.g., after an informational or a phone screen. That way, the company doesn't dismiss you outright if the numbers you propose are too high especially if your initial screen went well.

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