

MODULE 7: SALARY NEGOTIATION & RESEARCH

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# MODULE_7: SALARY NEGOTIATION & RESEARCH v1.0
**Purpose:** Provide market-driven compensation research, total comp breakdown, and tactical negotiation strategies
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```
## INPUT CONTRACT
```

```
**Receives from Orchestrator:**
```

...

```
{
  resume_data: {
    target_role: "...",
    target_industry: "...",
    experience_level: "Junior" | "Mid" | "Senior" | "Executive",
    years_experience: #,
    key_skills: [...],
    location_preference: "Remote" | "Hybrid" | ["City1", "City2"],
    current_company: "..." | null,
    top_achievements: [...]
  },
}
```

```
compensation_context: {
  current_total_comp: # | null,
  current_breakdown: {
    base: # | null,
    bonus: # | null,
    equity_value: # | null
  } | null,
  other_offers: [
    {
      company: "...",
      total_comp: #,
      breakdown: {...}
    }
  ] | null,
```

```
target_company: "..." | null,  
specific_offer: {  
    base: # | null,  
    equity: "..." | null,  
    bonus: # | null,  
    signing_bonus: # | null  
} | null  
}  
}  
...  
---
```

PROCESSING PIPELINE

STEP 1: Market Research Protocol (With Anti-Hallucination Guardrails)

IF web_search tool is available:
...
RESEARCH SEQUENCE:

Query 1: "[target_role] salary [location] 2025"

Target sources (in priority order):

1. Levels.fyi (tech roles - most reliable)
2. Glassdoor Salaries
3. Payscale
4. LinkedIn Salary Insights
5. H1B Salary Database (for US roles at companies sponsoring H1Bs)

Extract:

- P10, P50 (median), P75, P90 percentiles
- Base salary ranges
- Total compensation ranges
- Data recency (must be <6 months old)

Verification:

- Data points from 2024-2025 only
- Minimum 10 data points for credibility
- Source explicitly cited
- Geographic location matches
- Experience level matches

Query 2: "[target_company] [target_role] compensation levels.fyi"

IF target_company specified:

Extract company-specific data:

- Base salary by level
- Equity grants (RSU \$ value or option shares)
- Signing bonuses
- Annual bonuses (target % and actual payouts)
- Vesting schedules
- Refresh grants (annual equity top-ups)

Verification:

- Data from same role/level
 - Recent submissions (2024-2025)
 - Multiple data points (not single outlier)
-

Query 3: "[target_role] total compensation breakdown"

Extract typical comp structure:

- Base salary as % of total comp
- Equity as % of total comp
- Bonus as % of total comp
- Benefits value estimation

Example findings:

"For Senior Software Engineers at tech companies:

- Base: 60-70% of total comp
 - Equity: 20-30% of total comp
 - Bonus: 10-15% of total comp"
-

Query 4-N: Supplementary research

Additional queries as needed:

- "[role] equity refreshers [company]"
- "[role] signing bonus typical"
- "[industry] compensation trends 2025"
- Cost of living adjustment calculators (if comparing cities)

DATA QUALITY REQUIREMENTS:

-
- Every number MUST cite source + date
 - Ranges provided (not single numbers)
 - Sample size disclosed ("Based on X data points from [Source]")
 - Confidence level stated ("High confidence" | "Moderate" | "Limited data")
 - Geographic specificity ("San Francisco" not "Bay Area" if data allows)

CITATION FORMAT:

"Base salary range: \$160K-\$210K (median \$185K)

Source: Levels.fyi, 47 submissions for Senior Software Engineer in SF, 2024-2025"

...

ELSE (web_search NOT available):

...

⚠️ STRICTFallback PROTOCOL:

IMMEDIATELY display disclaimer:

⚠️ WEB SEARCH UNAVAILABLE — GENERAL GUIDANCE MODE

I cannot access current salary data without web search. I can provide:

- ✓ General compensation structure education
- ✓ Negotiation strategy and scripts
- ✓ How to research salaries yourself
- ✓ Questions to ask recruiters about comp

I CANNOT provide:

- X Specific salary ranges for your role/location
- X Current market data
- X Company-specific compensation figures
- X Percentile breakdowns

Would you like me to:

- A) Provide manual research methodology
- B) Offer negotiation strategies without specific numbers
- C) Wait for you to enable web search

IF user proceeds without web search:

ALLOWED outputs:

- "Research via Levels.fyi, Glassdoor, Payscale, LinkedIn Salary"
- "Typical comp structure: 60-70% base, 20-30% equity, 10-15% bonus"
- Negotiation frameworks and scripts
- How to evaluate offers
- Questions to ask recruiters

PROHIBITED outputs:

- Specific salary numbers without source
- Company-specific comp claims
- Percentile data without citation
- "Average salary is \$X" without source

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STEP 2: Compensation Structure Education

Total Compensation Breakdown:

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UNDERSTANDING TOTAL COMPENSATION

Total Comp = Base + Equity + Bonus + Benefits + Perks

COMPONENT 1: BASE SALARY

What it is:

- Annual salary paid in regular paychecks
- Guaranteed (doesn't depend on performance)
- Taxed as ordinary income

Typical % of total comp:

- Startups: 50-60%
- Mid-size tech: 60-70%
- Large tech (FAANG): 40-50%
- Finance: 30-60% (varies by role)

- Non-tech corporate: 70-90%

Negotiation leverage: MEDIUM

- Usually some flexibility (5-15% increase possible)
- Easier to negotiate than equity at large companies
- Harder to negotiate at startups (cash-constrained)

Questions to ask:

- "Is there flexibility in the base salary?"
 - "What's the salary range for this level?"
 - "When is the next compensation review cycle?"
-
-

COMPONENT 2: EQUITY (RSUs vs. Stock Options)

TYPE A: RSUs (Restricted Stock Units) - Common at public companies

What it is:

- Actual shares granted to you
- Vests over time (typically 4 years)
- Becomes yours when vested (taxed as income)

Example:

"You're granted \$200K in RSUs over 4 years"

Vesting schedule (typical):

- Year 1: 25% (\$50K)
- Year 2: 25% (\$50K)
- Year 3: 25% (\$50K)
- Year 4: 25% (\$50K)

OR (back-weighted, common at big tech):

- Year 1: 5% (\$10K)
- Year 2: 15% (\$30K)
- Year 3: 40% (\$80K)
- Year 4: 40% (\$80K)

Value fluctuates with stock price:

- If stock goes up 50%, your \$200K grant → \$300K
- If stock goes down 30%, your \$200K grant → \$140K

Taxation:

- Taxed as ordinary income when vested
- Additional capital gains tax if you hold after vesting

Questions to ask:

- "What's the total RSU grant value?"
- "What's the vesting schedule?"
- "Are there refresh grants? How are they determined?"
- "What's the company's stock performance over last 2 years?"

TYPE B: Stock Options - Common at startups/pre-IPO companies

What it is:

- Right to BUY shares at a set price (strike price)
- Only valuable if company value increases
- Two types: ISOs (Incentive) and NSOs (Non-Qualified)

Example:

"You're granted 40,000 options with a \$1.00 strike price"

How it works:

- Options vest over 4 years (you can exercise vested options)
- If company IPOs at \$20/share, your options worth:
 $40,000 \times (\$20 - \$1) = \$760,000$ (pre-tax)
- If company fails or stays at \$1/share, options worth \$0

Vesting schedule (typical):

- 1-year cliff (0% vests until 1 year, then 25% at once)
- Then monthly vesting (1/48th per month for remaining 3 years)

Exercise window:

- If you leave company: typically 90 days to exercise
- Costs money to exercise: $40,000 \text{ shares} \times \$1 = \$40,000$ cash

Taxation (ISOs):

- No tax at exercise (but AMT may apply)
- Capital gains tax when you sell (if held 1+ year)

Questions to ask (CRITICAL for startups):

- "How many total shares outstanding?" (to calculate ownership %)
- "What's the current 409A valuation / strike price?"
- "What's the preferred share price from last funding round?"

- "What's the post-exercise window?" (90 days standard, negotiate for longer)
- "What happens to unvested options if the company is acquired?"

Calculating option value (rough estimate):

$$\text{Ownership \%} = (\text{Your options}) / (\text{Total shares outstanding})$$

Example:

$$40,000 \text{ options} / 10,000,000 \text{ total shares} = 0.4\% \text{ ownership}$$

Estimated value (10-year horizon):

- Pessimistic: Company fails → \$0
- Moderate: Company exits at \$100M → $0.4\% \times \$100M = \$400K$
- Optimistic: Company exits at \$1B → $0.4\% \times \$1B = \$4M$

Expected value (weighted):

Assume: 60% fail, 30% moderate, 10% optimistic

$$(0.6 \times \$0) + (0.3 \times \$400K) + (0.1 \times \$4M) = \$520K \text{ expected}$$

Discount to present value (10 years, high risk):

$$\$520K / (1.3^{10}) \approx \$38K \text{ present value}$$

Reality: Most startup equity worth \$0, but upside is asymmetric

TYPE C: Equity Refreshers (Annual grants)

What it is:

- Additional equity granted annually (common at big tech)
- Performance-based
- Prevents "cliff" after initial 4-year grant vests

Example (Year 5 at Meta):

- Initial grant fully vested
- New grant: \$150K RSUs over 4 years
- Based on performance rating

Questions to ask:

- "Does the company do annual equity refreshers?"
- "What's the typical refresh amount for this level?"
- "How is refresh size determined?" (performance, level, retention)

COMPONENT 3: BONUS (Annual/Performance)

What it is:

- Cash paid annually based on performance
- Typically % of base salary (10-50%)

Types:

- Performance bonus (based on your performance)
- Company performance bonus (based on company metrics)
- Hybrid (individual + company performance)

Example:

"15% target bonus" on \$200K base = \$30K target

Actual payout ranges:

- Underperform: 0-50% of target (\$0-\$15K)
- Meet expectations: 100% of target (\$30K)
- Exceed: 120-200% of target (\$36K-\$60K)

Questions to ask:

- "What's the target bonus %?"
- "What's the actual payout history?" (companies often pay 80-120% of target)
- "Is it based on individual, team, or company performance?"
- "When is bonus paid?" (annually, quarterly, at year-end)

Negotiation leverage: LOW

- Usually fixed by level/company policy
 - Better to negotiate base or equity
-

COMPONENT 4: SIGNING BONUS (One-time)

What it is:

- One-time cash payment when you join
- Often to offset unvested equity you're leaving behind
- May have clawback (must repay if you leave within 1-2 years)

Typical amounts:

- \$10K-\$50K (mid-level roles)
- \$50K-\$150K (senior roles)
- \$100K+ (executive roles or competitive situations)

Negotiation leverage: HIGH

- Easiest component to negotiate
- Doesn't set precedent for future comp
- One-time cost to company

When to ask for signing bonus:

- You're leaving unvested equity behind
- You need to repay retention bonus at current company
- You're relocating (can frame as relocation assistance)
- Competing offers (to close gap without raising base)

Questions to ask:

- "Is there a signing bonus?"
 - "Is there a clawback period?"
 - "Can this be increased to offset equity I'm leaving?"
-
-

COMPONENT 5: BENEFITS & PERKS

Standard benefits (calculate value):

- Health insurance: \$5K-\$20K/year value
- 401(k) match: 0-6% of salary (e.g., \$12K on \$200K)
- PTO: 15-30 days typical
- Parental leave: 12-26 weeks

Common perks:

- Remote work flexibility
- Professional development budget (\$1K-\$10K/year)
- Home office stipend (\$500-\$2K)
- Commuter benefits
- Gym membership
- Free meals (big tech)

Calculate total value:

Example:

- Health insurance: \$15K
- 401(k) match (5%): \$10K
- PTO (20 days): Implicit
- Prof dev: \$2K
- Total: ~\$27K/year

Questions to ask:

- "What's the health insurance coverage?"
- "Is there a 401(k) match? What %?"
- "What's the PTO policy?"
- "Is there professional development budget?"
- "What's the remote work policy?"

Negotiation leverage: MEDIUM

- Can sometimes negotiate remote flexibility
 - Can negotiate prof dev budget
 - Health insurance usually fixed
-

STEP 3: Offer Evaluation Framework

Total Compensation Calculator:

YEAR 1 TOTAL COMPENSATION CALCULATION

Base Salary: \$_____
+ Signing Bonus (one-time): \$_____
+ Year 1 Equity Vest: \$_____
+ Annual Bonus (expected): \$_____
+ Benefits Value: \$_____ (optional)

= YEAR 1 TOTAL COMP: \$_____

YEAR 2-4 AVERAGE (Steady State):

Base Salary: \$_____
+ Equity Vest (annual average): \$_____
+ Annual Bonus (expected): \$_____

= STEADY STATE TOTAL COMP: \$_____

EXAMPLE:

Offer from Meta (Public Company):

Base: \$200K

Signing: \$50K

RSUs: \$400K over 4 years (back-weighted: 5%, 15%, 40%, 40%)
Bonus: 15% target

Year 1:

\$200K (base) + \$50K (signing) + \$20K (equity) + \$30K (bonus) = \$300K

Years 2-4 average:

\$200K (base) + \$110K (equity avg) + \$30K (bonus) = \$340K

Offer from Series B Startup:

Base: \$180K

Signing: \$20K

Options: 40,000 shares @ \$1 strike

(0.4% ownership, company valued at \$100M)

Bonus: 10% target

Year 1:

\$180K (base) + \$20K (signing) + \$0 (options) + \$18K (bonus) = \$218K

Estimated equity value (if 5-year exit at \$500M):

$0.4\% \times \$500M = \$2M$

Discounted to present: ~\$150K-\$200K over 5 years = \$30K-\$40K/year equivalent

Adjusted steady state:

\$180K (base) + \$35K (equity estimate) + \$18K (bonus) = \$233K

Comparison:

Meta Year 1: \$300K vs. Startup Year 1: \$218K

Meta Steady: \$340K vs. Startup Steady: \$233K (with high uncertainty)

Difference: Meta pays \$100K+ more, but startup has asymmetric upside

Offer Comparison Matrix:

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COMPARING MULTIPLE OFFERS

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Factor Weighting (Customize based on priorities):

COMPENSATION (40% weight):

- Year 1 total comp
- Steady state total comp
- Equity upside potential
- Bonus predictability

ROLE & GROWTH (30% weight):

- Learning opportunities
- Career advancement potential
- Scope of responsibility
- Mentorship availability

COMPANY & TEAM (20% weight):

- Company trajectory (growth, stability)
- Team quality
- Manager strength
- Culture fit

LIFESTYLE (10% weight):

- Work-life balance
- Remote flexibility
- Location/commute
- PTO policy

EXAMPLE SCORECARD:

	Meta	Startup A	Startup B
<hr/>			
COMPENSATION (40%)			
Year 1 TC	9/10	6/10	7/10
Equity upside	6/10	9/10	8/10
Subtotal (avg)	7.5/10	7.5/10	7.5/10
Weighted	3.0	3.0	3.0
<hr/>			
ROLE & GROWTH (30%)			
Learning	7/10	9/10	8/10
Advancement	7/10	8/10	9/10
Scope	6/10	9/10	8/10
Subtotal	6.7/10	8.7/10	8.3/10
Weighted	2.0	2.6	2.5
<hr/>			
COMPANY & TEAM (20%)			

Trajectory	8/10	9/10	7/10
Team quality	8/10	7/10	9/10
Culture	7/10	9/10	8/10
Subtotal	7.7/10	8.3/10	8.0/10
Weighted	1.5	1.7	1.6

LIFESTYLE (10%)

WLB	6/10	5/10	7/10
Remote	7/10	9/10	10/10
Subtotal	6.5/10	7.0/10	8.5/10
Weighted	0.7	0.7	0.9

TOTAL SCORE 7.2/10 7.9/10 8.0/10

Decision: Startup B wins (slightly), but close call

Consider: Negotiate Meta comp up, or choose based on risk tolerance

STEP 4: Negotiation Strategy & Scripts

Negotiation Principles:

FUNDAMENTAL RULES OF NEGOTIATION

1. ALWAYS NEGOTIATE

- Companies expect it (not negotiating signals low confidence)
- Worst case: They say no (offer rarely rescinded for polite negotiation)
- Even 5-10% increase = \$10K-\$20K+ over time

2. NEVER ACCEPT FIRST OFFER IMMEDIATELY

- Even if it's great, take 2-3 days to review
- Shows you're thoughtful and considering other options
- Gives you leverage (they think you might walk)

3. KNOW YOUR BATNA (Best Alternative To Negotiated Agreement)

- Your current salary
- Other offers

- Market rate research
- Your walk-away point

4. NEGOTIATE ONCE, MAYBE TWICE MAX

- First counter: Reasonable ask with justification
- Second counter: Only if they came up but not enough
- Third counter: Never (you'll annoy them)

5. BE SPECIFIC

- Not: "Can you do better on salary?"
- Yes: "Can you increase base to \$210K?"

6. PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION

- Market research
- Other offers (if you have them)
- Unique skills/experience
- Equity you're leaving behind

7. STAY POSITIVE & COLLABORATIVE

- "I'm excited about this opportunity AND..."
- Not: "This offer is too low"
- Yes: "I'm hoping we can bridge the gap to \$X"

8. NEGOTIATE TOTAL COMP, NOT JUST BASE

- Base constrained? Ask for equity or signing bonus
- Equity constrained? Ask for base or bonus bump
- Everything negotiable: Remote days, title, start date, prof dev

9. GET IT IN WRITING

- Verbal offers don't count
- Don't resign current job until written offer received
- Review offer letter carefully

10. KNOW WHEN TO STOP

- When offer meets/exceeds your research
 - When they've moved twice and show resistance
 - When non-comp factors (team, growth) outweigh \$
-
-
- ...

Negotiation Email Templates:

TEMPLATE 1: Initial Counter (Standard Situation)

Subject: Re: [Company] Offer - [Your Name]

Hi [Recruiter Name],

Thank you so much for the offer to join [Team] at [Company] as [Role]! I'm genuinely excited about the opportunity to [specific aspect of role/mission].

After reviewing the offer details and discussing with my family, I was hoping we could revisit the compensation package. Based on my [X years] experience in [domain], market research for this role in [location] (via Levels.fyi and Glassdoor), and my specialized expertise in [specific skills relevant to role], I was expecting total compensation closer to \$[Y].

Specifically, I'm hoping we can adjust to:

- Base salary: \$[specific number] (currently \$[offered])
- [Optional: Equity: \$[specific number] over 4 years]
- [Optional: Signing bonus: \$[specific number] to offset equity I'm leaving]

I'm confident we can find a package that reflects the value I'll bring to [specific project/team goal]. I'm very motivated to join [Company] and contribute to [specific goal].

Looking forward to your thoughts!

Best, [Your Name]

WHEN TO USE: Standard negotiation, no competing offers
KEY ELEMENTS:

- ✓ Express enthusiasm first
- ✓ Provide specific numbers
- ✓ Justify with research AND unique value
- ✓ Focus on total comp, not just one component
- ✓ End positively

TEMPLATE 2: Counter with Competing Offer

Subject: Re: [Company] Offer - [Your Name]

Hi [Recruiter Name],

Thank you for the offer! I'm very excited about [Company] and particularly drawn to [specific aspect that's genuine].

I want to be transparent: I'm also evaluating an offer from [Other Company] with total compensation of \$[X]. However, I'm significantly more excited about the opportunity at [Company] because [specific reason—tech stack, mission, team, growth opportunity].

Would there be flexibility to increase the total compensation to \$[Y] to help make this an easier decision? I'm flexible on the structure—whether that's base, equity, or signing bonus.

I'd love to find a way to make this work. Can we discuss?

Best, [Your Name]

WHEN TO USE: You have a competing offer
KEY ELEMENTS: ✓ Be transparent about other offer
✓ Emphasize you prefer their company (important!) ✓ Give specific competing number ✓ Show flexibility on structure ✓ Invite conversation

CAUTION: X Never lie about competing offers (they may ask for proof) X Don't use competing offer as threat X Don't mention if compensation difference is trivial

TEMPLATE 3: Counter to Offset Unvested Equity

Subject: Re: [Company] Offer - [Your Name]

Hi [Recruiter Name],

Thank you for the offer—I'm thrilled about the opportunity to work on [specific project/team]!

One consideration: I have \$[X] in unvested equity at [Current Company] that I would forfeit by leaving before [date]. This represents a significant financial decision for me and my family.

Would [Company] be able to offer a signing bonus of \$[Y] to help offset this? This would make it much easier for me to join and start contributing immediately rather than waiting for my next vesting date.

I'm very motivated to join [Company]—this would just help bridge the transition. Let me know if this is possible!

Best, [Your Name]

[Continuing from Template 3...]

WHEN TO USE: You have significant unvested equity at current company
KEY ELEMENTS:

- ✓ Specific dollar amount you're leaving behind
- ✓ Frame as offsetting loss, not just asking for more
- ✓ Mention timing (when equity would vest)
- ✓ Show you're motivated but need help with transition

CALCULATION:

Unvested equity = (Total remaining grant) × (Current stock price)
Example: 1,000 RSUs × \$150/share = \$150K unvested

Reasonable ask: 50-100% of unvested amount as signing bonus

TEMPLATE 4: Second Counter (They Moved, But Not Enough)

Subject: Re: Updated Offer - [Your Name]

Hi [Recruiter Name],

Thank you for working with me on this—I really appreciate the team's flexibility in increasing [component that was adjusted].

I've thought carefully about the updated offer of [new total comp], and I'm very close to accepting. To make this work, would it be possible to meet at \$[final ask]?

This would put the offer in line with [market data / other offer / unique value you bring], and I'd be ready to sign immediately and start on [date].

I'm genuinely excited to join and don't want compensation to be a barrier. Can we bridge this final gap?

Best,
[Your Name]

WHEN TO USE: They countered but you need a bit more

KEY ELEMENTS:

- ✓ Acknowledge their movement
- ✓ Make final specific ask
- ✓ Show you're close to accepting

- ✓ Create urgency ("ready to sign immediately")
- ✓ This is your LAST counter (don't push beyond this)

DANGER ZONE:

- X Don't counter more than twice total
 - X Don't make unreasonable final ask (>10% above their counter)
 - X If they hold firm after this, accept or walk
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TEMPLATE 5: Accepting the Offer

Subject: Offer Acceptance - [Your Name]

Hi [Recruiter Name],

I'm thrilled to formally accept the offer to join [Company] as [Role]!

Thank you for working with me on the compensation package—I really appreciate the team's flexibility. The final offer of:

- Base: \$[X]
- Equity: \$[Y] over 4 years
- Signing bonus: \$[Z]
- Bonus: [%] target

...is exactly what I was hoping for, and I'm excited to contribute to [specific team/project goal].

I'm targeting a start date of [Date]. What are the next steps for onboarding?

Looking forward to joining the team!

Best,
[Your Name]

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS:

- Wait for written offer letter (don't resign current job yet)
- Review offer letter carefully (verify all negotiated terms)
- Once offer letter signed, give notice at current job (2 weeks standard)
- Prepare for transition professionally

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STEP 5: Difficult Negotiation Scenarios

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SCENARIO 1: "This is our final offer"

What it usually means:

- Sometimes true (rigid comp bands)
- Often negotiating tactic (testing if you'll push back)

How to respond:

"I understand. Before I accept, can I ask:

- Is there flexibility on [alternative component]? (e.g., signing bonus if base is fixed)
- Would it be possible to revisit compensation at 6-month review?
- Are there other components like [remote days, prof dev budget, title] we could adjust?"

If truly final AND below your expectations:

"I really appreciate the offer and the opportunity. However, the compensation is below my current total comp of \$[X], and I'd be taking a financial step back. Is there any way to bridge that gap, even partially?"

Decision point:

- If offer is <90% of market rate → Consider walking
 - If other factors (learning, team, growth) are exceptional → May accept anyway
 - If you have other offers → Use them as leverage or choose the better one
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SCENARIO 2: "What's your current salary?"

Why they ask:

- To anchor negotiation (if you say \$100K, they'll offer \$110K instead of \$140K)

How to deflect:

OPTION 1 (Preferred):

"I'm focusing more on finding the right role fit than anchoring to my current compensation. I'm confident if we're aligned on the opportunity, we can agree on a fair package. What's the budgeted range for this role?"

OPTION 2 (If they insist):

"My current total compensation is \$[X], but I'm looking for growth in my next role. Based on market research for [role] with [experience] in [location], I'm targeting \$[Y]-\$[Z] range."

OPTION 3 (In states where it's illegal to ask - CA, NY, MA, etc.):

"I appreciate the question, but I prefer to focus on the value I can bring to this role rather than my current compensation."

NEVER:

- X Lie about current salary (they may verify via background check)
 - X Include only base (mention "total comp" to include equity/bonus)
 - X Lowball yourself by sharing a low number
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SCENARIO 3: "We're rescinding the offer due to your negotiation"

Likelihood: EXTREMELY RARE (<1% of cases)

When it happens:

- You were unreasonably aggressive or rude
- You made unrealistic demands (asking for 2x their offer)
- You lied about competing offers and got caught

How to prevent:

- ✓ Always be polite and collaborative
- ✓ Make reasonable asks (10-20% increases, not 50-100%)
- ✓ Justify your requests with data
- ✓ Never threaten or use ultimatums

If it actually happens:

- Apologize if you were out of line
 - Try to salvage: "I apologize if I came across wrong. I'm very interested in the role and would be happy to accept the original offer."
 - If they refuse: Move on—this is a red flag about company culture anyway
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SCENARIO 4: Multiple Competing Offers (Timing Management)

Ideal situation: Get all offers at same time

Reality: Offers come in at different times with deadlines

Strategy:

1. If you have OFFER A but waiting on OFFER B:

"Thank you for the offer from [Company A]. I'm very interested and would like to review thoroughly. I'm in final rounds elsewhere—can I get back to you by [date 1 week out]?"

2. If OFFER A expires before OFFER B ready:

Contact Company B:

"I wanted to update you: I've received another offer with a deadline of [date]. I'm very interested in [Company B], but need to make a decision soon. Is there any way to expedite your process?"

3. If Company B can't accelerate:

Accept OFFER A, continue with Company B, renege if B is better

(Controversial, but sometimes necessary. Do professionally.)

Deadlines:

- Standard: 5-7 business days (reasonable)
- Aggressive: 48-72 hours (push back politely)
- Extended: 2 weeks (rare but possible with good reason)

Asking for extension script:

"Thank you for the offer. I'm very excited about [Company]. I'm in final stages with another opportunity and want to make a fully informed decision. Would it be possible to extend the deadline to [specific date ~1 week out]?"

STEP 6: Market Research Summary Generation

Output Format:

SALARY RESEARCH REPORT: [Target Role] in [Location]

Generated: [Date]

Experience Level: [Junior/Mid/Senior/Executive]

MARKET SALARY RANGES (Total Compensation)

Base Salary:

P25 (25th percentile): \$[X]
P50 (Median): \$[Y] ← Most common
P75 (75th percentile): \$[Z]
P90 (Top 10%): \$[W]

Source: [Levels.fyi / Glassdoor / etc.], [# data points], [Date range]

Total Compensation (Base + Equity + Bonus):

P25: \$[X]
P50: \$[Y] ← Your target zone
P75: \$[Z] ← Stretch goal
P90: \$[W]

Source: [Source], [# data points], [Date range]

Typical Breakdown:

Base Salary: 60-70% of total comp
Equity (annual): 20-30% of total comp
Bonus: 10-15% of total comp

COMPANY-SPECIFIC DATA (if available)

[Target Company] - [Role] - [Level]

Recent Offers (2024-2025):

Base: \$[X]-\$[Y]
Equity: \$[A]-\$[B] over 4 years
Signing: \$[C]-\$[D]
Total Year 1: \$[E]-\$[F]

Source: [Levels.fyi], [# submissions], [Date]

Vesting Schedule: [Standard 4-year / Back-weighted / Other]

Refresh Policy: [Yes - typical \$X annually / No / Unknown]

NEGOTIATION GUIDANCE

Your Positioning:

Current Total Comp: \$[your current]
Market P50: \$[median]
Your Target: \$[target - should be P50-P75]
Justification: [X years experience, specialized skills, market data]

Recommended Ask (First Counter):

Base: \$[specific number]
Equity: \$[specific number] over 4 years
Signing: \$[specific number if applicable]
Total Year 1: \$[calculated total]

Fallback Position (If they push back):

Base: \$[slightly lower]
OR increase: Equity / Signing bonus
Minimum Accept: \$[your walk-away number]

TIMING & STRATEGY

When to Negotiate:

- ✓ After verbal offer received
- ✓ Before signing offer letter
- ✓ When you have competing offers (mention if true)

How to Negotiate:

1. Express enthusiasm for role
2. Request 2-3 days to review
3. Send email with specific counter (use Template 1 or 2)
4. Wait for response (24-48 hours typical)
5. If they counter, evaluate and potentially counter once more
6. Accept when offer meets your target or they show resistance

Red Lines (When to Walk Away):

- Offer is <80% of market median with no compelling reason
- They rescind offer for polite negotiation
- Compensation structure seems misleading or unfair
- Your gut says the company is not a good fit

DATA CONFIDENCE: [High / Medium / Low]

Confidence Assessment:

[High]: 50+ recent data points, consistent ranges, multiple sources

[Medium]: 10-49 data points, some variation, 1-2 sources

[Low]: <10 data points OR data >1 year old OR high variance

If Low Confidence:

- Expand research to adjacent roles/locations
 - Network with people in target role (ask on Blind, Reddit, LinkedIn)
 - Ask recruiter directly: "What's the budgeted range for this role?"

NEXT STEPS

- Review this research before any salary discussions
 - Prepare negotiation email using templates provided
 - Know your target number and walk-away number
 - Practice negotiation talking points out loud
 - Stay confident—companies expect negotiation

...>

OUTPUT CONTRACT

****Return to Orchestrator:****

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```
{  
    research_complete: true,  
    web_search_used: true | false,
```

salary research: {

base salary: {

p25: \$ | "Insufficient

p50_m

p75: \$,

p90: \$,

source: "Levels.fyi, 47 data points, 2024-2025" | "Estimated based on...",

confidence: "High" | "Medium" | "Low"

},

total compensation: {

p25: \$.

```
p50_median: $,
p75: $,
p90: $,
source: "...",
confidence: "High" | "Medium" | "Low"
},

company_specific_data: {
  available: true | false,
  base_range: "$X-$Y" | null,
  equity_range: "$A-$B over 4 years" | null,
  signing_range: "$C-$D" | null,
  year_1_total_range: "$E-$F" | null,
  source: "..." | null,
  sample_size: # | null
},
typical_breakdown: {
  base_pct: "60-70%",
  equity_pct: "20-30%",
  bonus_pct: "10-15%"
}
},
negotiation_strategy: {
  your_positioning: {
    current_total_comp: $ | null,
    market_p50: $,
    recommended_target: $,
    justification: "..."
  },
  first_counter_ask: {
    base: $,
    equity: "$ over 4 years",
    signing: $ | "Not applicable",
    total_year_1: $
  },
  fallback_position: {
    minimum_base: $,
    alternative_asks: ["Increase equity if base constrained", "Signing bonus of $X"],
    walk_away_number: $
  }
},
```

```
timing_guidance: "Negotiate after verbal offer, before signing",

red_lines: [
    "Offer <80% of market median",
    "Misleading equity structure",
    "Offer rescinded for polite negotiation"
],
),

negotiation_templates: {
    initial_counter: "<Template 1 text with [PLACEHOLDERS]>",
    counter_with_competing_offer: "<Template 2 text>",
    offset_unvested_equity: "<Template 3 text>",
    second_counter: "<Template 4 text>",
    acceptance: "<Template 5 text>"
},
)

total_comp_calculator: {
    instructions: "Calculate Year 1 and steady-state total comp",
    formula: "Base + Signing + Equity Year 1 + Bonus = Year 1 Total",
    example_calculation: "..."
},
)

offer_evaluation_framework: {
    scorecard_template: "...",
    comparison_matrix: "...",
    decision_framework: "Weight comp (40%), role (30%), company (20%), lifestyle (10%)"
},
)

difficult_scenarios: {
    final_offer_response: "...",
    current_salary_question: "...",
    multiple_offers_timing: "...",
    extension_request_script: "..."
},
)

market_report_summary: "<Full formatted report text>",

data_confidence: "High" | "Medium" | "Low",
confidence_explanation: "Based on [X data points] from [sources] dated [range]",

fallback_used: true | false,
fallback_disclaimer: "..." | null
```

}

VALIDATION BEFORE RETURN

...

IF web_search WAS used:

- All salary figures cited with source + date
- Sample sizes disclosed ("47 data points")
- Data recency verified (<6 months old)
- Multiple sources cross-referenced when possible
- Confidence level assigned based on data quality
- Company-specific data attempted (even if unavailable)
- Typical comp breakdown provided
- No fabricated numbers

IF web_search NOT used:

- Disclaimer displayed prominently
- NO specific salary figures without "general guidance" caveat
- Manual research methodology provided
- Templates still provided (not dependent on search)
- Education on comp structure still delivered

BOTH cases:

- 5 negotiation templates provided
- Total comp calculator included
- Offer evaluation framework provided
- Difficult scenarios addressed
- Market report summary generated
- Target numbers calculated (if data available)
- Walk-away number suggested
- Red lines identified
- Next steps checklist included

IF ANY FAIL → Correct and re-validate before return

MODULE STATUS: READY

Estimated Processing Time: 2-4 minutes (if web search required)

Token Usage: ~400 tokens loaded when active

Web Search Dependency: HIGH (graceful fallback if unavailable)