

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

### Asking Questions Related to Compensation

#### Examples of Questions to Professional Contacts:

*“Given my background, what do you think I should ask for?”*

*“It’s been really difficult to find salary information on [insert employer name]. Is there any chance you could give me a general idea of the salary range and what the possible compensation structures are?”*

*“If you were me, what would you ask for?”*

*“What’s the range one can expect for this type of position?”*

*“The data I’ve seen on salaries are all over the place! What do you think is reasonable?”*

*“Is there any rule of thumb to coming up with a ballpark salary range?”*

*“Do you have any negotiation tips?”*

#### Examples of Questions Posted on Q&A Sites:

Quora: <http://b.qr.ae/wDrpRD>

Hacker News: <http://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=2907815>

---

## THE INITIAL OFFER

### Sample Dialogue

#### Common Questions to Expect from the Employer:

*“What are your salary expectations?”*

*“I need a ballpark figure. How about a range?”*

*“Just give me a number. I know it’s preliminary, I won’t hold you to it.”* Wink, smile.

*“What were you paid before?”*

#### Initial Response to Employer Regarding Salary Expectation:

*“I’m not sure. I hadn’t thought about this yet, because I wasn’t sure if I was going to get an offer. I need to think this through before I can give a specific number. All I know right now is that my expectation is to be paid market taking into account the job responsibilities and my level of experience.”*

*“I need to research this before I can give you a number. What are you thinking of offering for this position, given my skill set?”*

*“Well, I’m looking to be paid at least market rate. What do you think is market rate?”*

**If the Employer Persists in Getting a Number:**

*“Well, based on preliminary research, my sense is that the number would be around [insert \$ amount that’s on the high end] all-in, which takes into account base salary plus other benefits. I’m not sure, though. It could be more or less...it really depends on the specific responsibilities, benefits, opportunities for career advancement, professional development training, etc.”*

*“At my last job, I was paid an all-in value was \$\_\_\_\_, which includes [bonus, stock options, gym membership, company parking space, [x] days of paid vacation time, etc.]. However, what I earned at my last job was not indicative because [insert reason(s)]”*

**Note:** when calculating the all-in value of your compensation from a prior job, explicitly state that you are including the value of the benefits you received at the last employer. You may want to include the following benefits (if you received them):

- i) maximum bonus you would have received that year or the highest bonus you received
- ii) the value of your stock options or other forms of equity
- iii) the value of any perks you received including train passes, parking space, rental subsidy, gym membership, subsidized childcare, insurance benefits, vacation, etc.
- iv) anything else that was of monetary value to you and can be reasonably quantified.

Examples of possible reasons why last salary was significantly lower or not comparable to the one you’re currently being considered for:

- i) the job was more junior;
- ii) the job was with the government and this job is with the private sector;
- iii) the responsibilities for this job is a lot greater;
- iv) the pay structure was totally different compared to how this company compensates its employees;
- v) had a much shorter commute;
- vi) my last company was located in an area where the cost of living was much lower, so you accepted a rate that was market for that area;
- vii) your last company was in a different industry from this company.

**If the Employer Acts Surprised and Says That They Pay [\$\_\_\_\_]:**

*“Well, as I mentioned, I need to do some research and -- as I mentioned – the number is preliminary. I’d be willing to consider \$\_\_\_\_ if it’s within market range and what you offer others for a similar position. I’d also take in other considerations, such as quality of life, the company culture, other benefits offered, and opportunities for professional development. Do you offer other benefits in addition to [\$\_\_\_\_]?”*

## Upon Receiving the Initial Offer:

If it's obviously a lowball offer:

*"Oh. (pause) Thank you, I really appreciate the offer – always good to be wanted! It's significantly lower than what I had budgeted, though. Would you be able to tell me how you came to that number? Is there much room to negotiate here?"*

After the employer provides his/her response: *"Could I get back to you on [\_\_ day(s)]? As with all big decisions, I need to "sleep on it."*

The objective with this question is to find out what their concerns may be about you, so that you can address the problem. For example, if their concern is lack of experience, then suggest a salary increase upon your first work anniversary as you will have proven your abilities by then.

If it's a reasonable or high offer:

*"Thank you! I really appreciate the offer. Could I get back to you on [\_\_ day(s)]? As with all big decisions, I need to "sleep on it."*

***In all cases***, ask to see the offer in writing:

*"In the meantime, could you send the offer package to me? I'd like a few days to review it."*

---

## THE DISCUSSION

### The Negotiation

Starting the discussion the initial offer was low:

*"I really want to work for \_\_. I love [the company, product, people, etc....give a reason or two]. However, I have certain expenses such as [school loans, mortgage, high rent, car repairs, car loan, etc.] that I wouldn't be able to cover at that salary."*

*"Could you go a bit higher? Would you consider \_\_ more [express this as \$ or a % increase, whichever sounds smaller]? Or perhaps some increase in salary to that amount after [\_\_ months]?"*

Starting the discussion if the initial offer was reasonable or high:

*"I think it's a very reasonable offer. I want to thank you again trusting me with these responsibilities. If I could get [X, Y, and Z] then I can agree to it right now otherwise I'd appreciate it if you could let me think about this a bit more."*

Always remember that they could be telling you the truth *or they could be using a negotiating persona*. See The Bluff, for example, in the "Top 20 Tactics" by the Shapiro Negotiations Institute for how to identify and handle the most common negotiating personas.

***In all cases***, ask to see in writing everything that's been agreed to, especially if you negotiated conditions that are contingent upon certain future events.