

LAND *the* JOB



Six Months to Start Your
Software Career

RYAN LATTA

Land the Job

Six Months to Start Your Software Career

Ryan Latta

This book is for sale at <http://leanpub.com/landthejob>

This version was published on 2020-11-11

ISBN 978-1-7344861-0-0



This is a [Leanpub](#) book. Leanpub empowers authors and publishers with the Lean Publishing process. [Lean Publishing](#) is the act of publishing an in-progress ebook using lightweight tools and many iterations to get reader feedback, pivot until you have the right book and build traction once you do.

© 2019 - 2020 Ryan Latta

Tweet This Book!

Please help Ryan Latta by spreading the word about this book on [Twitter!](#)

The suggested hashtag for this book is [#LandtheJob](#).

Find out what other people are saying about the book by clicking on this link to search for this hashtag on Twitter:

[#LandtheJob](#)

*For my family, writing community, and the people who put their
faith in me to help them with their career.*

Contents

Introduction	i
The Industry	ii
Thanks	iii
10 - The Offer & Negotiating	v
The Offer Letter	v
The Benefits	vii
Other Paperwork	xiii
Negotiation	xvii
Signing the Offer	xxi

Introduction

Welcome to *Land the Job!* Before we get into the meat of the book, which will equip you to land that first and future job in the software industry, I thought I'd take the time to share why this book was written in the first place.

A few years ago I was working in a small consultancy, and we brought in a friend to join us. He didn't have any previous software experience, although we thought we could get him up to speed quickly. This began a two-year-long mentoring program between our new hire and me.

We covered all of the essentials needed to be a software developer. We taught what variables and functions are. We showed how to organize code. We demonstrated source control. What we taught grew in complexity as he learned on the job and from his mentors.

Eventually, he was ready to spread his wings and get out into the industry. He asked me for help in finding that first job, and our mentoring relationship changed. Over the coming months, I helped him develop his resume and sharpen his ability to find employment through scouring job postings and leveraging his network. We talked through how to get through the interviewing process and even salary negotiation.

After a few months, he landed his job. He got the salary of his dreams. My payment was a bottle of bourbon, and it was one of the best bourbons I've had.

I wondered if I could help someone else in the same way and I signed up to be a mentor again, this time with the focus on getting that first job in software. I suggested it would likely take six months to get that first job, and at the end of their six months they had their first signed offer.

While I wouldn't claim I have all the answers, I have developed a repeatable way to get a job in software. I honed this system through my career of ten years, and then taught others to do the same.

My goal is to equip people with the skills needed to get that first job and several afterward.

The Industry

If you look up the fastest growing industries, software development¹ has remained one of the most in-demand for years, and that trend isn't slowing down. If you keep looking, you'll find companies everywhere expressing the sentiment that they cannot find good people quickly enough.

You'll also find many people struggling to get jobs.

Companies are working hard to attract talent while simultaneously failing to hire it.

How can this be? Is the job that difficult?

Not really. My current hypothesis is that the software industry is so bad at finding people that it excludes perfectly qualified people because the candidates don't know how to navigate the hiring process.

I aim to equip everyone with what they need to be successful and maybe even prompt better hiring practices that render this book obsolete.

Beyond that, if we look at what it's like in software development compared to a lot of industries, you could do much worse. A given day for a developer will involve showing up to work in whatever clothes you're comfortable in at a time that is convenient. Your manager may show up at 8:30 AM, but developers might not show

¹"Fastest Growing Occupations" bls.gov. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/fastest-growing.htm> (accessed December 26, 2019)

up until 10 AM without any worry. You'll work at a computer that you've set up just for you. You can get some coffee and maybe a bite from the snacks that they provide. A few morning meetings with the team and you're into code. You can get up and take breaks with your colleagues. There will usually be an area to relax in, maybe play a game, have some drinks or snacks, and chat. The day ends, and everyone heads home.

The demand is high which means compensation is quite good considering the amount of training needed. The mobility of the workforce means that you will be able to search for increasingly better opportunities with little to no cost to you. This job can and will pay six figures—if you can get in.

There will be the other trappings that come with any job. Deadlines, poor communication, frustrating decisions, and so on is the stuff that makes any position feel like work. But you'll be paid well to get through those things, and there will always be another opportunity if it is too much to bear.

Software development isn't a job where you'll be at significant risk of physical injury. It isn't one where you'll be at high risk of being fired. It is a job that asks that you know the tools, techniques, and that you work well on a team. You can learn to do this job, and I can show you how to get it.

Thanks

Getting a job is hard work. I don't think enough people talk about how hard it is. My preferred phrase is "Soul-crushing." Applying for jobs and hearing nothing or hearing rejection over and over is tough to accept. I've often wondered if I wasn't good enough or if I wasn't cut-out for the industry.

I don't think that's true, but rather that the game is rigged. I believe at this point that getting a job is a unique set of skills that can be

taught and learned. If you have the right skills for this maybe the search for that next job won't be soul-crushing.

There are so many things I'll cover in the book about the nature of getting a job in software that I don't want to spoil what is coming up in the chapters ahead, but I do want to make it a point to write this:

Thank you so very much. May you find a way to your job in the pages ahead.

10 - The Offer & Negotiating

All that hard work you've put in has paid off when you have an offer in hand. You earned all the yeses you needed, and now it is time to look at the offer, potentially negotiate, and sign the offer to start your job.

Before signing on the bottom line, there are some things I want to draw your attention to. Receiving the offer is the point at which you'll see more clearly what you're going to do for the company and decide if you are going to negotiate or not.

The Offer Letter

When you look at your offer letter, it will likely contain a few key elements. The items I want to draw your attention to are:

- Start date
- Compensation
- Expiration

The start date will likely be something that you've already discussed throughout your interview, but it is good to double-check that date now. Double-checking is especially true if you are relocating for the job. Generally, companies prefer to have employees start on Monday and have people's last day on Friday. If your start date is a Wednesday, you may want to check to see if that was intentional, or they would prefer it be the following Monday. Sometimes the date is selected because it falls in line with the standard two-week

notice or that there is some other circumstance they are planning around. Either way, check the date and make sure there are no surprises.

The compensation is the star of the show in the offer letter. This section is where the company will describe to you your salary and other compensation like stock, equity, or bonuses. You may also see things like your paid-time-off amount here too. I don't think I've ever had an issue with any of these numbers being different than what was discussed, but it'd be terrible to find out that you are getting paid less than you thought because you didn't check in the letter.

Lastly, in some offer letters, you'll find an expiration. You'll either see this in the email that you receive with the letter or see it in the offer itself. The most common expiration period I see is forty-eight hours. That means you have forty-eight hours from the moment you receive the letter to return it, or the offer isn't valid. I want to say that I find this to be an obnoxious practice.

Choosing to work for a company is a significant decision that often includes families, budgets, and planning the exit of your existing job. The expiration, in my opinion, adds unnecessary stress. When I receive an offer with an expiration, I call up immediately and tell them the latest moment I intend to give them an answer. That may be outside of the expiration, but I make it clear they'll know one way or another from me soon. If they want to yank the offer, they can, and I'll consider myself spared from a company with poor policies.

You may also find that you get an offer on a Friday that has an expiration of forty-eight hours. I like to call the company up and ask who is working on Sunday to receive my letter. That conversation usually makes it obvious that this policy wasn't thought about before they sent it, and it is unreasonable to have a forty-eight-hour expiration. The point is, you don't have to accept the offer in terms of expiration, and you can set terms with them.

From the company's perspective, they are trying to prevent people from sitting on an offer. If you received an offer and said nothing for two weeks, the company has to figure out if they should keep interviewing even though they have a candidate they want. This limbo situation is costly for a company to be in as interviewing is expensive, but they don't know to stop since you aren't signing the offer. Throughout the hiring process, companies generally have all the information and power, which is difficult for a candidate to navigate. A company feeling uneasy here, in the end, doesn't prompt any sympathy from me.

At the bottom of the letter, you'll have a line to sign with a date. Until this letter is signed, nothing is official, and you do not have a job. So celebrate that you have the offer, but if it isn't signed, you're not finished yet.

The Benefits

I mentioned above that you'd likely see your compensation in your offer letter. Your salary is one of the main components, but it isn't the only thing that you need to look at when signing an offer. Generally, the elements that I want you to look at are:

- Salary
- Bonus
- Stock and Equity
- Vacation and Sick leave
- Health Care
- Retirement

The salary we've already covered above, the main thing is to see that it is the salary you'll accept or negotiate from as a base. You may view it written in terms of what you'll make each pay period or what you'll make per year. Either way, check the math and see that it works out and that you're comfortable with the number.

Bonus

Depending on what industry you go into and your seniority, you may find yourself looking at a bonus in your compensation package. Bonuses are rare for software development, but I'm covering it because it might pop up at some point in your career.

Bonuses are typically listed as a percentage of your income. So if you were making one-hundred thousand with a ten percent bonus, then you could be looking at an extra ten thousand dollars at some point in the year.

Now, it can get more complex than this, but for the sake of the offer letter and compensation, this level of detail is sufficient.

The way bonuses typically are paid out is a bit more interesting, and it gives clues as to how likely you'll be to receive one. When the company decides to offer a bonus, they pool the money available for bonuses together, and then it is passed from the highest level down through lower levels — each level taking money out of the pool for their group. Software developers are typically at the bottom of the pile. So that means that if bonuses are going out, everyone above you in the organization has to get their share and there still be enough left over. How do companies decide what goes into the pool? Well, often it is based on the company's performance. If the company has a good quarter or year, money will go into the pool.

The bonus pool means that bonuses might be getting paid out, but it just isn't making its way down to you.

Remember when I said that your bonus is described as a percentage of your salary? Well, that is your maximum bonus. Your minimum is zero. If a bonus does get paid out to you, it will never be more than your maximum, but it can easily be less than that.

Also, the conditions of receiving your bonus may be conditional on company performance, your team's performance, or your performance. I've never met a company that would give more clear criteria as to what any of those things mean. The lack of certainty

around knowing if I'm in the running for a bonus means that I treat it as a coin flip.

Often when I realize that bonuses are a part of the compensation, I ask, "When was the last bonus paid?" The answer to that question will tell me how real the bonus is. If they haven't paid a bonus in a few years, I won't pay much attention to it. If they pay every year, I'll get excited. I highly recommend that you do not consider your bonus as money that you will earn or make when you are budgeting. Don't bet your mortgage or rent on a bonus.

Since bonuses are often described as a percentage of your salary, then the higher your salary, the higher your potential bonus. This relationship between bonus and salary greatly incentivizes the savvy interviewer to negotiate a higher salary, back to the hundred-thousand salary example. If you negotiate up to one-hundred and ten thousand dollars, then you just earned another ten thousand from salary. Negotiating that extra ten thousand gives you twenty-one thousand each year — ten from negotiating, and eleven thousand from the bonus.

Stock and Equity

Another common part of a compensation package and offer is stock or equity. This topic is fairly confusing, so I'll try only to cover the basics involved.

Essentially these two items boil down to the amount of the company you have. Employers offer stock to you as an option to purchase or in shares just like you can buy in the market. Only a company gives them to you with the "Option" to buy them at a price independent of the market. Equity is essentially the same, but exists privately within the company and conveys ownership.

Stock and equity come down to you being able to make money if the company grows and improves, and you are able to share your stock or equity in the company at the right time.

Vesting

If that isn't strange enough, stock, equity, and retirement often come with a vesting schedule. Vesting is essentially a time you have to wait until it's yours to use.

So for example, if you are going to get six hundred shares of stock vested over four years, you won't be able to use that stock until you've been at the company for four years.

Depending on the vesting terms, quitting early may mean you forfeit everything or some fraction of what you've accumulated through the vesting schedule. Looking at the vesting schedule helps you see when all that compensation they list in your package will actually be yours. Also, looking at the vesting schedule can help you make sense of where this particular job sits in terms of your career.

I recently quit a company before the vesting of my 401k was complete. That means I lost a significant portion of what the company contributed to my retirement. I calculated my loss from leaving the company and put that number next to a job that gets me further in my career. When I looked at the money that way, I was able to decide if I should stay or go.

Vacation and Sick Leave

If you're passionate about travel, seeing the world, or spending time with your family, vacation may be very important to you as a part of your compensation package.

In the software industry, it is common to start with somewhere between fifteen and twenty days paid vacation. You may or may not get sick days as well, and they may or may not roll over from year to year.

Companies have a lot of variety in how they give vacation. Sometimes it is one lump amount that includes sick leave and time off.

Sometimes they are separate. Pay attention to how they are listed. You will also want to consider the paid holidays they offer. If you need a set of holidays for your religious or other needs, now is the time to bring that up.

A footnote about vacation is that the more time they give to employees, the more liability the company has. Companies keep the money they are going to pay you while you're on vacation, off to the side. That pool of money represents a significant, unusable amount of cash that the company cannot use for anything. The overhead companies keep by giving vacation has given rise to them using some creative strategies.

Unlimited vacation is an approach companies can use to reduce their liability. If this is their policy, ask how you get to take a vacation. Sometimes it is unlimited, but "With manager approval only." In a job where you have a bad manager, this could mean you don't get any vacation and are made to feel guilty for being sick as well.

You may also want to ask if they have a standard vacation policy, how that vacation accrues, and if you can spend into debt if you join the company late in the year. The situation comes up often that you join a company but have a week of vacation planned. You won't have accrued the time off yet, so you need to spend the vacation time you'll earn later in the year. It's a pain to keep track of, but if they allow it, you have flexibility. If they don't, get used to taking big vacations at the end of the year.

Health Care

Healthcare is a complex subject. The essential parts are that you want access to healthcare, and you want your company to pay for as much of it as possible.

There are broadly two types of healthcare plans that you'll encounter, Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) and High-Deductible

Plan (HDP). Knowing the difference helps when you look at a company.

PPO plans tend to be more expensive every month for your premium, but your costs when you need care are lower. So you may pay more every month, but when you go to the doctor, it costs maybe twenty dollars. If you go to the hospital, many of the services will be covered. So you are trading a higher month-to-month with a lower incident cost.

HDP plans, on the other hand, have a lower monthly premium, but you have to deal with a higher deductible. You can almost think of it as the opposite of a PPO plan. The deductible component is how much you need to spend on healthcare beyond your monthly premium before your insurance helps. So if you have a three thousand dollar deductible, you will need to spend three thousand in health care before insurance helps. To offset these plans, they usually come with a Health-Savings Account (HSA). This is a bank account that you can put money into for health care.

While explaining all the details of how this works, and how to run scenarios, and pick the right plan is outside the scope of this book, knowing what kind of options you have is important at this moment. If they offer healthcare plans that are too expensive or don't meet your current or future medical needs, you need to know that now.

Think about if you'll be covering your family, starting a family, growing your family. If you have any health issues that require frequent or expensive treatment, weigh that as well. Health care is one of the biggest concerns for job-hunters. Many will stay in jobs they hate because the health care is excellent.

Retirement

Moving on to retirement, you want to look for a few things. First that they offer a 401k and that they match. Beyond that, it comes

down to you and how you are planning to build wealth to ensure you make the most of the retirement offerings.

A 401k is an investment account. You use it to invest in the stock market. The unique part is that it comes with specific tax rules that are beneficial for employees investing for retirement. There are also rules if you take your money out before retirement. So, leveraging a 401k throughout your career offers you a unique way of preparing for retirement while managing your taxes along the way.

The matching that comes with your 401k is a perk many companies offer. Companies will offer to match dollar-to-dollar what you put into your account. If they provide a six percent match, they'll put in six percent of what you put in. They may set a maximum amount on it, or some other odd terms, but they all boil down to this basic concept.

What this means to you is that this perk offers you the chance to get a lot of extra money towards retirement for half the effort and cost. If you can afford to do it, I recommend that you minimally contribute up to your match. That way you get the free money from your company.

While many companies offer retirement, comparing their match is a way to separate companies along their benefits packages. Knowing this information helps you select companies to apply to as well as plan your financial future while employed.

Other Paperwork

Your package will contain numerous pages of legal documentation for you to sign. Often you'll see these papers after you've signed the offer. I do want to raise awareness of a few pieces that exist in almost every bit of hiring paperwork.

Your human resources folks can help you understand these pieces.

Non-Disclosure Agreement

These agreements are pretty standard. Read yours to see exactly what yours entails. The basics are that these agreements ask you never to share company secrets with people outside of the company. It is simple enough in principle, but it can be hard to know what constitutes a secret. For example, if you were part of some interesting internal project where you got really good at high-scale financial transactions, you'd also be a great candidate for another job. What part of the skills and knowledge that you developed are secrets, and which aren't?

My rule of thumb here is that I tend to avoid talking about any detail that was directly related to a company generating revenue. So in this example, the scalable transactions aren't the secret. The magic algorithm or business model that leveraged that scale is the secret.

Look at your NDA, note the terms, and if there are any expirations or if it exists forever. If your job is at an agency or consultancy where you'll have clients, have a conversation about how the NDA works.

Non-Compete, Non-Solicitation, and Moonlighting

These clauses in your paperwork all represent different aspects of employment beyond your job. While rarely do these clauses create any issues, they sometimes present a couple of challenges for the ambitious and opportunistic employee.

Non-compete clauses refer to preventing you from going straight over to your competitor. This clause relates to the NDA above. Many companies with a sales group will have non-compete terms in their employment packages. This clause exists to prevent someone with a deep network of clients or leads taking them when they

go to a competitor. For software development, it is unlikely to cause an issue unless you work for a consultancy or agency.

Non-solicitation is a bit trickier to understand. This clause exists to prevent poaching employees. The idea is that if you leave, you can't come back and try to get current employees to work with you somewhere else. This policy also applies to the reverse scenario as well. If there are consultants at your job, you cannot solicit them to work with you either. For many developers, this won't be an issue but talk with your managers and human resources people to better understand how this works.

As you work in the field, you'll build a network of people you trust and want to work with. Understanding how non-solicitation clauses work helps you work with these people regularly throughout your career.

Lastly, we have moonlighting. Moonlighting is when you take or have a side-job. You may teach or mentor in your free time. You may be involved with open-source. You may be building a video game. Most of the time, your company won't care unless it competes with them. It is still a good idea to bring up their policy and the clause and mention what you want to or do work on so it can be written in as an exclusion.

Related to moonlighting, there are sometimes clauses that exist that attempt to give ownership of your work to the company. Moonlighting is only one of the places where that can happen.

Intellectual Property

Somewhere in your hiring packet, there will be a section that will go over intellectual property rights. I want you to pay very close attention to it.

At a minimum, these clauses will say that anything you do with company equipment or time is the property of the company. This

minimum clause comes with several implications that very few companies think through. If you work for a company and they want you to sign this document but work on your personal computer, stop. As soon as you agree to use your personal computer for work, you have also transferred everything you've done to the company as well. Every side project is their property. Every good idea in an email is theirs.

It is sometimes hard to set such clear boundaries, but start the conversation. In the HBO series Silicon Valley, they bring this situation up as the main character who built a side project gets taken to court by his employer. They attempted to prove that he violated these clauses by using company time or equipment on his side project. The situation resolved when it was revealed that the employment contracts were all illegal and unenforceable.

While this show is a parody, it is well-researched. Many parts of this section and your offer paperwork may be unenforceable or even illegal. Reading your paperwork gives you an idea of what they are asking of you. If it seems unreasonable, say something.

Now, I mentioned the minimum clauses claim everything you do with their time or equipment belongs to the company. They can sometimes go beyond by claiming everything you do while employed belongs to them. I do not sign these agreements. Human resources will always assure me that it doesn't mean anything, but I refuse. Remember, these clauses transfer ownership to the company. I always have side-projects I'm tinkering with, and I'm not giving them all away for free.

If you see that more expansive version, bring it up. Making sure you know what you are signing helps you understand the boundaries between your job and personal life and ambitions. Ambitious developers have built so many great things in their free time. If you have a great idea, pursue it, and make sure the company's participation in it is clearly defined.

Negotiation

Now that the boring stuff is out of the way, let's talk about how to negotiate better compensation. Be warned, attempting this takes a fantastic amount of courage. If the interview process was stressful, get ready.

Before I jump into the details of how I negotiate, I want to make a note for the first-time job-hunters. I typically don't advocate you negotiate your first job. The reasons are that you are unlikely to have a wealth of experience behind you to justify how amazing you are, and you have to be able to walk away. First-timers rarely fit those two criteria. I recommend instead that you get the first job, and start negotiating your second job.

There are a few things throughout the book I've mentioned about negotiation, and there are a few principals I'll bring up:

- First one to say a number loses
- Always 10% more
- Have a reason
- Be prepared to walk away
- It isn't just salary

First One to Say a Number Loses

Throughout your interview process, interviewers will ask what your salary history is, or what you want to make. If you're going to set yourself up to negotiate well, avoid those questions.

I respond to those requests by saying something like, "I'm more interested in seeing if we're a good fit. If we are, I'm confident we'll find a number that works."

If you work with recruiters, it can be a bit more difficult as they don't usually like negotiation and will want to set a number very

early in the process. At this later stage in my career, I prohibit recruiters from discussing compensation on my behalf.

Now, let's say you do speak a number at some point in the process. All hope isn't lost; it's just less ideal. When you offer a number, the company will check against the salary bands they have in place. If you said something too high or too low, it might not go well for you. You are unlikely to know the band, so you'll be guessing based on your sense of worth and the market. However, from the moment that number comes out, that number will anchor the rest of your compensation discussion. If you anchored to a low part of the salary band, that is the compensation you will negotiate.

When they have to give a number they are forced to weigh a few things. First, they will pick a number within their band. Second, they have to decide if they want to go back to interviewing again, and third, the company has to decide how badly they want you now. Most companies are fatigued by interviewing, and when they find someone, they want to hire them. These factors tend to encourage a higher number when they offer one first.

Always 10% More

So if you're going to negotiate, how much should you ask for? Well, I recommend you start by asking for ten percent more than your offer. If they offer one hundred thousand, ask for one hundred and ten thousand.

Now, this is a simple guideline, but it works almost every time. Feel free to change the number to whatever you think is right. If you know your value and the market demand is way higher than ten percent, you ask for what you are worth and what the market supports.

The reason ten percent works well is that by the time you are negotiating, the company has spent a lot of time, energy, and money finding you. When a company hires you, they also pay their parts of

the benefits, equipment, adjustments to their insurance, and so on. Their total cost having you employed is significant, but ten percent doesn't feel that way. Also, asking for ten percent for this process to be over feels like a cheap purchase.

If you're unsure where to start, start by asking for ten percent more than the offer.

Have a Reason

When you get the offer, you'll likely be talking with human resources. They are unable to negotiate with you most of the time. So when you negotiate, they'll have to take it back to the managers for approval. Providing a reason helps them present your case adequately and give you the best chance. Without providing a reason, they can look at you compared to a similar candidate who didn't ask.

You want to have a list of things about you that are incredible that may not have come out in your interview. Throughout your various jobs, I recommend you create a notebook where you can jot down incredible feedback you get, and your accomplishments. The interview process will pull some of the juicier bits out, but if you do this simple practice, you'll have dozens or hundreds of examples to justify higher compensation.

You don't need to worry if your list of things equals the amount you're negotiating for. You only need to sell it. Just like when writing a resume, you write for the outcomes and impacts, you talk about the outcomes and impacts you have here too. This practice also prepares you for a raise while employed.

When you look at the compensation package, you may also notice certain holes or issues that are good reasons to negotiate with as well. I joined one company and negotiated an extra ten percent because their healthcare was inadequate. Another, I negotiated the

amount of my bonus because they hadn't paid them regularly. I kept the bonus as well.

Whether your history is full of gems, or the compensation package itself offers the opportunity, have a reason you use when negotiating.

Be Prepared to Walk Away

When you negotiate, you are asking for something that they can refuse. You need to be prepared to hear the rejection of your negotiation mentally. You have to be mentally prepared to walk away.

Now, you may not walk away, but if your frame of mind is there, you can negotiate confidently. You can also look at the situation from a place of confidence instead of desperation. That confidence will help you see the company as one you can choose to work with instead of one that you need to work for.

This attitude is a reason I typically recommend first-timers avoiding negotiation. Many are trying so desperately to break into the industry that the thought of losing the job over negotiation is too much. Don't negotiate that first time if that's you. Take the job. Know this isn't your forever job, and you can try again in a few months.

It Isn't Just the Salary

Salary may be the most obvious thing to negotiate, but it is far from the only thing. Here's a list of other parts of your compensation you may want to think about:

- Bonus
- Stock
- Vacation

- Childcare
- Transportation
- Professional development
- Equipment
- Working hours
- Remote work

This list is far from exhaustive, but it does highlight that beyond the money you make, there are things you can negotiate. Part of knowing what to ask for is knowing what lifestyle you want. Once you can visualize the life you want to have, you know more clearly what you need from this job to get closer to it. If you have children and the stress of paying for childcare is taking the life out of you, see if the company will offset the costs. If you're in a major metropolitan area where traffic is terrible, or parking is awful, negotiate a transportation stipend so you aren't worried about getting to work. Negotiate a better life for yourself.

Signing the Offer

You passed the interviews, you've negotiated, and you have the final offer. You're ready to accept. There is one last detail I must bring up before we are all done, and you can enjoy this moment.

Many people have a hard time knowing when to talk about interviewing, the potential or received offer, or providing notice to their current job. With good reason, it is confusing, and it feels like if you make a mistake here, things can go south.

The rule of thumb I advocate you follow is that you don't say anything to anyone until you have a signed offer. Everything can change until you've put a pen to that paper. Verbal offers can be rescinded. The job can vanish during negotiation. It isn't until you accept the offer in writing that you have a job.

The harm in talking about interviewing or potential offers you have is that your current employer will likely have to make plans to transition you out of your current responsibilities. They will do this before you provide notice. That means that you could wind up sitting at your current job with nothing to do, and if your new job falls through, you'll be in a tough position. By this time, others are doing your work, the company is expecting you to quit, and yet you remain. More often than not, this situation feels so awkward that many developers leave. The downside is they don't have a job lined up.

Say nothing until the offer is signed.

When you do sign the offer, the next bit is submitting your notice. Depending on where you live and the local laws, you may have to provide a certain amount of notice to your employer. Do your homework. If you live in an at-will state, you can quit at any moment without any reason and without penalty. Knowing the laws regarding terminating your employment are important, as they change how you may leave.

It is pretty common to provide two weeks of notice. Giving notice means that you go to your boss with a written resignation indicating that your last day will be two weeks from when you submit the resignation. This event triggers your transfer of responsibilities, and human resources will begin to arrange the termination of your benefits. Even if you are in a job you hate, I don't recommend quitting in a flashy way that gives you personal satisfaction at the expense of others.

We live in a surprisingly small world, and word travels quickly. If a story about you travels far enough, you may find that a future employer knows that you are a jerk when you quit, and they may decide to pass on you before you ever have a shot. Leave on professional terms. Be clear about your last day, and take it upon yourself to transition your knowledge and responsibilities to a new person.