

IX. NEGOTIATING COMPENSATION

A. What to do if the job posting states that you must include your salary requirements.

If you ignore the request, your application will likely also be ignored. You need to get good information about what salaries are in that geographic location, for that type of practice, for that size of firm. There is a great deal of information available on the Internet, from bar associations, trade associations, and the CSO. The CSO, for example, has a copy of Altman Weil's annual Survey of Law Firm Economics, U.S. Government Salary Schedules, and NALP publications on compensation.

When stating a salary requirement, it is also a good idea to state a range. Realize, however, that you will very likely not get more than the upper limit that you state.

B. When can you negotiate?

First, realize that you do not begin to discuss or negotiate compensation until you have an offer.

Generally, salaries at large law firms are set and not negotiable. Similarly, government salaries are set based on education level, years of experience, etc. Medium and small firms, however, generally anticipate negotiating salary and benefits. Therefore things such as parking, 401Ks, etc. are all negotiable.

C. What variables do you need to consider in negotiating compensation?

The following factors will also impact your salary:

- What you earned in your last job.
- What people with similar education and experience receive in the field.
- What value you will add to the enterprise. Will you enhance profitability?
- Your financial needs.
- What benefits do you need, healthcare, etc.
- What are the billable hour requirements?
- Will you receive a budget to entertain clients?
- What type of administrative support will you receive, i.e., Will you have a secretary? Access to a paralegal or law clerk?
- Are your responsibilities clearly defined in your employment agreement?
- Will the employer pay for bar dues, CLEs, etc. If you are a recent graduate, will they cover bar review courses and bar exam fees?
- Relocation costs.
- Retirement plans.
- Bonuses.
- Credit for bringing in clients, new associates.
- Does the employer permit flexible work arrangements?

The above advice was compiled from "Negotiating Compensation and Other Terms of Employment," published by Federal Reports Inc. Copyright 1998.