

While many feel that negotiation is an art, it's important to recognize that all negotiations are based off substance. In this case, the substance is you! Your experience, skills, and talents you have to offer. Don't get too cocky though, all employers expect you to be professional when negotiating. While your talents are needed, it's your attitude, passion, and willingness to serve instead of be served that are keys to both your and the company's success.

The following question is a great way to open negotiations: "Is any part of this offer negotiable?" For most entry-level positions and almost all internships the answer is "No". However, you need to be prepared to answer if they say "Yes, what did you have in mind?" or "Why do you feel you deserve that consideration?" Keep in mind that it is not appropriate to say "Due to the cost of living..." or to give them another similar factor which has undoubtedly been accounted for already in your offer. Your best response is that you feel that they haven't adequately considered your particular skills, experience, or value you will bring to the company.

When negotiating, be sure your employer isn't misunderstanding your intentions. If an employer believes that your goal is just to obtain "the steak dinner" or highest salary, or if an employer feels you are too high maintenance, you will be labeled as "pricing yourself outside of the market". "Pricing yourself outside of the market" means they don't believe you understand the current market and what you should expect to receive for the entry-level talents you possess.

Be sure to know the current market value of the industry position you want for the location of your employment. Your entry level pay and compensation will be dependent on what region of the country you are living in. Glassdoor.com can be a great aid in helping you determine competitive compensation for your position in that area.

Interns can use a rule of thumb used by many major industry employers in which interns are provided with around 80% of the salary wage that an equivalent full-time position would receive with no additional benefits. You can also use this rule of thumb to calculate the potential entry-level salary offer. However, remember that once benefits get added you don't want to be so salary sensitive that you fail to score the full value of the offer.

Recently, an IS student was considering asking for more salary. When he provided me with all the benefits (a high 401K match, a restrictive stock option based on company performance, a potential additional bonus based on company and personal performance, paid medical benefits, etc.) the total entry-level compensation reached well over \$70,000. Would it be worth losing the job by "pricing yourself outside of the

market” because you feel that you deserve at least another \$3 to \$5 thousand in salary? Remember that other offers you may have heard about may not provide the same overall compensation. (As you evaluate internships -- determining which is the best could be based on what you hope to receive in a competitive offer. However, do not miss the best internship or the best career by only focusing on the money).

Many students have reported being asked in interviews if they have offers and from whom. Most have felt very uncomfortable in responding. Don't stress, and be honest. There is no problem in disclosing whether or not you have an offer and in most cases from whom. You may even provide a general date for when those offers might expire. However, "It is not necessary or even appropriate to indicate what the offer/s is/are valued at." If employers are wanting to hire you, rest assured that it doesn't matter if you have to tell them that you haven't received any offers yet. You could say, if it is true, "No, but I am expecting other offers." If you say "Yes", some will act quickly to put an offer on the table, but others will just follow their timelines. Employers do want to know if there are other competitors -- especially, if that competitor is in the same industry and/or in the same region of the country. Everything you provide will be used to evaluate your overall value. It may influence an employer to provide a better offer, but employers are not required to do so.

It is not appropriate to negotiate simply because you have two or more offers. It can be viewed as pressuring. Even when you have been told - "Call if you have a better offer." You need to know your audience...the culture of the employer. A non-IS student recently lost an offer because he indicated that he had received a better offer. He wasn't asked -- The employer just said they were removing their offer. The student wanted to work for that employer -- yet, he was thinking that by providing the information he might receive a higher offer. However, he now had a better offer, but not necessarily with the employer he really wanted.

Evaluate your offer/s based on your priorities and passions.

Bottom line: If you intend to let someone know that you have received a better offer -- ensure that you first state that you are still very much interested in working for whomever you are calling.

If you negotiate -- Be gracious and act appropriately -- respect the negative response. If you can't fall in love with them...you probably shouldn't negotiate with them either.