

Use these savvy tricks to negotiate a better job offer

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When Cathy texted her boyfriend to tell him that she had just accepted a job offer from a large Midtown law firm, he texted her back, “How much?”

After she told him, he asked, “What was their first offer?”

She answered with the same number.

You took the first one? Joking, right?” he replied.

It turns out that Cathy, who has asked that her last name be omitted for professional reasons, wasn’t kidding at all.

“Stupid me. I probably could have gotten \$5,000 or even \$10,000 more,” says the attorney, who lives in Queens.

Jobvite’s Job Seeker Nation study, released in May, revealed that only 29 percent of job seekers negotiated their salary for their current or most recent job offer. Other statistics suggest it’s even fewer than that.

“Most people don’t have the nerve to ask for more,” says Bob Cadet, vice president of Robert Half Technology, an information-technology staffing service in Midtown.

That’s truer of women than it is of men.

“Some women think that asking for a higher salary is rude,” says Sarah Frankel, CEO of recruitment firm the 525 Group.

In fact, most employers won’t be the least bit put off if you want to negotiate your compensation. “Up to 90 percent expect it,” says Joel Garfinkle, executive coach and author of [“Get Paid What You’re Worth: How to Negotiate a Raise or Higher Starting Salary”](#) (available now at [GarfinkleExecutiveCoaching.com](#)).

But you have to haggle in a professional manner that won’t put you at odds with what could be your future employer. So gather your facts long before you begin the conversation, experts say.

KNOW YOUR VALUE

A good place to start is by finding the market rate for the job that you are applying for. You can ask the recruiter, if you’re working with one. If not, Web sites such as [Salary.com](#), [Indeed.com](#) and [GlassDoor.com](#) are full of information.

“This will tell you what the role is worth,” says Cadet, noting that it isn’t necessarily the same as what you deserve. If you want \$100,000 and the role is graded for \$50,000, you’re probably not a good fit for the job and you shouldn’t waste anyone’s time, including your own.

KEEP YOUR SALARY TO YOURSELF

The employer won’t know what you’re currently earning or what you’re looking for until you actually tell them. In other words, at that point all of the cards are face up for you, giving you the upper hand until you give the employer a number. The experts all insist that you should delay talking about your salary for as long as you can.

DON'T MAX OUT

If you have a salary figure in mind that is within their budget, aim near the top of that range, but not the very top, Cadet advises. "You need to leave room for them to give you a raise once you're in the role. Many companies won't make an offer if it's too tight," he says.

If you're that exceptional, an employer may change the grade of the job, or the role itself, so that they can pay you more, but for them to even try to do that, you have to be ready to sell all the skills that you bring to the table.

"Be prepared to defend what you think is your fair market rate," Frankel says. "This goes beyond the required qualifications listed in the job posting and might include having an advanced degree, unique experience that's valuable to the employer, or a strong track record working for a competitor. But don't lose sight of the fact that at some point, everyone is replaceable."

BE PREPARED TO STATE YOUR CASE

Once an employer's formal offer is on the table, the final negotiations begin.

If the offer is too low, "Act surprised," says Garfinkle. He suggests saying something like, "Based on all of the value that I bring to the table, I was expecting more." Follow up with stories about problems that have been solved because of actions you've taken, and "include measurable results," Garfinkle says.

NEGOTIATE FOR MORE THAN MONEY

Frankel's approach is different. Before you go back to negotiate, she says, "be very clear about what you are looking for and what you are willing to take," she says. Don't limit yourself to money, either. Working from home or getting extra vacation may be just as valuable to you, so ask for that, too.

And by all means keep your personal needs out of it, says Rachel Bitte, chief people officer at Jobvite. "It's not HR's responsibility to cover your newly increased rent or car payment."

KNOW WHEN TO FOLD 'EM

Once the employer comes back with a second offer, be prepared to say yes or no, say the experts. Going an extra round probably won't get you very far and could even cause resentment.

"That's a bad way to start a relationship with your next employer," says Cadet.