

The Handbook For Evaluating A Job Offer



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Introduction To Job Offer Negotiation

“There may be luck in getting a good job, but there is no luck in keeping it.”

Jonathan Ogden Armour

By just showing up for an interview and answering all of the questions, it doesn't necessarily mean that you will be a successful manager of your career. Only after you have made it through all of the interviews and have been formally extended a job offer comes the task of evaluating the offer, accepting the offer, and fitting into the new organization. Most job seekers feel the interview process terminates once they leave the facility. However, it often is the job seeker that continues to “finesse” the interview process after an interview that lands the job!

Try to think back to the last time that you made a big decision or purchased anything of value that may have had a long-term consequence on your life. You probably will want to make certain that you haven't gotten yourself so excited you rush into something blindly.

An example could be returning to graduate school, buying a car or purchasing a new home. You hopefully will do a little research and not rush into the decision because something major like this will have an impact on your life (and probably the lives of your significant others).

Job seekers need to do the same thing when they are evaluating a new job. Do you realize that individuals spend more than 60% (often 70-80%) of their waking hours at a job? Just imagine not enjoying that job--that's a lot of time spent being very unhappy. Job seekers should evaluate the job offer from every possible angle (i.e., prestige of institution, reputation, benefits, supervisor support, salary, challenge, upward mobility, etc.) The time to gather all of this important data that you will use to evaluate the job offer is before, during and after the job interview.

Evaluating the Job Offer

As a career management decision, evaluating a job offer involves careful consideration of many important factors. Some of the factors that should be considered include:

Benefit Packages	Promotion Potential	Work Load
Work Ethic	Family Considerations	Work-related Responsibilities
Relocation	Professional Development	Managerial/Colleague Support
Salary	Commute to Work	Organizational Fiscal Stability
Performance Appraisals	Team Work	Minimum Standard for
Evaluation Criteria		Job Performance

A job seeker needs to ask the question, **“Is accepting this new position with this organization worth the investment of my time, money and energy?”**

Benefit Packet Considerations

Evaluating the benefit package of a job offer is the most important factor you should consider. Most individuals that we have talked to think that all benefit packages are pretty much the same. This is not true! Often when a person accepts a job offer, they then find out that the health insurance coverage is horrible. When this happens, the job seeker often leaves the job almost immediately to look for another position with better benefits. Watch out! Managers and supervisors often offer advice or information during an interview regarding benefits that may not be accurate or up-to-date. You will want to read the benefit information material very carefully and meet with a professional in the benefits office from Human Resources to have your questions answered. If there is any confusion with what they discussed with you, have the benefits professional put the information in writing for you. Here are some points to keep in mind when you are considering different benefit packages:

- If you are offered a benefits package that you will need to contribute to out of your pay check (this has become very common recently because of the escalating cost that employers incur covering their employees' benefits) remember to calculate the amount that you will need to pay when evaluating the salary.
- Does the employer offer a "cafeteria" type insurance plan where you get to choose your health benefits provider, i.e., Blue Cross-Blue Shield, U.S. Healthcare, Pru-care, or Keystone Health Plan East. Will you receive optical and dental coverage through the same provider? Are you offered other coverage including life insurance, accidental death & dismemberment, short term disability or long term disability? How long do you have to work before you are able to receive full coverage?
- Consider the amount of sick leave, vacation time and personal time that you receive. Again, this varies from employer to employer. Often new graduates will receive 2 to 4 weeks vacation per year, 3 to 5 sick days per year and 4 to 5 personal days. How long do you have to work before you are allowed to take a vacation?
- Also inquire about "when" your benefits start; i.e., immediately; after 60 days; a year? If it is after a certain waiting period, you must get coverage from some other source.
- Will there be on-call responsibilities and how will you be compensated?
- Consider other benefits that might be offered e.g., uniform allowance, free parking, travel reimbursement for meetings, professional association fees and journal reimbursement, elder care, on-site child care, tuition reimbursement, tuition allowance for children, commuter-travel compensation, etc.
- Evaluate the type of pension program that the employer is offering. Do they have a 401K, or other matching program?

Assessing Promotion Potential

An important aspect of evaluating a job offer is the advancement potential within an organization. Some institutions have career ladders in place that allow individuals to accomplish certain goals that lead to advancement. One example is the career ladder advancement program, for example, Clinical Ladder 1, Clinical Ladder 2, etc. Other organizations have long-established traditions of promoting from within and promote that philosophy as a fringe benefit.

Regardless of the organizational philosophy or approach, it is important for you to accurately research the employer's promotional philosophy and ask questions during an interview about advancement potential and future opportunities. Here are some guidelines you might want to consider:

- Once an offer is on the table and you are not sure about it, do some informational interviewing with individuals in the organization to determine the promotion practices.
- If you did not have an opportunity to meet with your immediate supervisor or their supervisor during the interview, you might want to consider setting up an interview with them to assess the opportunities.
- Assess the age of your colleagues and superiors. If the top level people are close to retirement, the advancement potential is very favorable.
- Consider lateral as well as upward movements in the organization. Perhaps another department or unit in the facility would have greater possibilities for challenge, professional development, skill building or advancement.

Analyzing the Work Environment

An often difficult condition to predict when evaluating a job offer is your ability to “fit” into a new physical environment. It is critical to consider the physical environment of your potential work place and the individuals (i.e., peers and supervisors) that you will be working with as part of the job offer evaluation process.

Analyzing the work environment refers to the environmental conditions of a place of employment. It includes such conditions as:

- Co-workers
- Supervisors
- Support staff
- Other colleagues (i.e., physicians, therapists, nurses, nutritionists, etc.)
- Communication lines
- Authority privileges and rights
- General feel of the new work place.

Many people have told us that after they accepted their job offer they found out that their department reports to “other professionals” (i.e., physical therapists reporting to nurses); their department is in the basement next to the vending machines; the staff hadn’t received raises in three years so morale is low and the staff turn-over is high.

How you will relate to co-workers and your supervisor is just about as difficult as predicting how well you’ll relate to your in-laws. However, thorough research, an ability to judge people, and a little time will assist you in having a comfortable or uncomfortable feel for the potential work place. Often organizations will try and “paint a rosy picture” of the conditions of the work place because they are so desperate to hire someone. They promise all kinds of situations in order to attract you to the work place, then, once you’ve accepted the offer, the work environment doesn’t seem anything like when you interviewed.

Relocation and Travel Expense Reimbursements

In the past, relocation expenses for healthcare professionals to relocate to a job in another area of the country were traditionally paid for by the employer. Travel expenses to and from facilities for interviews were also sometimes reimbursed. With dramatic changes occurring in healthcare employment opportunities, relocation and reimbursement of travel expenses often does not occur. Again, this can be brought up when you discuss the specifics of the job offer. Before you accept the job offer, ask the possibility of a relocation package. It doesn’t hurt to ask!

Other Considerations

It is important to evaluate every job offer with organizations that hold your interest very carefully. Each offer is a negotiation tool that is useful in enriching the conditions of the position you seek and also acts as a leverage for other job offers.

Remember it is important to accept the kind of position that will fulfill your career goals. If an offer doesn’t quite fit you, then you have the right to negotiate the conditions of the job description and responsibilities before you accept the position that will best fit your career and career goals.

Use any researched information that you can find regarding the facility to uncover as many details and descriptions of the organization. Read facility newsletters, job descriptions, brochures, organizational charts, mission statements, employee handbooks, or corporate and annual reports to assist you in your research.

Also, you might want to consider looking at the way you were hired and the hiring process. For example, was it open and honest or were there several delays, promises, unanswered questions or changes that confused you?

A Quick Way to Evaluate Job Offers

Being in control of your career and the interview process also means the ability to make clear and quick decisions regarding any offers. Evaluating job offers is like being a new parent; there's a lot of information, training and assistance before the baby is born, but then you're left unsure of everything when the baby arrives. Nobody can train you to be a parent. You have worked hard at the interview, now you need to know what to do with it once you get the offer.

Many job seekers that we have talked to find this the hardest part of the job search process; evaluating between 2 and 3 job offers. Some individuals find that making a pro - con sheet helps to determine which job is the right "fit." Others may find this *Job Offer Evaluation Worksheet* helpful. There is nothing complicated about it, and it can be used when you are evaluating a job offer. It should be used for every job offer that you receive. We do not recommend bringing the worksheet with you during the interview, but to fill it out immediately following the interview, second interview or meeting in which the offer was extended. On the left side of the worksheet there are conditions called Job Offer Factors. These are conditions or factors that **you** determine which are important to you when seeking a position or career move. Any one of the factors could be the most important; however, you must weigh each factor as to its importance to you at this present moment in your job search or career. The score is then calculated and applied to the scale on the worksheet.

Job Offer Evaluation Worksheet

Directions: Under the left hand column labeled job offer factors, identify all of the factors about a job that are important to you and your family. We have given you some examples below such as reputation of facility, size of institution, salary range, supervisor support, on-site day care arrangements to within 15 minute commute from home. After you have identified the job offer factors, you will weigh **each one** related to the level of importance (1 = heavy importance to 3 = light importance). The next thing you will do is rate the facility on the opportunity they afford you this job offer factor; 1= outstanding opportunity to 5= poor opportunity. Multiply weight x rating and add all together for your total score. Look at the job offer evaluation scale to determine where your score falls into the range. Remember this worksheet should only be considered as a guide for evaluating a job offer. In the final analysis, a job seeker's "gut feeling" will often be the deciding factor in determining the acceptance of a valid job offer.

Job Offer Factors	Weight	Rating	Weight x Rating
Reputation of Facility	_____	_____	_____
Size of Institution	_____	_____	_____
Required Work Hours	_____	_____	_____
Salary	_____	_____	_____
Benefits	_____	_____	_____
Orientation Program	_____	_____	_____
Management Support	_____	_____	_____
Distance to Work	_____	_____	_____
Promotion Potential	_____	_____	_____
Level of Independence	_____	_____	_____
Working Conditions	_____	_____	_____
Available Resources	_____	_____	_____
Peer Support	_____	_____	_____
Teamwork	_____	_____	_____
Amount of Salary Increases	_____	_____	_____
Technical Support	_____	_____	_____
State of the Art Equipment	_____	_____	_____
Tuition Reimbursement	_____	_____	_____
Level of Support from Management to Pursue Advance Degrees	_____	_____	_____

Job Offer Factors	Weight	Rating	Weight x Rating
Patient Population	_____	_____	_____
Continuing Education	_____	_____	_____
Institution's Fiscal Security	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

My total score is: _____

Weights

- 1 = Heavy Importance
- 2 = Medium Importance
- 3 = Light Importance

Ratings

- 1 = Outstanding Opportunity
- 2 = Excellent Opportunity
- 3 = Good Opportunity
- 4 = Fair Opportunity
- 5 = Poor Opportunity

Job Offer Evaluation Scale

- 20-40 = Accept the job offer
- 41-100 = Accept with modifications

- 101-200 = Renegotiate the offer
- Above 201 = Express your appreciation and formally decline the job offer

* = *The Job Offer Evaluation Sheet* was developed by John E. McLaughlin and Stephen K. Merman. Sound Advice for Job and Career Strategists (Denver, Col.: Portland Management Group, 1977)

How to Continue Assessment of the Job Offer

To fully critique a job offer, you must continue to ask questions and assess the position’s potential to your own career goals, values and interests. The following list of questions can also help you in deciding whether or not the job offer is right for you:

Job Offer Assessment Questionnaire	Yes	No	Unknown
1) Does accepting this job seriously affect your career?	_____	_____	_____
2) Has this facility grown rapidly in the past 5 years?	_____	_____	_____
3) Is the facility’s rate of growth comparable to the rest of the industry/field?	_____	_____	_____
4) Does this organization pay as well as other organizations?	_____	_____	_____
5) Is this position funded by “soft” money (i.e., grant, etc.)	_____	_____	_____
6) Does this facility have prestige among other organizations?	_____	_____	_____
7) Does this facility value its’ employees?	_____	_____	_____
8) Is this facility located in an area where you and your family would like to live?	_____	_____	_____
9) Do you value the services provided by this facility?	_____	_____	_____
10) Will you be able to achieve your career goals with this facility?	_____	_____	_____
11) Is the financial status of this department and facility financially sound?	_____	_____	_____
12) Does the mission statement or philosophy of care of this facility match your values?	_____	_____	_____
13) Do employees practice independently?	_____	_____	_____
14) Are the problems facing this department important to top level management?	_____	_____	_____
15) Is the relationship between your potential department and top-management positive?	_____	_____	_____
16) Is there promotion potential within this department?	_____	_____	_____
17) Are your skills and abilities needed by this department?	_____	_____	_____
18) Do you feel that this is the right department for you?	_____	_____	_____
19) Does the work seem challenging?	_____	_____	_____

Job Offer Assessment Questionnaire

Yes No Unknown

- | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| 20) Is the salary comparable to market value? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 21) Are you satisfied with the benefits package? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 22) Do the work hours fit your schedule? | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 23) Does your potential supervisor seem supportive of his/her employees? | _____ | _____ | _____ |

24) In the space provided, describe at least 10 conditions that you like about this job offer:

25) In the space provided, describe at least 10 conditions that you **do not** like about this job offer:

How to Formally Accept the Job Offer

The art and skill of job offer acceptance goes beyond accepting the offer on the spot. The reason behind not accepting the job offer on the spot, is so that you can remove yourself from the situation in order to have a clear head and to evaluate every aspect of the work setting and offer.

Accepting a job offer is done by the job seeker after careful consideration of all the factors. We recommend that job seekers should ask for **at least** three days to evaluate the offer and to discuss it with family members. If you are waiting on another offer to come through, attempt to put the employer off professionally by asking if you can have more time. Then you can call the other employer and be very professional and polite and ask when final job offers will be extended. If you will be given an offer, this might hasten the offer up a little.

Accepting the job offer in a professional manner requires certain rules, strategies, and common sense behaviors. The following are some guidelines that we recommend:

- a. **NEVER** accept the offer on the spot. Professionally thank the employer for the offer and say you are really excited about the opportunity that this job offer affords you but you would really like several days to think things over.
- b. Follow up the offer with an acceptance letter to the employer that expresses your appreciation for the offer, and spells out any specifics that were discussed (in the event that a contract is not provided). The specifics could include: an agreed upon start date, flexible schedule of hours, starting salary, evaluation at six months instead of twelve months, sign-on bonus, relocation expenses, etc.
- c. Follow up via the phone in a few days with the employer to ensure that the acceptance letter was received and the specifics are agreeable to all parties.
- d. Establish a start date with your supervisor and expectations during the first week. Try to gain as much information as possible about what will be expected during the initial first days on the job.

Turning Down Other Job Offers

If you have been evaluating more than one job offer, it is appropriate, professional and ethical to inform all other employers of your decision and to withdraw your employment application from consideration. Your withdrawal letter should express appreciation for the employer's consideration and courtesy. It may be appropriate to state that your decision to go with another facility was based on having a better fit with your professional goals at this stage in your career. **DO NOT** say that you obtained a better job. **DO NOT CONTINUE TO INTERVIEW AFTER YOU HAVE FORMALLY ACCEPTED AN OFFER. THIS WILL ALMOST ALWAYS WORK AGAINST YOU!**

When you want to professionally turn down an offer, we recommend that you put it in writing. You may want to turn an offer down because it does not fit with your career objectives and interests. Rejecting an employment offer should be done thoughtfully and carefully. Remember, you do not want to burn any bridges... this could be a future employer one day. Indicate in the letter that you have carefully considered the offer and have decided not to accept it. Also, be sure to thank the employer for the offer and for consideration of you as a candidate.

The rationale behind keeping the lines of communication open and positive with potential employers is in the event that your new position doesn't pan out, you could always go back to them again as a possible employment contact.

RESOURCES

The following list of publications and books were used to develop the information that was presented in this Handbook. The books are available in the Career Development Center, Edison 707 for browsing. Handouts are always available and we encourage job seekers to come to the Career Development Center to browse through the many resources, to acquire handouts or to make an appointment with a career counselor.

Banis, William J. (2004). The Art of Writing Job-Search Letters, Job Choices: 2005, National Association of Colleges and Employers, Bethlehem, PA. (**Handout** available in the Career Development Center)

Holton, Ed (2004). The Critical First Year on the Job, Planning Job Choices: 2005, National Association of Colleges and Employers, Bethlehem, PA. (**Handout** available in the Career Development Center)

Simon, Mary B. (1998). Negotiate Your Job Offer. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, NY. (**Book** available for browsing in the Career Development Center)

Krannich, Ronald and Krannich, Caryl Rae (1998). Dynamite Salary Negotiations: Know What You're Worth and Get It. Impact Publications, Manassas Park, VA. (**Book** available for browsing in the Career Development Center)