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Salary Negotiations

Tips from Laura Balson, labalson@golanandchristie.com, and Candice Kline, candice.kline@sidley.com.

1. Any time you are going to sign a contract, have a lawyer look at it. These documents are crafted to benefit the company that crafted them.

2. Even very experienced professionals hold back in pushing for what they want. There is always room to negotiate - the path may not be obvious.

3. Think about what is a "must have" (Blue Chip) and what is a trade-off (bargaining chips). Figure out additional items that you can use as bargaining chips. Have an analytical framework. Charles Kraver, "The Intelligent Negotiator." Reminds people to know their target.

4. Know your limits. How are you going to make yourself happy? What are your likes and dislike? How important is flex time? If you have a lot of stress around something - you need to be aware of it.

5. Get to know the prospective employer. Get a sense for their culture. Think about fit. Do people arrive early and work late? Is there high turnover? Do people seem to value family time or not? Do you like the industry? Do you see yourself networking in that space? Tailor your negotiation strategy to the culture of that organization.

6. There are organizational structures that apply to any negotiations. Always ask for more. Add margins to your margins. Always be ambitious.

7. Think of negotiations like a salesperson. Never burn bridges. Always cultivate networking. View negotiations on employment as opportunities to expand relationships.

8. Be well researched and prepared for your negotiation. Be perceived as a problem solver. Show that you can be very thoughtful. That is reflected in your language.

9. Use a friendly language. Sally Krawcheck - Use "I" statements rather than "you" statements, but keep it job focused. Acknowledge what the other person is saying. Say, "Yes, and." - From "Getting to Yes" William Ury. Create an opportunity for problem-solving.

10. Need to know which industries have more flexibility. Finance has more flexibility than academia. Could put more compensation at risk than salary. If you are very confident in your abilities, then that is your blue chip.

11. How to avoid getting short-shift because you are internal? Consider moving to another organization. Find examples in your experience where you were lauded and connect to organization values. There might be some scenarios where org is interviewing external candidates and you can find out what those candidates were lacking. Make arguments on how you are saving the company money. Maybe you can negotiate getting the right projects. Find other things of value to you and negotiate for those.

12. How to deal with a situation when you find out that a male coworker doing the same job is making more than you? Don't wait. Be upfront about it. Companies are aware of the liability. Some private companies are turning to a more government style system (pay grades) to deal with this. You have legal and you can be pretty assertive.

13. Start-ups. Lot more flexibility in the dot com arena. Generous 401(k) matching with immediate vesting. Companies may plan to be sold in 2 or 3 years.

Tip from a participant on online applications. Be honest when entering salary requirements. Don't enter zero or too high or low number. Employers are looking first for experience and recruiters will present them applicants grouped in salary bands. One of the presenters also advises against putting in too narrow of a range. A $20K salary range may be too narrow.

On getting an offer from a tech start-up:

1. May have to push on all the other benefits. Use gentle humor, such as "Hey, I thought all dot coms came with stock options?" If they still don't get it, say, "Other start-ups are offering stock options, free lunches, paying for transit passes and other perks." Companies without a human resource department have a lot more flexibility, so be creative in getting to your goal.

2. If they really want you, they will find the money. You are one expense of many expenses. They can take the money from another area.

3. If they try to pressure you to accept a low offer, delay and divert. Go back to those things they like to talk about where you can highlight your strengths. "I know you have plans for product x and here are some things I was thinking about based on our last conversation.

On dealing with stereotypes:

Say something to challenge assumptions. One of the presenters brought up how a petite Asian women mentioned she rode her Harley on weekends.

On dealing with company acquired by a Brazilian private equity firm who decides to lower your salary to a fraction of what it was before:

Treat it like working for a new company. They changed the rules of the game and show that you can perform well in the new scheme. If they lower base and offer more incentive, ask what happens if you exceed the highest target. There may be an opportunity to increase your overall compensation. A participant mentioned that there might be opportunities to step into a higher level position with executive departures.

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