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Evaluating Job Offers

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INTRODUCTION

You have been diligently conducting your job search campaign sending out cover letters and resumes, networking, keeping records, interviewing, and following-up and now your efforts have paid off; an employer representative has called and offered you a position (a job!!!!). The offer is what all this work is about, but don't leap to accept until you have evaluated the pros and cons. The best policy is not to accept an offer right away even if you are fairly certain you want the job. Give yourself a couple of days to think it through carefully. Remember also that until you officially accept, you are in an excellent position to bargain for salary, staff, benefits, facilities, and memberships. Once you take the job, you may lose this power. Once an offer is made, it will not be made to someone else unless you say "No" given of course that you respond in an agreed amount of time. In some cases, you may be able to take as long as two weeks if the organization is not in a rush to fill the job. A few days to a week is more usual.

Remember that the job may not be perfect. All your needs and values may not be met, but are your most important ones being filled? If you are uncertain about your priorities, go back and do some self-assessment exercises to clarify your own thinking. If you are unsure about whether the job would be a good move even though you like it, check with others in the field.

There are many considerations to be made when deciding either to accept or reject a job offer. Possible criteria can be grouped into five main categories: the job or position; the organization; geography; salary/benefits; people relationships; personal. The importance of each category and of the items it covers will, of course, depend on your individual interests, values, and particular situation.

This booklet contains several checklists you can use to evaluate this criteria. Although some criteria will be less relevant to you than others, you should include as many items as possible in your evaluation. Much of the basis of your evaluation will be information you have gathered from company literature and from people within the organization with whom you have talked. Be sure that this information is as objective as it can be in light of your need for a good job. Talk to inside sources and people with whom you would be working, study the information, and develop organizational profiles drawing conclusions about the personality of each potential employer.

Don't be overcome by the excitement surrounding a job offer and all the changes in your life that it represents. There is a tendency to overlook some of the not-so-pleasant aspects of a job simply because you have "finally received a job offer!" Before making your decision, talk to trusted friends who know you or meet with a counselor in the Career Center to discuss it. You have the power and, hopefully, the information to make a good decision. Remember, this is not a life or death choice or one which remains permanently cast in cement. Hopefully, the job you choose will represent a logical step in your own career aspirations.

GUIDELINES IN ACCEPTING OR REJECTING AN OFFER

If you have any questions on any aspect of the offer or the job, clarify them before accepting. Of course, you will keep notes of important points discussed between you and the employers. If you receive an offer you want to consider, acknowledge the offer immediately, indicating when your decision can be expected. Employers should allow you reasonable time to consider your decision. By the same token, if you have received an offer from Company A, but would prefer an offer from Company B, you can write or call Company B informing them another company has extended an offer but that you are still interested in Company B and would like to know your status with them. Be considerate of employer needs in requesting time extensions.

Accept in writing, restating important facts (salary, starting date, title, etc.). If you get an offer you're not really interested in accepting, you should say so immediately in writing. Don't be forced by lack of an alternative to accept a job you don't really want unless it offers the flexibility to continue your job hunt.

* To see sample letters of Acceptance or Rejection refer to APPENDIX A: SAMPLE LETTERS

Inform all other organizations with whom you have been dealing of your acceptance of a job. You will want to remain on friendly terms with these organizations; you may consider employment with them at some time in the future or do business with them in your new job.

Notify the Career Center about your decision. We love to hear about happy endings and success stories!

Write thank-you notes to anyone who was especially helpful in your job search (references, counselors, friends, faculty)

Keep track of your direct job-hunting expenses, such as agency fees, travel, postage, and resume printing. Many of these expenses are tax deductible.

AND FINALLY.....

Treat yourself to a celebration! You have found a job! You will be immersed in your job soon enough, so for now, kick back, relax and enjoy the moment. Congratulations!

CONTINUED CAREER PLANNING

As soon as you have accepted a job offer, your active job search campaign will end. Your career will not end with your first job, however, and you will not want to stop your personal career planning. You will want to build a career path for yourself and to plan your career progression.

No matter how content you are in your first (and any subsequent) job, it is important to keep your resume up to date. Each time you take on a new responsibility or help make an important decisions, keep a record for use in updating your resume. Your resume file and updated resume will assist you in making a self-assessment every year or two. This self-assessment is necessary in determining whether or not you are following your career plan and/or in deciding what aspects of your plan need to be changed as you have changed.

EVALUATING JOB OFFERS

The factors used in evaluating and comparing job offers can be integrated into various rating forms as those which follow. Depending upon your career objective, you may want to either add or change some of the criteria included in the check lists. Since we each value job aspects in different fashions and levels of importance, the different formats and rating systems will provide different perspectives on the job choice.

WORK SATISFACTION CHECK LIST

Directions: Consider each of the job offers you now have in terms of the work satisfaction it offers. Answer yes or no to each of questions below for each of your offers. It is understood that you don't know everything about the position or organization, but take your best guess.

Criteria

	Offer #1	Offer #2	Offer #3
Will I enjoy working with my future co-workers, supervisors, and/or supervises?			
Will I have a good opportunity to express myself on the job?			
Is the working environment satisfactory?			
Will I be fully using my primary skills?			
Is there sufficient diversity and challenge?			
Will I be able to get the kind of feedback I require to actually see the results of my efforts?			
Is there an opportunity to learn and expand?			
Is the commute to and from work within satisfactory limits?			
Are there open avenues of communication?			
Will I be able to dress comfortably?			
Will I be able to get value from my work to the extent that I make contribution?			
Am I motivated and satisfied with the ultimate purpose of the organization?			
In terms of work pressure, is there opportunity close to any of my Adream jobs?@			
do I really want to do this kind of work?			
Is the salary and benefit package satisfactory (see Career Center packet, AJob Interviewing@ and section on Salary negotiation.			
Additional Criteria:			

DEVELOPING A BUDGET

To effectively evaluate a job offer, you will also need to examine your financial situation. Will the salary and benefits meet your financial needs? Use the list below to help construct an overall budget. **BE REALISTIC!**

ITEM **ESTIMATED MONTHLY EXPENSE**

Mortgage Payment or Apartment Rent	_____
Home or Apartment Insurance	_____
Gas (utilities)	_____
Electric (utilities)	_____
Water (utilities)	_____
Telephone	_____
Student Loan Payment	_____
Car Payment	_____
Car Insurance	_____
Gasoline	_____
Car Maintenance	_____
Food	_____
Clothing	_____
Drugs/Medical Expenses	_____
Child Care	_____
Tuition Expenses	_____
Subscriptions, Magazines	_____
Household Needs	_____
Personal Needs	_____
Life Insurance Premiums*	_____
Medical Insurance Premiums*	_____
Laundry and Dry Cleaning	_____
Taxes	_____
Club and Association Memberships	_____
Entertainment	_____
Other:	_____
Other:	_____

Total Monthly Expenses _____
 X 12 Months=Annual Expenses _____

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

When evaluating a job offer, fringe benefits are an important part of the compensation package and should be carefully

reviewed. Listed below are

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Most employers offer two or three options for Health coverage and this is the most expensive benefit. The employer pays part of the premium and the employee the remainder. The stronger plans also include dental and vision coverage. Three of the most common options are:

HMO(Health Maintenance Organization)-

Under this plan the employee selects a physician from a list specified by the insurer. The physician serves as a gatekeeper and refers patients to certain specialists. In an HMO there is no deductible and you pay small copayments for each visit. An HMO is the least expensive to you, but is a controlled system.

PPO(Preferred Provider Organization)-

Under this plan a group of doctors, hospitals and pharmacies are contracted at a higher discount than traditional health insurance. Under this plan, oftentimes you are allowed to select your own physician. There is usually an annual deductible, you might pay a percentage of certain expenses, and there might be other copayments involved.

Traditional Health Insurance-

Under this plan you have total freedom of choice of doctors and hospitals. The insurance covers 70-80% of the expenses and there is a deductible. This is the most expensive coverage.

PENSION PLAN

Under a pension plan an employer contributes a portion of your salary and you contribute a portion of your salary in pre-tax dollars. These dollars are invested in real estate, bonds, stocks and money market accounts to provide an annuity for your retirement. It is important to understand how a company handles the money invested in a pension plan if you leave the organization.

GROUP LIFE INSURANCE

A life insurance plan provides a payment to your beneficiary if you die or are seriously disabled while in the employment of the organization. This is usually based on a formula of your salary. Group life insurance is to replace the loss of your wages for several years to your beneficiary. Group life rates are age-rated and are lower for younger people.

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM DISABILITY

If you become permanently disabled and are not able to work, long-term disability provides you a percentage of your salary to age 65. In most cases, long term disability starts six months after you become disabled. Short-term disability replaces the loss of salary for serious illnesses that last up to six months.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

Some employers will reimburse employees for the costs of taking courses at local colleges. After you have been employed at a company you may want to continue your education and take graduated courses. With the escalating cost of tuition, this can be a very valuable benefit.

CHILD CARE

This is the new benefit of the 90's. With both members of a family working outside the home, there is a need to find quality care for children during the day. Child care may include a company-operated center, a discount with a local provider, or a reimbursement for direct costs.

OTHER BENEFITS

Vacation Time

Profit Share Plans

Recreational Programs

Sick Time

Flex Time

Relocation Programs

Employee Discounts

Maternity/parental Leave

Cafeteria Benefits Plan

SALARY NEGOTIATION

Another major consideration in the evaluation process will be your salary. Remember, you CAN negotiate salary after an offer has been made. Here are some salary negotiation tips:

Before the Interview

* Prior to the interview stage, research the job market and learn the salary range for the types of jobs for which you will be interviewing.

-There are salary surveys which are produced annually by various professional associations (i.e. The Chronicle of Higher Education produces a chart of higher education teaching salaries each year; the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) publishes a salary survey newsletter which is published on a quarterly basis; the U.S. Government often provides salary survey information). Check the professional publications in your field for salary information.

-One quick and sure-fire method for salary information simply requires a few phone calls. Call personnel representatives in organizations similar to the one you are interviewing with and ask them to give you a salary range for that type of position (don't get discouraged if they refuse your request, simply try another organization).

-You might look through the Colorado College Career Referral Network and locate some alumni/ae who are doing the same kind of work. They should be able to provide you with an accurate salary range. Be sure to get a cross-section of ranges to allow for the variances between organizations.

* Prior to interviewing, determine your bottom line.

-Spend some time reviewing your current or most recent salary and benefit package in relation to your budget. It is important to establish a minimum salary figure that you are willing to accept. The low end of the salary range you give to an employer should be a little higher than your bottom line (ex. You determine that with your budget you need to make \$25,000 to be able to survive. You could give a range of \$25,000-\$30,000 as your range but a recommended range would be \$26,500 to \$32,000.) See the worksheet: "Developing A Budget."

-At some point your bottom line will be tested. An employer will offer you a salary that is below this amount. You need to know how low you can go.

* Salary is often based upon value and your ability to produce. You will need to know your market value.

-There are no clear-cut guidelines for assessing one's value. Based on salary ranges, your education and experience, and your skills and capabilities, you need to personally assess what you are worth.

-If for example your research indicates that the average salary for this position is \$27,000 (above your bottom line), you might give the employer a salary range of \$27,000-\$32,000. Many people make the mistake of naming a figure in the middle of a salary range. Ask yourself why you don't deserve the top. It's easy to be impressed by a salary more than you've been earning only to resent two months later that you didn't ask for more.

* Often, you will be asked about your salary requirements in the initial stages of the job interview process, perhaps even in the letter of application. Having done your homework, you may provide the employer with your salary range. Do not give one specific amount. However, you may avoid naming figures at all before an offer has been made by stating that you are open for negotiation should you be offered the job.

-You do not need to provide your salary history in your application even if it is requested.

-You may inquire at the initial interview about the salary range for the position.

The actual negotiation process

* Do not negotiate salary until a job offer has been made.

-Once the job offer is on the table, salary negotiation takes place to determine a salary and benefit package that both sides will be able to live with. It does not have to be an adversarial relation and should be a cordial discussion. The job offer will remain on the table regardless of what you express in the negotiation.

-Negotiation involves compromise. It is a win/win situation.

* First, determine the need to negotiate.

-Evaluate any offer which is made. If you've done your research, you will know whether or not it is a fair offer.

* Do not negotiate on the telephone unless it is necessary.

-It is more difficult to listen on the phone, and you can not tune into the nonverbal reactions which are present in face-to-face interviews.

-If you do need to negotiate, ask to set up another personal interview. If you can not arrange this, ask for a phone interview at a later date. This will give you time to prepare.

* Negotiate on the basis of your qualifications; your education, experience, skills, and capabilities in relation to their worth in the job market, NOT on the basis of your wants or needs.

-The more education and experience you have in your field the stronger your negotiating position will be. If you are career changing, you may lose some of your bargaining power in the process. You will need to draw attention to the transferability of your skills.

-Don't discuss your problems, financial or otherwise. Employers do not want to hear about your student loans and other personal matters. The discussion should be based on qualifications and performance.

* Some salary scales are non-negotiable, especially in the non-profit and public sectors.

-Non-negotiable salaries are rare in the profit sector, but they are also rare at upper levels in any sector. Where your current or most recent salary exceeds the top of the posted range, you may be able to negotiate above the range.

* When asked to name a figure, you might be asked to give your last salary.

-If you were inadequately compensated or feel that you now deserve a somewhat higher rate, state the figure but give sound arguments about how the new job responsibilities are more demanding, how you have acquired new skills or credentials, and why you should not be penalized for past underpayment.

* Hold your ground if a certain salary level is important to you.

-Sometimes waiting out the silence is your best ploy. Be ready to give your arguments. In many cases the person making the offer does not have the authority to offer more, but needs to go to a superior. Ask them to do so.

* If you cannot get the salary you want, ask when you can be reviewed again, or try for other non-fixed benefits (memberships, a few extra days off).

* If the employer completely balks at the figure you name, ask what he/she had in mind. You may have been way off base.

* Once the final figure has been reached, you will need time to make your decision.

-In all negotiations, the time will come for the Afinal offer@ to be made and for you to make a decision to accept or decline. Ask them how much time you have for your decision. Sometimes you can ask for as much as two weeks and in other situations you might only have a day or two.

-The Afinal offer@ should come from the employer, not you. It is your role to find areas of mutual agreement.

* Do not accept a job offer with the idea that if a better job offer comes along, you will just Aback out@ on the first offer.

-It is very risky to give your word to an employer and then cancel out at the last minute. Awhat goes around, comes around@ is often true, and this action could come back to haunt you later on down the road. Your word should be good for something, and your reputation in the community is at stake.

-Decide on each job offer for what it is and has to offer.

* Make your acceptance or decline of the job offer by telephone conversation but ask for written confirmation.

-It is standard practice to formalize an acceptance of a job offer verbally. However, it is highly recommended to always get a written confirmation of the job offer which spells out job title, starting date, and salary information, etc. In most cases, this written confirmation can be a legally binding document. Therefore, be sure it is the job you want before Asigning on the dotted line.@

* Some organizations require the signing of a contract. Read through everything, including the fine print, before signing. Make copies for your files.

* Once you have accepted a job offer, write to those employers who are still considering your application and inform them that you are withdrawing.

GRADING YOUR JOB OFFER

In the space to the right rate each criteria factor on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest. At the bottom of each column add your score to determine your job offer grade.

Criteria	Terrific=5	Very Good=4	Pretty Good=3	Average=2	Not so Good=1
Type of Work					
Responsibility					
Chance for advancement					
Fellow Workers					
Supervisor					
Training					
Pay					
Working conditions					
Travel					
Expenses					
Performance appraisal					
Growth					
Reputation					
Location					
Fringe Benefits					
My Gut Feelings					
Other people=s feelings					
Other:					
TOTALS					

ADD TOTALS FROM EACH COLUMN: _____

Grading System: 81-90 The job of a Lifetime; don=t hesitate accept immediately! A chance like this might not come again!
 61-80 Very fine job offer. Better than most can hope to get.
 41-60 Pretty good offer all in all. It would be ok to do this work for a year or two and then move on.
 21-40 Borderline job offer: if you have been job hunting a long time and just want to work, then take it.
 0-20 Forget it: you=d be better off being a waiter or waitress or doing temp work.

7-STEP CAREER DECISION MAKING MODEL

To help you process and identify the information you need to decide about a job offer, use the 7-Step Career Decision-Making Model below:

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY THE DECISION TO BE MADE

1. Should I accept the position?

STEP TWO: KNOW YOURSELF (Self Assessment)

1. What is important to me? (Values? Priorities?)
2. What are my skills, strengths, talents, or weaknesses?
3. What am I most interested in, what can I get excited about?
4. What are my longer range goals and objective? How does this job fit in?

STEP THREE: BEGIN IDENTIFYING OPTIONS (Career Exploration)

1. What are my other options? Are other job offers?
2. Do I have a strong interest in other types of jobs?
3. What other types of jobs should I be considering?

STEP FOUR: GATHER INFORMATION AND DATA

1. Examine the information and resources you already have.
2. Identify what additional information are resources you will need to make your decision.
3. Seek out new information that will be helpful. Ask yourself some of these question:

STEP FIVE: EVALUATE OPTIONS THAT WILL SOLVE THE PROBLEM

1. Identify the pros and cons of each alternative.
2. Identify the values and needs that are satisfied by each.
3. Identify the risks involved with each alternative.
4. Project the probable future consequences of selecting each.

Use the charts A Grading Your Job Offer@ and A Work Satisfaction@ to evaluate your options.

STEP SIX: SELECT ONE OF THE OPTIONS

1. Based on all the information you have gathered and analyzed, choose one alternative (Accept or decline the job offer)

STEP SEVEN: DESIGN A COURSE OF ACTION TO IMPLEMENT THE DECISION

1. Identify steps to implement the decision
 - a. Call employer to accept or decline position
 - b. Accept in writing, restating all important facts (salary, starting date, title, etc. You should also write if declining the offer. (See APPENDIX A for sample letters)
 - c. Ask for written confirmation of the job offer.
 - d. Inform all other organizations with whom you have been dealing of your acceptance of a job. You will want to remain on friendly terms with these organizations; in the future you may consider employment with them.
 - e. Write thank you letters to anyone who was especially helpful in your job search (references, faculty members, friends, career counselors, etc).
 - f. Keep track of all your direct job-hunting expenses, such as fees, travel expenses, postage, and resume printing. Many of these expenses are Tax deductible.
2. Identify when to begin and end each step
3. Identify the information or resources needed to complete each step.
4. Identify the possible obstacles to implementing the decision, and how to overcome them.