

## The 10 Commandments of Salary Negotiations

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While exploring new career options, I asked two neighbors who had made recent job changes what percentage pay increase they received. I was surprised when one told me 39%. When the second said his new salary was 46% higher, I realized that increases in job changing weren't limited to the 5% to 10% usually given for internal promotions and cost-of-living raises.

My neighbors did me a great favor. They opened my eyes to the truth in this statement: You can negotiate anything. Here are my 10 commandments for negotiating a new salary.

1. *Research your profession's salary range.* Check with recruiters in your field (even if you don't pursue their leads), competitors, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook, the Internet, your local chamber of commerce and trade publications.
2. *Select a target salary or total pay.* You may not get the amount you want, but having a specific objective can help you get close.
3. *Don't initiate salary discussions.* Wait for the interviewer to bring the subject up, even if it's postponed to a second interview.
4. *When asked for your salary requirements, say that they're "negotiable."* Do the same on applications by writing "negotiable" in any box asking about salary details. If the form asks you to provide current salary, write, "to be covered during interview." This isn't being evasive, because without knowing details about benefits, how could you select a salary figure?
5. *When asked for your salary requirements, reply by asking the interviewer to share the position's salary range.* If your request isn't granted, excuse yourself politely and leave. (Would you want to work for a firm that won't respond to this legitimate request?)
6. *Discuss benefits separately from salary.* Your list of benefits can include insurance, tuition reimbursement, relocation payments, stock options, bonuses and outplacement upon termination.
7. *Analyze all benefit packages* with a family member or friend, or with an insurance, investment or bank professional. They'll provide you with an invaluable second opinion and may look at the offer more objectively.
8. *Consider the cost of living* if you're moving to a new area, and if it's higher, suggest that you be paid a differential.
9. *In discussing why you deserve a substantial increase,* use examples of your accomplishments that prove your value, not merely your experience. Comparisons to your current salary are irrelevant and should be avoided; you're talking about the benefits you'll bring, not your past salary, which you may have had no control over.
10. *Always assume a firm's first offer is negotiable* and never accept an offer at the interview. Express your strong interest, but state you always discuss decisions of this magnitude with advisers whose judgment you have relied upon for years. Tell your interviewer when you'll contact him or her with your decision.

By following these commandments, you'll increase your chances of receiving a pay increase well into the double-digits.