

## Use care in negotiating staffer's pay

A critical moment in the hiring process comes while negotiating salary.

For the job candidate, it is a tense time during which a job and a decent pay level could be taken away or changed seemingly on a whim. Perhaps the worst mistake an employer can make is to buy into that perception.



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Neither employer nor prospective employee is in the driver's seat when it comes to salary negotiation. Rather, the process is more like a dance, one to be entered willingly — if tentatively — by both parties.

The first thing you want to do is to assess your need and your capacity to bargain. How much leeway do you have to negotiate with a candidate? That leeway will be determined by several factors, including:

- The market.** Determine the fair-market value for the job you're filling. Then compare the salary range for that job within your organization with the same range in your geographic area and in your field as a whole. Make sure you don't overpay or under-offer.

- The economy.** Pay attention to current situations as well as trends when making a new

hire. What is the economy like within your industry and within your region? You certainly don't want to hire an employee at an above-average level if that salary is going to become a liability in the near future.

- Your company.** What is the level of the job you're filling within your organization? This has less to do with fair-market value than it does with worth and relevance of the position to your company's overall operation. During salary negotiations, your company culture, pay philosophy and typical promotion practices and procedures all have a significant bearing on the pay rate for a new hire or a promotion.

In the end, the question becomes this: How badly do you need this particular person for this particular job?

Ultimately, nobody wins a salary negotiation unless both sides come out victorious. Make every effort to understand your market, your company and your candidate, and you can turn every salary negotiation into a success.

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