

## **Negotiating Your Terms**

*By Brooke Heath*

Finally you receive *the* call and hear the words you've been anxiously waiting to hear: "We would like to extend you the job offer for..." But alas, your excitement dies when the offer, for some reason or another, isn't exactly what you were expecting to hear. Maybe the money isn't what you thought it would be, the benefits aren't so great, or your vacation time isn't what you expected.

When this happens, the thing to remember is that all is not lost. Don't decline the offer right away. Tell the employer that you are very excited about the opportunity to work for the company, but explain that you would like some time to think about it. If they are professional, most potential employers will allow you this time. Use this time to think about your options and possibly negotiate the terms of your offer.

### **Time to Negotiate**

It's important to understand that the fact that the employer liked you enough to offer you the job doesn't mean he or she likes you enough to pay you more money, give you more vacation time, etc. Do not assume you can negotiate what is being offered. However, on the other hand, realize that some initial job offers are just points for beginning the negotiation process.

First, decide which points of the offer you would like to negotiate, and be ready to back your arguments up with reasons you feel you deserve more.

For example, if you would like more pay, check job postings, state sites, etc., that provide pay information. Then you can explain to the employer that based on your research, you feel that your wages should be closer to X amount. Or you can explain that based on your experience, you were hoping for a specific salary.

You only have one chance to make a counter offer, so be prepared for what you will do if the employer will not budge on the terms of your offer.

### **Not Negotiable**

If the employer will not negotiate the terms of your offer but the job is everything you have been looking for, don't walk away. Instead, ask if the new employer would be willing to conduct a review after you have been working six months, and ask that a salary increase be contingent upon your job performance.

### **Accepting/Declining the Offer**

When accepting a position, especially if the terms have been negotiated from the initial terms, ask that the terms of your position (i.e., title, wages, vacation, start date, etc.) be sent to you in writing.

When declining the offer, make sure that you are still gracious. It is possible that some day you will want to change jobs and may be interested in this employer, or the employer may have contacts with another potential employer. Thank the person extending the offer and give a brief reason for your rejection.

Don't make a poor impression, regardless of whether you will be taking the job. And in either case, be sure to thank the employer for extending the offer.