Job Offers

All your hard work has paid off and you have received a job offer! Now you need to decide whether or not to accept it, and if so, on what terms. Whether you are evaluating one offer or comparing several, think carefully and clearly; this is an important decision.

The steps toward making your decision are:

1) Clarifying the details of the offer
2) Evaluating the offer, or weighing various offers
3) Negotiating the offer
4) Accepting or declining

The Offer

Offers are usually made verbally. In most cases, the recruiter or manager will call you to extend an offer. Remember the following:

Express Your Interest
Always be enthusiastic and professional. This will lay the groundwork for a positive discussion if you pursue the position and decide to negotiate. It will also help maintain the School’s relationship with the company if you decline.

Don’t Make a Decision on the Spot
Even if you know you will accept the position, ask for time to consider the offer to make an informed decision. It gives you bargaining room, it allows you time to think clearly, and it is customary. Employers generally will not expect you to accept the job immediately.

Get the Details
Ask about the following facets of the offer:

- **Job Responsibilities and First Assignment**
  We often forget to ask about this, and it is one of the most important aspects of the offer. You might find the prospect of working on a particular project or new venture, or with certain individuals at the company, very compelling. Up to this point, the company might have been considering you for one of several assignments. What you do for your first assignment can be part of your bargaining package.

- **Base Salary**
  Be matter-of-fact and direct when you ask what salary is being offered. Repeat the figure without revealing your reaction to it, so that you can write it down accurately.

- **The Signing Bonus**
  Some companies offer signing bonuses as a one-time monetary award. They originated as a means of offering cash for start-up expenses, such as a new wardrobe. Signing bonuses have evolved as incentives for students to accept one offer over another. Because future
Raises are computed as a percentage of your base, it behooves a company to entice you with a signing bonus rather than a higher base salary.

- “Exploding Offers.”
  If you accept the offer immediately, the signing bonus is sometimes significantly higher than if you accept the position at a later date. The Hotel School does not endorse this practice by employers because it puts undue pressure on students. If a company makes such an offer, please bring it the attention of the OSS.

- Relocation Package
  Within relocation allowances, make sure you understand what is paid for: moving household goods, house hunting trips, and brokers' fees are examples (this is especially important in New York City). Some companies will offer you temporary housing when you begin your job if a lease or home purchase cannot be finalized on short notice.

- Benefits Package
  These are not always negotiable within a company because there may be elements which are standard for all employees. However, there may be quite a difference from one company to another.

- Starting Date
  Many companies recognize that you want a break after finishing your MMH. They might want you to start following graduation, but may be flexible about later start dates.

Deadline
When a company representative extends an offer of employment they should state a deadline by which you need to respond. This is often negotiable, and we ask employers who are recruiting at Cornell to give students at least three weeks minimum to make a decision.

Ask for the Offer in Writing
Tell the employer that you will consider this offer and would like to have the written offer and a benefits package mailed to you before you make a decision. There are a number of reasons why a verbal offer can fail to materialize. NEVER accept an offer for full-time employment, or decline another, until you have the offer in writing.

If an employer is willing to be flexible on the deadline for accepting their offer, this will allow you to continue interviewing with the companies that interest you and keep all of your options open. However, if the employer requires a firm decision before you have other offers, you will need to evaluate their specific offer and make a decision.

Evaluating Your Offers
Salary is not the only component you should use in determining which offer to accept. There are a lot of other factors that you should take into account when choosing between offers. Ask yourself these questions as you think about your offers:

The Company:
- Is the company strong and stable?
• Where does this company fall in size range?
• Do I have a strong preference for a particular point in that range?
• Am I seeking excitement or security?
• How is the company situated in its industry?

The Job Itself:
• Will I find this job appropriately challenging? Keep in mind the level of professional
  challenge that you want to accept at this stage in your life.
• Is the mission of the company and the job function in keeping with my values?
• Is this job a logical stepping-stone to my overall goal? If this is not your first-choice job, will
  you be able to network and position yourself to find your “Plan A” job in a few years? Or,
  if this job is a detour from your overall career path – say you have the opportunity to
  manage your brother’s heavy metal band – will you be able get back on track if the band
  splits up?

The People at the Job:
• Based on what I know, do I like my hiring manager? If so, how dissatisfied would I be if
  they left? If not, will I still be able to accomplish my work in an otherwise supportive
  climate?
• Do my prospective colleagues seem interesting and knowledgeable? If teamwork is
  required, do they seem to demonstrate a strong team-spirit?
• What is the turnover rate in my prospective department? What might be the causes of
  high turnover? Is low turnover an indication of stagnation? If this is a concern, request time
  to speak with future colleagues before deciding.

Location:
• Is it likely that my partner/spouse can find employment in this community? Is this the kind
  of community in which I would be able to develop a satisfying social life as a single person?
• Are there significant opportunities for recreation, cultural enrichment, and education in this
  area?
• Would I be too close to or too far away from my family?

If you have multiple offers, careful comparison of all components is important before you can
make a decision. This is a highly personal matter, and you must allow yourself to accept the job
with the lower salary if that is where your reasoning leads. Perhaps the lower paying job is in a
better location, or is more challenging, or actually has more growth potential. Even in a difficult
job market, think carefully about accepting the first or only offer you get if you would hate the
job or your significant other would be miserable in the city in which it’s located.

Keep in mind that the cost of living varies tremendously between cities. The Nestlé Library has
information on the cost of living index that allows you to compare salaries in different locations.

It is important to conduct this kind of analysis before negotiating, especially if you are using other
offers as your basis for negotiation. If you find it helpful, develop and use a comparison grid.
This can be a very difficult time for many students and we encourage you to discuss your opportunities with family members, faculty, OSS staff, and colleagues to get as much feedback as possible. But remember, in the end, the decision is yours to make. If you feel that one job is for you and the other is not, despite its prestige, follow your instinct.

**Negotiating Your Offer**
Should you negotiate? There is no one right answer for everyone. If the employment offer comes up short of your expectations, and your research shows that you probably have room to negotiate, then yes. If you are ecstatic about the offer, do not negotiate simply for the sake of negotiating, particularly in a difficult job market; there may be willing people lined up behind you happy to accept less than you have been offered. Even in a “seller’s market,” however, undertake negotiations with integrity and diplomacy. Keep a long-term perspective.

If you intend to negotiate, there is only one time to do it, after you have the offer and before the company has you.

**Five Rules of Effective Employment Negotiation:**
Nancy Bell Greiff, formerly an Assistant Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Johnson School, offers five suggestions:

*Don’t Miss the Forest for the Trees*
You can become so caught up in the details of a job, such as salary and bonus, that you lose sight of the big picture. Accept the position that you are really excited about, where the work itself is compelling and where the long-term opportunity is greatest. Time and experience have proven that this type of job will reap the financial benefits down the road; the job that pays a few thousand more to start, but is less exciting to you, will not pay off to the same extent in the long run.

*Be Prepared*
Do your homework. Research salaries at similar companies, in the same job function. Talk with classmates and alumni who have experience at the same and similar companies. Use data available from the OSS, including the annual Post Graduate Report. Consult the web site [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com), and ask for published salary data available through the Nestlé Library. You cannot negotiate well if you do not have facts at hand.

*Develop Alternatives*
If you take Professor Tony Simon’s HADM 6611: “Negotiations in the Hospitality Industry” class, you will learn about BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement). The more attractive your alternatives to the proposed agreement, the more power you have.

Effective negotiation is not an “either/or” discussion. Weigh several areas on which you are willing to negotiate. Decide what is important to you. For example, a location that affords the lifestyle you love might have a much greater impact on your job satisfaction than an extra $5,000.

*Determine What the Employer Wants*
You will have difficulty negotiating effectively if you approach the discussion from the basis of what you want and think you deserve. A much better avenue is to show the employer how
meeting your requests are in his or her interest. What do you bring to the table that is worth something to them? Reinforce your interest in their goals, the skills and experience you offer, and your desire to be part of their team.

Ensure That Everyone Saves Face
Remember that you may be working with these professionals in several months. Employers are usually reasonable and willing to negotiate with you. Not all, however, have the leeway to negotiate as much as you might want. Some employers, in fact, will negotiate less willingly with students who handle the process unprofessionally. If you have unreasonable expectations in your requests, or if you are demanding and unyielding in your interactions, you can pay for it later. Do not garner for yourself the reputation of “the MMH Upstart” before you begin the job. And above all, do not present alternatives, such as the promise that you will go elsewhere, unless you are ready to follow through with them.

Approach negotiation with an open mind, and a team spirit: “Let’s discuss what might work well for both of us.” Aim for a win-win solution.

Accepting an Offer
Before accepting an offer, make sure that you have done two things:

1) obtained the offer in writing, and
2) contacted all companies from whom you have not received a response.

Accepting an offer is a professional commitment. Make sure you have responses from all companies you are seriously considering before you make a decision. Otherwise, you may end up accepting an offer and then finding that a company you had not heard from wants you to interview further. To avoid the temptation of an unethical situation, make sure you have as many answers as possible.

When you make a final decision, notify the employer by phone and follow up with an acceptance letter outlining the parameters of the job. Make sure to confirm any changes to the terms of the offer in writing in your letter of acceptance. Then, within 24 hours, notify the OSS and all other employers of your decision; remove yourself from any on-campus interviews and do not accept any further invitations for interviews.

Protocol for Accepting Offers
When you accept an offer, you have a professional obligation to work for the employer. Reneging on an offer (i.e., accepting an offer and then changing your mind and rejecting it) is unacceptable and unprofessional. It reflects poorly on you, the Hotel School, and the University, and it jeopardizes the School's relationship with the company. It is a small world out there - recruiters frequently talk to each other. If you renege, you hurt your reputation, and you run the risk of having your second offer withdrawn because of your unethical behavior. The negotiation and acceptance process is a delicate and fragile one that needs to be handled with care. For some, it can be more frustrating and painful than the job search itself. We encourage you to make an appointment with an advisor in the OSS to discuss your particular situation.
**Reporting an Offer**
When you accept an offer, you cannot continue to interview. Be absolutely sure, when you accept an offer that you intend to take the job.

If you are unhappy with an offer you have accepted, you are encouraged to discuss the situation with the OSS before you take any action. Reneging on accepted offers is a violation of Hotel School policy. If you violate school policy by reneging, you will be required to meet with an OSS advisor. You must also write a letter of apology to the company and send a copy to the advisor. Each case will be evaluated individually pending the discussion of your situation and a determination will be made about the additional loss of recruiting privileges.

Further Resources:

[www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)
[www.vault.com](http://www.vault.com)
[www.wetfeet.com](http://www.wetfeet.com)

Specific features vary, but there is almost always an article or survey with comparative salary information on these web sites.