

All Right! You Got the Job!!!

Woo-Hoo!!! YES!!! Congratulations!!!

Receiving a job offer can be elating – as you finally see all of your hard work pay off in a very real way.

While elation or desperation may tempt you to accept or reject an offer on-the-spot, doing so can place you in a less than ideal position. Take time to thoroughly review the offer, the organization, the job, and take it before the Lord in prayer. After all, you will be the one spending 40-60 hours per week doing the work, so you want to be sure that your decision to accept or decline an offer is the right one.

Evaluating Job Offers – Areas to Consider

The ultimate goal of a job search is to obtain at least one job offer, hopefully more than one. Once you are to this point, prayer is obviously your most powerful form of confirmation in making the right decision, but you need to do the foot-work as well. In this part of the process, you must obtain as much information as possible. Hopefully you have already started procuring the needed information by asking well-prepared, thoughtful questions of the employer about every aspect of the company and job.

Another helpful step will be to actually write down what is important to you in your next job. Try to cover the following areas: general organizational information, job duties and responsibilities, geographical location and environment, culture and values, company size, salary and benefits, colleagues and superiors, growth potential, status and stability of the organization, training and development programs, and opportunities for advancement.

The Organization

Background information on an organization can help you decide if it is a good place for you to work. Factors to consider include the organization's business or activity, financial condition, age, size, and location.

You generally can get background information on an organization, particularly a large organization, on its Internet site or by telephoning its public relations office. A public company's annual report to the stockholders tells about its corporate philosophy, history, products or services, goals, and financial status. Most government agencies can furnish reports that describe their programs and missions. Press releases, company newsletters or magazines, and recruitment brochures can also be useful. Ask the organization for other items that might interest a prospective employee. If possible, speak to current or former employees of the organization.

If you cannot get an annual report, check the library for reference directories that may provide basic facts about the company, such as earnings, products and services, and number of employees. Some directories widely available in libraries either in print or as online databases include:

- Dun & Bradstreet's Million Dollar Directory
- Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations
- Mergent's Industrial Review (formerly Moody's Industrial Manual)
- Thomas Register of American Manufacturers
- Ward's Business Directory

Stories about an organization in magazines and newspapers can tell a great deal about its successes, failures, and plans for the future. You can identify articles on a company by looking under its name in periodical or computerized indexes in libraries. However, it probably will not be useful to look back more than 2 or 3 years

The Industry

Long-term projections of employment and output for detailed industries, covering the entire U.S. economy, are developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and revised every 2 years. For example, see the November 2005 Monthly Labor Review for the most recent projections, covering the 2004-14 period, on the Internet at: <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/mlrhome.htm>. Trade magazines also may include articles on the trends for specific industries.

Should you work for a relatively new organization or one that is well established?

New businesses have a high failure rate, but for many people, the excitement of helping to create a company and the potential for sharing in its success more than offset the risk of job loss. However, it may be just as exciting and rewarding to work for a young firm that already has a foothold on success.

Does it make a difference if the company is private or public?

An individual or a family may control a privately owned company and key jobs may be reserved for relatives and friends. A board of directors responsible to the stockholders controls a publicly owned company and key jobs usually are open to anyone.

Is the organization in an industry with favorable long-term prospects?

The most successful firms tend to be in industries that are growing rapidly.

Job Duties & Responsibilities

Having gone through the interview process, which may have involved as many as three separate interview sessions, you should have a good idea of what your responsibilities will be. You should also have picked up on what kind of working conditions there will be, what kind of people you will be working around, and just how much your job is actually going to interest you.

Even if everything else about the job is attractive, you will be unhappy if you dislike the day-to-day work, it can very quickly become a "grind". Determining in advance whether you will like the work may be difficult. The more you learn about the job before accepting or rejecting the offer, the more likely you are to make the right choice. Actually working in the industry and, if possible, for the company would provide considerable insight.

What are the job considerations?

For most entry-level positions, you should weigh the work itself, the level of responsibility, the opportunity for learning new skills, and advancement opportunities more heavily than the initial starting salary and other perks.

Does the work match your interests and make good use of your skills?

The duties and responsibilities of the job should be explained in enough detail to answer this question. If they are not, you may need to do some additional digging for detail; if details are not forthcoming, this may not be an overall good indicator of your potential future employer.

How important is the job in the company?

An explanation of where you fit in the organization and how you are supposed to contribute to its overall objectives should give you an idea of the job's importance. This may vary in importance to you; for some knowing what they do achieves a larger goal is a major driver for their own personal motivation.

Are you comfortable with the hours?

Most jobs involve regular hours—for example, 40 hours a week, during the day, Monday through Friday. Other jobs require night, weekend, or holiday work. In addition, some jobs routinely require overtime to meet deadlines or sales or production goals, or to better serve customers. Consider the effect that the work hours will have on your personal life. Also consider how flexible you might need your hours to be for other considerations such as family.

How long do most people who enter this job stay with the company?

High turnover can mean dissatisfaction with the nature of the work. It can also indicate that the position simply is not suitable for many types of people. Try to eliminate yourself from this category. For example: If you are outgoing, self-motivated, a good communicator, and comfortable with somewhat long hours you would probably not make a first-class sales person in areas such as automobile, insurance, and personal care product sales.

Culture & Values

Do you really believe in the job? Can you stand behind the organization? Does the company culture fit your personality and personal belief system? Are your values upheld? It is easier to apply yourself to the work if you are enthusiastic about what the organization does and what it stands for.

Salary & Benefits

A job cannot be evaluated simply based on the starting salary. Make sure you are looking at all the benefits the job offers and who you will get to work with.

Wait for the employer to introduce the subjects of salary and benefits. Some companies will not talk about pay until they have decided to hire you. In order to know if their offer is reasonable, you need a rough estimate of what the job should pay. You may have to go to several sources for this information. Try to find family, friends, or acquaintances that were recently hired in similar jobs. Ask your teachers and the staff in placement offices about starting pay for graduates with your qualifications. Help-wanted ads in newspapers sometimes give salary ranges for similar positions. Check online for salary surveys such as those conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) or various professional associations. Online sources such as Yahoo Hot Jobs offer regional salary averages for all kinds of positions as well.

You also should learn the organization's policy regarding overtime. Depending on the job, you may or may not be exempt from laws requiring the employer to compensate you for overtime. Find out how many hours you will be expected to work each week and whether you receive overtime pay or compensatory time off for working more than the specified number of hours in a week.

Also take into account that the starting salary is just that—the start. Your salary should be reviewed on a regular basis; many organizations do it every year. How much can you expect to earn after 1, 2, or 3 or more years? An employer cannot be specific about the amount of pay if it includes commissions and bonuses.

Benefits can also add a lot to your base pay, but they vary widely. Find out exactly what the benefit package includes and how much of the cost you must bear.

National, State, and metropolitan area data from the Bureau's National Compensation Survey are available from:

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Compensation Levels and Trends, 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE., Room 4175, Washington, DC 20212-0001. Telephone: (202) 691-6199.
Internet: <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/>

Data on earnings by detailed occupation from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey are available from:

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE., Room 2135, Washington, DC 20212-0001. Telephone: (202) 691-6569.
Internet: <http://www.bls.gov/oes/>

Geographical Location

Take into consideration where you will be physically located for this job. Climate, quality housing, recreational activities for you and your spouse, how close you are to family members, the level of crime and pollution, and transportation considerations such as traffic levels are all potentially important considerations.

If you are considering the salary and benefits for a job in another geographic area, make allowances for differences in the cost of living, which may be significantly higher in a large metropolitan area than in a smaller city, town, or rural area. There are online living expense calculators to assist with this process.

Also consider that if the job is in another section of the country, you need to consider the availability of housing and transportation, and the quality of educational and recreational facilities in that section of the country. Even if the job location is in your area, you should consider the time and expense of commuting.

Company Size

How will the size of the organization affect you?

Large firms generally offer a greater variety of training programs and career paths, more managerial levels for advancement, and better employee benefits than do small firms. Large employers may also have more advanced technologies. However, many jobs in large firms tend to be highly specialized, so you may end up doing a smaller variety of tasks overall.

Jobs in small firms may offer broader authority and responsibility, a closer working relationship with top management, and a chance to clearly see your contribution to the success of the organization. Smaller organizations tend to need employees to wear many hats in day-to-day operations, so you can expect to learn a much broader variety of tasks than in a larger organization.

Opportunities

A good job offers you opportunities to learn new skills, increase your earnings, and rise to positions of greater authority, responsibility, and prestige. A lack of opportunities can dampen interest in the work and result in frustration and boredom. The company should have a training plan for you.

What valuable new skills does the company plan to teach you?

The employer should give you some idea of promotion possibilities within the organization.

What is the next step on the career ladder?

If you have to wait for a job to become vacant before you can be promoted, how long does this usually take?

When opportunities for advancement do arise, will you compete with applicants from outside the company?

Can you apply for jobs for which you qualify elsewhere within the organization, or is mobility within the firm limited?

If continuing your education is important for your future career plans, then the opportunities for additional education will be a factor to consider.

Further Evaluation of the Offer

At the beginning stages of your job search, you may have developed a list of criteria you were looking for in a job. Review this list and add to it based on what you learned through the job search process. Examples of possible criteria include:

- Interest in particular job function, e.g., management, sales, analyst, consulting, design, manufacturing, or an interest in a rotational program
- The opportunity to work on challenging projects
- The opportunity to use skills and abilities that reflect your strengths
- A setting that will allow you to express your values
- Working independently and/or as part of a team as you prefer
- The opportunity to travel and/or work in a certain geographic location
- A position that will be compatible with your desired lifestyle, e.g., not working more than 40-50 hours per week, family-friendly environment, etc.
- A position that offers certain perks or incentives or a certain salary level
- Job security, opportunity for advancement and professional development

Prioritizing is important because, like other things in life, sometimes you have to compromise. Evaluate the offer by analyzing to what extent the position meets the factors you listed as those you definitely want in a job.

Based on the areas already discussed other questions you may want to ask yourself include:

- What are the job duties and responsibilities? Are they realistic?
- Is the work challenging? If not, is there variety in the work? Will I be learning new skills? Where will this job take me in one or two years?
- Do you like the working conditions as well as your potential supervisor and co-workers?
- What is the organization's reputation? Is the organization growing or downsizing?
- What is the compensation package? Does the salary meet your financial needs? Some smaller employers sometimes offer creative benefits to attract good employees, such as stock options, transportation costs, meals, flex-time, or tele-commuting.
- Will the organization be a good place to work?
- Will the job be interesting?

- Are there opportunities for advancement?
- Is the salary fair?
- Are the organization's values and lifestyles in sync with mine?
- Will I enjoy learning and doing this job?
- Is the work challenging?
- Do they provide me with quality professional development opportunities?
- Do I like the working environment? The staff? The supervisor?
- Does the compensation package; salary, benefits, vacation, health & retirement plans, meet my financial needs?
- Is the organization growing? Downsizing? What is its reputation?
- Is it in a geographic location that interests me?
- How do I feel about the required level of travel?

After answering these questions, you may need some time to think an offer through, or you may be ready to make a decision. If you need more information, do not hesitate to ask the employer for additional detailed information about the offer or what it's like working with their organization. This is a big step, and you want to have as much relevant information as possible before you make such a consequential decision.

Other Considerations

What About Delaying a Response?

You may find that you need more time than an employer initially extends to make a decision on a job offer, especially if you have other employment opportunities pending. When asking for an extension, it is important to provide a specific date by which you will make your decision and then stick to it.

What's the Best Way to Respond to an Offer?

If you're accepting the offer, you can confirm your acceptance verbally and then follow up with a written confirmation letter of acceptance of salary, start date, and job title. Be sure to express your appreciation and enthusiasm for the opportunity. If there are additional conditions of employment (such as medical exams), indicate when you expect to fulfill those.

If you're declining the offer, inform the recruiter verbally and follow your conversation with a well-written letter of thanks for the opportunity. Without going into excessive detail, explain that you are accepting a position that better matches your current needs. Keep things positive, so you do not close the door on the possibility of working with that employer in the future.

Are There any Ethical Considerations?

Yes. Once you have accepted a job offer, you must terminate all other job-search activity. Notify all other employers that you are no longer available for employment, and cancel any interviews (on campus or off) you might have pending. Acceptance of an offer is a commitment to your future employer. If you are not ready to make that commitment, do not accept the job offer.

Last and Most Importantly

If you have gotten this far and are still somewhat unsure as to what you should do there is one final matter that will prove to make or break deals throughout your life. Ask yourself: If this what the Lord has for me at this time?

If you are not sure how you will know this, there is extensive teaching on hearing the voice of the Lord; but perhaps the easiest, most effective way is to simply get quiet and look for that inner feeling of peace in regards to the job offer. Call it an "inner green light", an "inner witness", or as Mama used to say "knowing it in your knower". If this peace and knowledge is not present within you, it is likely not where you are supposed to be. Trust the Lord to show you the right path, and never override a complete lack of peace for any position, no matter what they seem to be offering you.