

CHAPTER 43

FOLLOWING UP, GETTING AN OFFER, AND NEGOTIATING

Your work is not done once you have completed the interview; there is still more to do. As shown in Figure 43-1, once you complete the interview you move on to the follow-up and negotiate the offer stage. In this chapter, we will discuss follow-up actions to increase your chances of getting an offer and how to negotiate for more.

SENDING THANK YOU NOTES

Within 1 or 2 days after the interview, send all the people you met a simple thank you note. The thank you note can be a handwritten note or email. If you obtained their business card or contact information during the interview, you know exactly where to send it. If you did not, as sometimes happens, you can always contact the Human Resources person and ask for the contact information.

The thank you note should be addressed directly to the person and express your gratitude for taking the time to interview with you. It is also a very good practice to mention one or two specific items you discussed during the interview. This will help them remember who you are and it sends a very positive message that you were indeed listening and paying attention. Here is a sample thank you to guide you when writing yours.

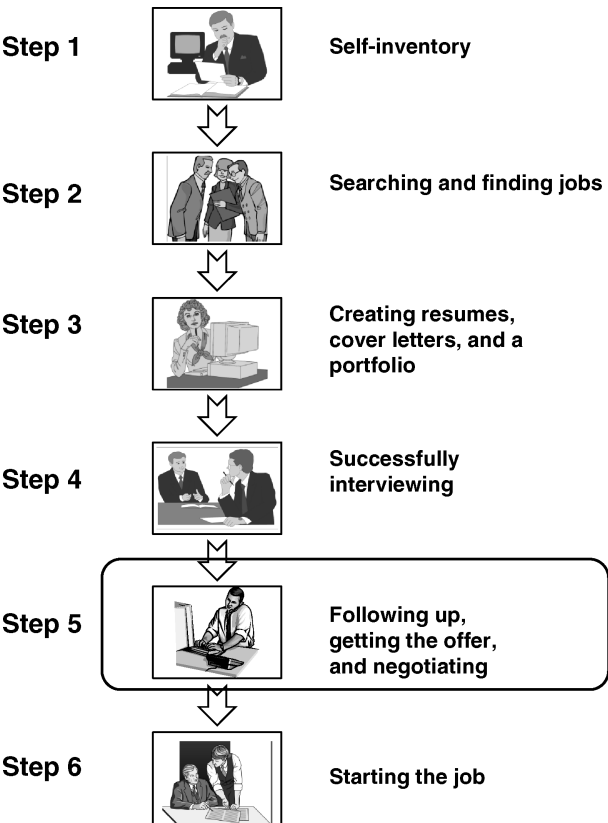


FIGURE 43-1 Job search process step 5—following up, getting an offer, and negotiating.

Mary,

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview with me, I enjoyed hearing about the company and the position. Your software development efforts on Project XYZ and the database challenges with user authentication sound exciting. I look forward to working with you and it was nice to meet another alumnus from Tufts University, I enjoyed sharing stories.

I look forward to hearing from you so I can be part of your organization.

Sincerely,
John Jones
Senior Software Engineer
Phone Number

Sample thank you note

In this example, I mentioned two specific items. One was related to the assignment and the other was a personal item. Mentioning a job-related item and a personal item are powerful ways to reconnect with the interviewer and allows you to be more personable to the interviewer, rather than just another candidate.

The timing of the thank you note is also critical. The best timing is 1 to 2 days after the interview. It sends a message that you are on top of things when responding so quickly. Some interview coaches recommend you to fill out the thank you note immediately after leaving the company, since everything is fresh in your mind, and mail it that night so that it shows up the next morning; an email thank you will also accomplish this.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HEAR NOTHING

If the company is really serious about hiring you and desperately needs help they oftentimes give you an offer in writing before you leave, or tell you they want to hire you and should have an offer out within a day. They may even ask if they can email you the offer when it is ready.

Getting an offer this quickly is not the norm and usually the company needs several days or even up to a couple of weeks before they can process an offer of employment to you. There are a multitude of reasons, some of which include the need to obtain upper-management approval of the selection, more candidates are being interviewed, or the hiring manager just has gotten busy with normal business and deadlines. The decision is put off until later when they have more time to make the decision. So the question becomes—what to do if you hear nothing and how long should you wait before contacting the company.

The answers to these questions depend on several things. If during the interview they told you it would take time and don't expect anything before so many days, then you should do nothing until the date they mentioned comes and goes without a word from them. If the date has passed and still no word, then contact them. If they did not indicate a date when they would get back to you during the interview then contact them within a week of your interview and inquire when you might expect a response.

The two people to contact are the Human Resources manager and the engineering manager to find out if they will be making you an offer. In the event you are not selected, you may ask for the reasons why. This will/may help you on the next interview.

GET THE OFFER IN WRITING

Make sure you get an offer in writing that identifies the job title, position, salary, and start date. If a company cannot put the offer in writing, then something is wrong. Putting it in writing protects you if anything goes

wrong. You have legal documentation to support your case in the event things fall apart. I know of cases where companies made offers of employment to people because they thought they were going to get a huge contract. Well, the contract never came, people had already quit their jobs only to be notified before they started that there was no job, and they were unemployed. Having written documentation is your only means of recovering from a situation like this.

HOW TO NEGOTIATE MORE OUT OF THE OFFER

When you get the offer you do not have to accept it as is, especially if you are unhappy about the terms of your employment or the offer falls short of your expectations. Everything is negotiable and job offers are no exception. Contact the person who is making the offer and start to go through it in detail. Discuss the position, salary, benefits, and start date.

As you go through the offer and you agree with each particular item, let the hiring manager know the areas you are pleased with. However don't stop there. If there is something you want to ask more for then discuss this item further. Explore the options for getting more.

If you are disappointed with the salary, ask if this is negotiable. Normally, there is a salary range that a hiring manager is allowed to offer and naturally all good managers do not offer the highest salary to start with. State you would like to request an increase, counter their offer with the salary you were expecting. Ask if they can come up with any higher offer to meet your needs. Stress that this is a hard issue for you which you want to resolve before accepting the offer. The hiring manager may go back and try to get you more. Or they may say take it or leave it. If they have no more they can offer you, then discuss the possibility of potential salary adjustments within the first year. Some hiring manager's hands are tied and they cannot offer any more than was approved. However, they have the means to adjust your salary upward after you have been with the company for a period of time. In this case you may be able to get the salary you wanted but it will take a little longer.

Another option is to request if they can offer you a signing bonus. When companies desperately need people they often offer a one-time signing bonus to entice people to come to work for them.

Next option to consider is regional salary cost of living adjustments. Companies know the cost of living in their area as compared to the area you are presently in. If the new job is causing you to relocate to a higher cost of living area, the company might offer a slightly higher salary to help keep your standard of living up as incentive to make the move.

Negotiate for title or rank in the company. If the new company asks if you want to be called a system engineer or electronics engineer, ask which one has

a higher salary range. Select the title with the higher salary. Remember, the company is probably going to offer you a higher salary based on including next year's raise already in it. So do not expect a raise anytime soon once you are in the company.

If the salary offer is too low and they are not going to offer you any more after negotiating, you can feel assured that at least you tried to obtain the most you could; it's your decision at that point to accept it or turn it down.

Another item up for negotiation is vacation benefits. If you are enjoying 3 or 4 weeks vacation a year, then accepting a new job where you only get 2 weeks vacation can be tough. You can discuss this with the hiring supervisor and see if you can have an exception to this rule. You may not be able to get your full 4 weeks but maybe they can offer more than the standard 2 weeks.

As long as you negotiate your items of concern in good faith and discuss your concerns in a professional and nonthreatening manner, you will be fine. Remember, it never hurts to ask and after all is said and done, you are no worse off if they say no to your request; the job offer still holds.

There is one more thing to consider before you finally accept the new offer. Would your present company be willing to make a counteroffer [1]? This negotiation option is also available to you. Your boss may ask you to remain with the company and make a better offer. In advance of your decision to try a counteroffer out of your present company, you should ask yourself if you receive a counteroffer, does it address all your concerns and will it move you toward your career goals? Would your relationship with your present company be damaged because you had wanted to leave? Would your employer now be suspicious of your loyalty if you stayed? Thinking through these questions and answering them in advance provides a valuable exercise that can prevent you from being caught offguard and enable you to decide in advance if you would accept or reject a possible counteroffer.

Your final step to finding a new job is to sign the job offer. Make a copy for yourself and return the original to the company. Congratulations, you now have a new job.

Keep all your information to yourself and do not talk to anyone at your present company about your new opportunity during the negotiation process.

RESIGNATION LETTERS

After you have signed your new employment agreement and have a starting date, it is time to turn in your resignation letter. Resignation letters are short and to the point—you are leaving [2,3]. Resignation letters are not for blaming or explaining all your thoughts. Here is a sample resignation letter to help you get started with yours.

Dear Mr./Ms. Manager:

This is my notification that I am resigning from (company name) as (title). (Date) will be my last day of employment. I have accepted a new position outside the company.

I appreciate the opportunities I have been given here, and wish you much success in the future.

Sincerely,

(your signature and date it)

Your Name

cc: (names of those being copied on the letter)

Sample resignation letter

The best professional action upon your part is to give your present company a minimum of two weeks notice prior to your last day. This will give them time to find a replacement and not give the impression you are leaving them high and dry.

LEAVING YOUR OLD JOB ON A GOOD NOTE

Once you have turned in your resignation letter, the word will spread quickly and everyone will want to know why you are quitting. You have to behave in your best professional manner and your goal is to leave a positive image of yourself; this will help you retain important professional contacts that could be helpful in the future [3]. Your resignation letter and how you conduct yourself from the time of your official announcement, to the time you leave, will form lasting impressions.

Be prepared for emotional reactions. Your employer may be surprised by your announcement. They may react emotionally or even take your leaving personally. Be cooperative and cheerful with your supervisor and coworkers. These people may experience anxiety concerning your unfinished projects and the sudden need to train someone to replace you. Try to anticipate these situations and calm their fears with positive communication as well as your cooperative nature and desire to help with the transition.

If you are up to it, you can also volunteer to train your replacement. In your final days, if you are comfortable with it, you might share how people can contact you once you leave in case there is anything they may need assistance with.

Here is a list of things to do before you walk out the door for the last time:

1. Go to Human Resources and find out how to extend your medical and life insurance benefits to cover you when you are in-between jobs.
2. Start taking home a box of your items each day so the last day you have very little to remove.

3. Check to make sure your vacation is going to be paid in your last paycheck.
4. Find out when your last paycheck will be coming.
5. Work until the end of the pay period so you get a full pay check.
6. Collect any magazines or books that you have loaned to other people.
7. Return all material that is charged out to you: computers, cell phones, and so on.
8. Make a list of all the key people you know, their phone numbers, and email addresses.
9. For those coworkers you want to stay in touch with provide you new contact information.
10. Discuss with Human Resources how to best handle your 401k, savings plan, or retirement pension plan. Record all the points of contacts for these should you need to contact them when you start at the new company.
11. The last day send an email to all your good friends at work saying goodbye.
12. Stop by the boss' office one last time and say goodbye. Shake hands, thank them, and wish them good luck.
13. Make a list of key business associates outside of work and let them know you are taking a new position and how to get in touch with you in the future.

If your coworkers host a going-away party, you should be the gracious recipient thanking everyone for all their help over the years and wishing them well. If you are asked to talk, you should be positive and upbeat and mention all you have learned from them and how much you enjoyed working with them. And if they give you a going-away gift you should send a thank note so that they can post it for all to see.

► **Career Tip.** Leaving your old company on a positive note is great for your career.

SUMMARY

Your work is not done once you have completed the interview there is still more to do. Within 1 or 2 days after the interview, send all the people you met a simple thank you note. If you have not heard from the company within a week (5 working days) from your interview, call them to see what is happening. All offers are negotiable and you can negotiate for more if you are unhappy with the offer. Get the offer in writing. After you accept it, then turn in your resignation letter. Resignation letters are very short and to the

point. Give at least two weeks notice and leave on a good note. Be very professional and leave your company on a positive note. Don't burn the bridges behind you. Thank people for the opportunity to work with them and wish them good luck in the future.

Have you identified any career actions you want to take as a result of reading this chapter? If so, please make sure to capture these ideas before you forget by recording them in the notes section at the back of the book.

ASSIGNMENTS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

- 1 Why send thank you notes to people?
- 2 Why is it important to get the offer in writing?
- 3 What terms of the job offer are negotiable?
- 4 Explain how you leave on a good note.

REFERENCES

1. Barkdull, Larry, *How to Write the Perfect Resignation Letter*, WriteExpress, <http://www.writeexpress.com/resignation-letter.html>.
2. About.com Tech Careers, <http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/resumesandletters/a/letrofresign.htm>.
3. Rudloff, Alex, Emurse web site, 2007, <http://www.emurse.com/blog/2007/05/23/sample-resignation-letters/>.