



“What are your salary requirements?”

If you cringed a little reading this question, you're not alone. For many women, this is the most nerve-wracking part of a job interview. But it's our fear of this question that partially contributes to our society's gender pay gap. According to the 2011 Census report, women continue to make only 77% of what men earn. Numerous studies have found that while women tend to accept the salary they're offered, men will both ask and negotiate for what they want. You can too, with these salary negotiation tips.



Acquaint Yourself with Negotiation: Fear of negotiation often comes from its portrayal as a battle, and one that only tough, money-hungry, power-driven people can win. In reality, it's nothing but a friendly conversation with a purpose that ultimately leads to benefits for both sides. Negotiation is also something we do every day, notes Lisa Quast, founder of **Career Woman, Inc.** and author of "Your Career, Your Way!" "We negotiate with our children on a bed time, and with our husbands on what movie to watch," she explains. "Negotiating a salary is similar, just different because it requires more thought." Once we're able to see negotiation without its stigma, we can get more comfortable with the idea and learn to negotiate effectively.

Practice Your Tactics: Many of us understand the importance of negotiation and would like to be able to do so with grace, but a lack of confidence or a loss of words can prevent us from expressing what it is we want. "Everyone is born with the skills to negotiate, but nobody is born a good negotiator," says Lee E. Miller, career coach and co-author of "**A Woman's Guide to Negotiating**." He recommends that negotiation be practiced frequently with family and friends or in low-risk situations such as at a store or restaurant. For those with a real fear of negotiation or who need extra help, countless books have been published on the topic and classes are available at colleges and businesses.

Do Your Research: Before asking for your desired salary, you want to have facts to back that number up. Figure out how much money you need to maintain your lifestyle and make that your bottom line. Research what others are making in your position, with your experience, and within your geographic location. Quast suggests web sites such as www.salary.com and www.vault.com to determine this information. "You should also research how your company pays their employees in addition to salary," says Miller. "Benefits, stock options, vacation time, bonuses, and other perks should also be considered when preparing for salary negotiation, as these can be negotiated as well."

Showcase Your Worth: During your interview or job review, focus on your past achievements, what sets you apart from others, and what you can do for the company. Sell yourself to your employer by showing your value. "You want to hold off on discussing pay as long as possible," says Miller. "Wait until they're really into you." He goes on to recommend that if the interview doesn't seem to be going well, abort discussion on salary completely. Also, you'll sometimes find yourself being asked questions about pay at the beginning of the interview. You may be able to dodge the question by indicating you would like to learn more about the position first.

Ask! When you have reached the moment of negotiation, it may be helpful to remind yourself why your salary is important. Remember your student loans, your home, or your family so you don't lose sight of why you want the things you want. When asked your salary requirements, aim high. You'll be surprised how often an employer will agree to your suggestion. If not, there's room to come down. In other situations, an employer might offer you a salary that appears very low. You can still open a calm and friendly discussion. "Express that you're a little surprised by the offer, while indicating the salary you had expected, given your research. Ask that they help you to understand," says Quast.

While most things in life are negotiable, there will be times an employer truly can't negotiate with salary, in which case other options should be considered. "If the company can't go up on salary, ask if your salary can be revisited in six months," says Miller. He also says to keep in mind that nobody has ever lost a job opportunity because they negotiated; however, people have lost out on opportunities because they failed to do so.

