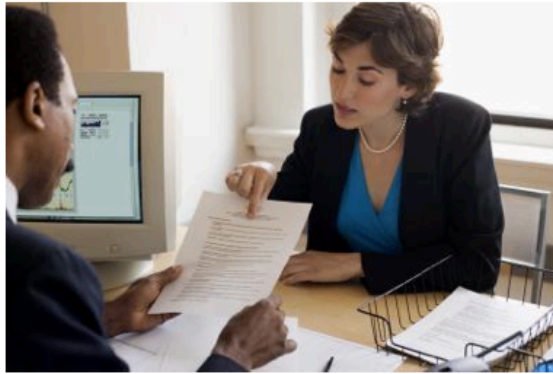


Should I Tell My True Past Salary in an Interview?

by Natalie Grace, Demand Media



Contact the hiring manager before applying for the job.

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As a job seeker, you want to be compensated according to your worth. Still, a potential employer might measure your value based on your past salary. Some employers require that you put this information on your application form. In some cases, the hiring manager raises the question during the interview. Whether you should disclose your past salary is a personal choice. However, in an article published by the Public Broadcasting Service, headhunter Nick Corcodilos advises never giving your present or past salary to a potential employer.

Problems With Stating Past Salary

If your past salary is lower than what the company has in mind for the position, the employer might think you lack the necessary skills and disqualify you. If you give a higher amount, the employer may rule you out, thinking you would not be interested in a lower salary. Corcodilo says potential employers do not need your salary history to employ you. Many do it to pressure candidates into giving up confidential information, which gives them the upper hand during salary negotiations.

Declining to Answer

You can use tact and diplomacy to try to get around questions about your past salary. According to the Career Services Center at The University of San Francisco, it is best to say you would prefer to know more about the position before discussing compensation. In addition, acknowledge that you are certain both sides can arrive at a mutually beneficial salary after the interview. Then, explain that you would be happy to demonstrate what you can do for the company.

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Requesting Budgeted Amount

Another strategy for working around salary questions is to try to get the interviewer to give you the budgeted salary range for the position. In an article published by Forbes magazine, career coach Lisa Quast suggests revealing the salary range your research shows for similar positions, and then asking for the company's budgeted range. To find out the market range for the position, use resources such as career services websites, job listings for the same position, professional organizations in your industry, business or trade magazines that list salary surveys, or recruiters that place people in your field.

Providing Salary Range

When asked about past salary, you can respond with your desired salary range. This tells the hiring manager whether your current salary expectations fit the company's budget for the position. It also indicates you are willing to compromise. Note that companies usually have budgeted amounts for posted positions. Therefore, it might best to ask for the budgeted salary range before revealing your salary expectations. Quast suggests discussing your desired salary range in the initial telephone screening instead of waiting until the actual interview. This helps put you both on the same page and makes it easier to discuss salary during the interview.

Making a Choice

Some hiring managers are inflexible and will expect you to disclose your past salary. In an article published by Monster.com, independent staffing consultant Lori Itani says that when speaking to candidates she asks for their past salary, and that they all end up disclosing the information. If you agree with experts who say that you should never disclose your past salary, you may have to politely and calmly walk away if the hiring manager becomes too rigid. This is particularly true if she insists that you disclose the information even after you have proven your worth in the interview. Regardless of which route you choose, refrain from lying about your past salary.