

CAREER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES LLC

OFFERING YOU THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE YOU NEED FOR THE CAREER SUCCESS YOU DESERVE

POSTPONING SALARY DISCUSSIONS IT'S TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

The **money question** always comes up during the hiring process. It can come in many forms: “**So, what will it take to get you on board?**” ... “**What are you looking for?**” ... “**What are your salary needs?**” ... OR it could take the form of asking for your salary history. However, it is critical that you understand that **timing is absolutely everything** when it comes to this topic. There is an appropriate time for discussing the money issue, and that time comes when the employer is interested in hiring you. This is the time that is most advantageous for the job-seeking candidate. Coming too early in the hiring process will derail your candidacy if not handled correctly.

Oftentimes, the question arises close to the beginning of the process; it may even show up in a classified ad. Why the early timing of this question, you might ask? It's really very simple. **The employer is looking to screen out as many candidates as possible, with as little investment of time and energy.** Don't fall victim to this ploy.

The following strategy may, at first, sound like a bunch of kindergartners playing in the sandbox; but here goes anyway:

Whoever mentions a dollar figure first is the loser!

{ ... *neh, neh, neh-neh-neh!* ... }

Here are the three guaranteed results if YOU mention a salary figure first:

- ☑ If your salary expectations are too high ... then “*We can't afford this candidate.*” If you haven't really sold your full value then the employer won't realize that she could hire one of you (at a higher salary than they intended) instead of two run-of-the-mill workers (*and actually save money in the process*).
- ☑ If your salary requirement seems low to them “*Well heck, if that's all he thinks he's worth then he isn't heavy enough for our team.*”
- ☑ Suppose you hit it right in the middle of the salary range that the company has budgeted for; you'd be leaving a lot of money behind on the table, when you sign on; extra pay that could have been yours; but you basically gave it all away.

In any one of these scenarios, you would come out as the loser.

The moral of the story is: **Don't talk money until:**

- a) **you've had ample opportunity to show what your value is;**
- b) **the employer feels that you are the right person for the job; and**
- c) **you've decided that the job is right for you.**

Research shows that a majority of the companies, whose ads say that they will not consider an applicant who doesn't furnish salary information, will still interview a non-disclosing candidate if s/he seems to be “*just what the doctor ordered.*” They would be foolish to rule out a highly qualified candidate just because s/he didn't include salary information with the résumé and cover letter package.

Please keep this critical concept in mind:

It is much too early to talk money before you have had the opportunity to present your full value.

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Let me shift topics for just a moment. Suppose you need to get a car and money isn't a problem. **What are you willing to pay for that car?** This is not a trick question. But right now, you don't have enough information to effectively decide how much you'd pay. We are already conditioned that we expect to pay **more** for something that is **more valuable**. But at this point we haven't even determined whether the car is new or used. Okay, ... let's make this even easier and limit the range: What would you be willing to pay for a new, imported, German car? We still don't know which brand car we're considering. You'd expect to have to pay a lot more for a top-of-the-line Mercedes Benz than you would for a VW Beetle. At this point, you don't even know what kind of car you'd be *'bidding'* on. *Back to our employment situation.* You can't let yourself get pinned to a salary before you: **a)** have had an adequate chance to sell your self; and **b)** know a lot more about the actual position. Who knows, if the job has a lot less stress and aggravation than your old job, you might be willing to accept a salary only a bit more than your old job.

The interviewing process can be compared to dating. Here is the parallel. The purpose of a first date is to determine if there is sufficient interest, is there enough chemistry ... to warrant a second date. (*Are there similar likes and interests, etc.?*) The purpose of the first interview is to determine (on the employer's side) whether the candidate possesses the necessary qualifications and experience for hire; and (on the job seeker's side) whether this is a desirable job. The employer is looking to determine whether there is enough interest to pursue things farther. So; ... you the job-seeking candidate ... **your objective is to turn this interview opportunity into a second interview.**

Many organizations have a two, three, or even four-step interview process. The first interview is a screening interview: Does the candidate have the right qualifications and experience? A second interview may cover more depth: "... Does this guy really know his stuff? Does she possess the right expertise for this position?" A third stage may involve assessing the candidate's fit with the organization ... it might even involve a social situation such as going out for lunch, dinner or drinks. It might not even be until a fourth meeting that a job offer is extended.

When you are at the interview, you are there primarily to sell your capabilities and then evaluate the job to make sure it is appropriate for you. It is too early to pin yourself down to a salary range before you've had the chance to effectively sell your value and potential. And make no mistake about the following: **THERE IS A HUGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VALUE AND PERCEIVED VALUE.** The employer may be simply assigning a mental price/value to you based on your most recent job titles. All employees are not created equal. Not every worker puts out the same energy. Some employees are more creatively talented when it comes to problem solving while others haven't even recognized that a problem exists. So ... asking you for your salary expectations or salary history early on, in the interviewing process, is much too soon to be any advantage to the job seeker; ... quite the contrary. Giving away this information is a huge disadvantage at this stage. Don't talk about the compensation package until you are certain that they are realizing how highly qualified you are and are seeing your full value

SALARY HISTORY

Your salary history is actually irrelevant to the decision of what this potential employer will pay you for this up-coming position. Requiring you to disclose your salary history up front, is a ploy used to get you to settle for a salary, in the lower segment of the salary range that the organization has already budgeted, when they determined that they needed to fill this particular position. That range can vary by as much as 20% or more. The employer wants to obtain the top talent for the lowest price possible. Your objective is exactly the opposite. **Remember, there is a HUGE difference between *telling* and *selling*.** Pinning yourself down to a pre-conceived salary range, before you've had the opportunity to sell your full potential is just what you **DON'T** want to do. You really **must not talk about the money** until they've had the chance to fully grasp the potential value that you would be bringing to this position. Make sure that you don't get undervalued or type cast by former job titles.

Previous salaries show what you were paid in your old jobs. There really isn't any correlation between what you were compensated for in your last position and what would be fair and equitable pay for the value (and additional experience) you bring to this new situation (usually at a higher level or with a larger organization ...*with more responsibility*).

I'm going to return briefly to the dating analogy. You may see a similar parallel in your own experience. Over a fifteen-year period I went out with a fair number of women. None of them bear any similarity, whatsoever, to the woman that I chose to spend my life with and married.

Don't let yourself be defined by what someone else *used* to pay you for a previous position. Those previous positions required much less experience than you have now as well as a somewhat diminished skill set. These days you possess a much higher qualification level than you did back then. And since you're not planning on re-accepting any of your former positions, *is there any connection at all between what someone used to pay you for an old job and what you should rightfully be paid in performing in this new role?* **Don't let yourself get hemmed in.**

By now you may be thinking, “Okay Mark, it sounds like a good idea to put off talking about salary until I've been offered the position. But how do I do that? When the potential employer asks me, right off the bat, what salary I'm looking for, I can't just ignore the question.”

This is quite true. Here's what you need to do. If the job posting or classified ad requires financial information, you can reply, in the body of your cover letter, that you'd **be happy to discuss it during a personal interview**. That way you are not ignoring the question, merely postponing the discussion of that topic. During the interviewing process, you can respond confidently to any premature salary gambit with the reply, “*I'm sure we can come to a good salary agreement if I'm the right person for the job, so let's first agree on whether I'm that person.*” Or: “*Your company has an excellent reputation and I'm sure that you'd pay a fair salary. Let's keep exploring this job situation and should the time come that you feel that I'm the best qualified for it, I'm sure that dollars won't be a problem.*” Or: “*Salary? Well so far the job seems to have the right amount of responsibility for me, and I'm sure you pay a fair salary, don't you?*” {*What can he say?*} “*So let's hold off on salary until you're sure you want me for this position. What other areas would you like to discuss now?*”

A couple of my other clients have been successful in answering the question “*What are your salary requirements?*” with “*Are you offering me the job already?*”

But what if they get angry with Me?

I've got to admit that it feels more than a bit uncomfortable when an employer asks about your salary requirements and you won't disclose them. A tug of war over disclosing your money requirements hurts your chances of being hired because it destroys the rapport needed for when the employer makes the hiring decision. Your rule of thumb here is to put off the first request, and maybe the second, but if asked again, you'll need to handle it more directly.

HERE
ARE SOME WAYS
TO HANDLE THE SITUATION
AND AVOID HAVING TO STRUGGLE.

Soften your “Let's wait” statements with introductory phrases like:

“Discussing salary is always so awkward for me, so ...”

“I know you must be eager to know my requirements, but ...”

“May I say something about that?”

Or, “When we discuss money up front I get worried I'll be screened out or boxed in, so could we ...?”

Use questions to find out what's so important about knowing your salary requirements.

“I notice we're back on salary again. May I ask you a question?” The employer says okay. “Are you wondering if you can afford me? Or do you just need it for an application? Or something else?”

“I notice we've come back to salary. I'd like you to know that I'd be happy to discuss money, and even share my tax return with you at some point if it's important, but could we take a moment to talk about why we need to discuss it now?”

Give up. You can disregard these salary-making rules altogether and reveal your salary up front. That will also end the tug-of-war. However, **I don't recommend it.**

People's attention easily gets focused on the glass-half-empty side of postponing, so they ask, “What if they get angry with me?” Note that the same glass is also half full: “What if they're more impressed with me?”

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One client reported an incident that happened when she was being interviewed by a recruiter who was retained by a family-owned company. The recruiter's job was to make a good selection and to do it **more objectively** than the family could on its own.

In one group interview the recruiter pressed my client for salary expectations. The client postponed it several times; the family brass were in the room and they were showing some signs of discomfort. The recruiter turned to them and remarked, "This woman is doing exactly what I would tell a candidate of mine to do in this situation."

She scored points by focusing the interview on contribution, not compensation.

Don't worry about upsetting the interviewer. If you allow the right mind-set to develop, you'll find your own natural words and ways to put off salary talk.

With the proper research and approach, the tactics previously introduced can even allow you to strategically explore positions that at first might seem to be beneath you. As an example, I had a client with high-level management capabilities who chose to interview for a line-manager position paying considerably below her worth. Although normally that might be seen as a waste of time; by applying appropriate salary-talk timing, **she was able to develop the interview into a superior offer**. She had discovered certain problems that the organization was facing and presented her background as the cure. Salary was side-stepped a number of times, but when pressed, later in the process, she replied that "... *my salary should be based on the responsibilities of the job and the standards of the industry.*" The interviewer then began talking about an even better job concerning the problematic situations and that it could pay, on approval of the president, \$10,000 to \$15,000 more than the position originally discussed. An interview that was supposed to take only a half hour actually took an hour and a half.

Another client deliberately interviewed for an advertised position for which she was overqualified. She *followed up the interview with a letter* revealing how she could save the company grief and overhead by solving the problems she had discussed with the interviewer; solve some other problems the interviewer had hinted at; and help over the next two years, to integrate CAD (computer-assisted design) with the CAM (Computer-aided manufacturing) systems. Had she disclosed her salary requirements in the beginning, she would have been screened out and never been hired for the position which *paid a good \$30,000 more than the originally advertised position.*

Role Reversal: From *Seller...* to ...*Buyer*

Common sales sense says that you will get your best compensation package if you wait. An interesting role reversal occurs if you postpone salary discussions until the time that you are offered the position. Generally, interviews start with the employer buying and the candidate selling. Watch Out! If you even passively agree to a price or range for the offer, the employer will line up their candidates, select one, and say, "Alright, I'll hire (buy) you for X dollars." However, if you were savvy enough to put-off discussing salary, the role is reversed. The employer is in a position where **s/he wants you.**

By following the simple strategy of delaying the money discussion,
you have engineered the situation to where the employer has
judged your quality, not your price.

They've decided to ask you to join them, so now, **they're selling the job to you!** The employer is motivated at this time to offer you their best price, because they want your contribution.

So be prepared when Mr. Employer looks you in the eye and says,
"What sort of salary are you looking for?"

Mark Berkowitz, NCCC, CPRW, JCTC, CEIP puts over 35 years of experience, in the Career Development field, to use for the benefit of his clients. Holding a Master's Degree in Career Counseling he is, at present, the only person in the country who is quadruply credentialed as a **National Certified Career Counselor**, a **Certified Professional Résumé Writer**, **Certified Employment Interview Professional** and an Internationally Certified **Job and Career Transition Coach**. Mark is a recognized expert in the Career field with extensive expertise in Career Assessment/Vocational Testing; presenting frequent workshops and seminars to diverse groups: from public school districts to *Workforce Preparation*.

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For sixteen years, Mark directed the Career Assessment & Counseling Center at the Southern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services, which enjoyed the reputation of being the most comprehensive career planning service in the region. He has taught graduate counseling and job search courses at the College of New Rochelle and mentored graduate counseling interns from Fordham University.

Among his career highlights are:

- ◆ Executive Board Member: Professional Association of Résumé Writers; Chairman (1998 – 2000) Certification Board.
- ◆ Serving on the National Certification Board and having coordinated the testing program for those seeking the designation Certified Professional Résumé Writer (CPRW).
- ◆ Was quoted in the National Business Employment Weekly in an article on writing résumés.
- ◆ Served as programming consultant to numerous school districts for their “School-to-Career Transition” programs.
- ◆ Had been instrumental in planning and producing the very successful “**Career Expo**” in the Hudson Valley Region for five years.
- ◆ Recognized for exemplary interview strategies in **WINNING INTERVIEWS FOR&100k+ JOBS**.
- ◆ Has had many examples of his résumé work published in the following books: GALLERY OF BEST RÉSUMÉS; GALLERY OF BEST RÉSUMÉS FOR TWO YEAR DEGREE GRADUATES; THE QUICK RÉSUMÉ AND COVER LETTER BOOK; AMERICA’S TOP RÉSUMÉS FOR AMERICA’S TOP JOBS, COVER LETTER MAGIC, PROFESSIONAL RÉSUMÉS FOR TAX AND ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONALS, EXPERT RÉSUMÉS FOR HEALTH CARE CAREERS, and PROFESSIONAL RÉSUMÉS FOR EXECUTIVES, MANAGERS AND OTHER ADMINISTRATORS, all six published by JIST Works; 101 BEST RÉSUMÉS, RÉSUMÉ WINNERS FROM THE PROS, RÉSUMÉS THAT KNOCK ‘EM DEAD, COVER LETTERS THAT KNOCK ‘EM DEAD, and THE EDGE RÉSUMÉ AND JOB SEARCH STRATEGY.
- ◆ Has been credited with being “... **one of the leading résumé writers in the United States**” by Dr. David Noble in his Jist Works book PROFESSIONAL RÉSUMÉS FOR EXECUTIVES, MANAGERS, AND OTHER ADMINISTRATORS.
- ◆ He has been spotlighted on WCBS television in “**Acing The Interview**” and has been named as the “**Professional of the Year 2024**” by the **PODCAST BUSINESS NEWS NETWORK**.



Wendy Enelow, Founding President of the Career Management Alliance has acknowledged Mark as “... **one of the most talented career counselors I have ever met.**”



You can contact him at 1+ (910) 833-5013 or cardevres1@gmail.com to find out how he can assist you in launching your career into a higher orbit.

*See how you can benefit from professional expertise
instead of suffering from your career mistakes.*

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