

Get Noticed! 6 Tips for Using Social Networking Sites in Your Job Search

Salary history & requirements

When a job posting asks that you include a salary requirement or salary history with your application, how do you react? Do you panic? Many job seekers do. In a perfect world, employers would attend to salary issues after a job offer has been extended to the job seeker. Despite the fact that we do not live in a perfect world, you have options when handling requests for salary requirements and histories. Common issues that arise in this situation include:

- But, I don't know how much the company is willing to pay me!
- What if I request too high a salary?
- I don't want to miss out on more money; but I'm still afraid that what I specify will be lower than their range.
- Why should I have to release my salary history information? Shouldn't that remain private?
- Won't this mess up my chance to negotiate later?

How to deal

You must first realize that there is a difference between a salary requirement and a salary history. The two terms should not be thought of as interchangeable, even though some people may treat them that way. A salary requirement is a statement specifying the annual salary range you wish to earn. Salary requirements should be based on duties the job requires, your experience and education related to the job title and the typical salary individuals performing the same job earn in your geographical region.

A **salary history** features a record of the starting and ending annual salary you earned at each job you listed on your résumé or application. Now that you know the difference between the two, can you see some possible benefits and problems associated with each?

Several choices are available for how you respond to employers' requests for salary requirements and histories.

- You can comply fully and provide all the information required. Salary requirements have an edge in this situation. You should provide a range in hopes of at least trying to overlap the figure they want to offer. Never provide a single figure when submitting a requirement. See examples on next page.
- Salary histories are difficult to get around. If you choose to comply with a salary history request, you must include figures for all jobs, provide accurate information and know your negotiating leverage could be compromised.
- You can insert the word, "negotiable," "open," or "competitive" in response to the desired salary question on an application. You can also ask to postpone the discussion of salary after a job offer has been made. Circumstances during which you choose to evade the request always carry a potential risk that you will be disqualified from the consideration for the position.
- If an employer requests a salary history, provide a salary requirement that features a range of \$3,000-\$5,000 instead. Since salary histories and requirements are sometimes requested verbally, be sure to reply in writing. Doing so can help avoid misunderstandings during the selection process.
- Another way to handle salary history requests is to write a tactful letter thanking the employer for contacting you about your salary history and informing him or her that you respectfully decline to provide a salary history because you would like to know more about the job. Also let them know that you will be delighted to discuss salary after meeting with them for an interview.

Taking the necessary steps to deal with salary requirements and requests can actually lead to a blessing in disguise in several ways. Researching and preparing salary requirements and histories—even if you never actually send them to an employer may help you:

- Reduce the anxiety you feel about handling salary histories and requests during future job searches.
- Educate yourself on your worth based on your experience, education and skills.
- Learn what your salary potential might be in the future after years of experience.
- Find what other individuals are making in your field in the nation, the state and your city.
- Find your "bottom-line" or minimum salary. If you find out that an employer cannot meet your "bottom-line" at the beginning of the job search (instead of after a job offer has been made), that could save you some time.