

## **Everything is Negotiable**

by Len Adams, CPC, President & Chief Executive Officer

Negotiation is defined as the use of information and power to affect behavior. Whether we realize it or not, we negotiate something every day of our lives. Whether it be what time our children go to bed to what the final price of the car- you want is going to be, a negotiation takes place.

This is especially true when it comes to the job search process.

There are several items to be cognizant of when it come to negotiating, whether it be for a job or in our every day lives.

Who, What, When, Where, Why

Yes, it is true that these are the same questions utilized by reporters when writing a story. However, these same questions must be examined when negotiating.

1. Who am I negotiating with? Does the person I am negotiating with have the power or authority to make the final decision regarding the issues I am confronting? All too often, particularly in a job search the candidate spends far too much time negotiating points with someone who either may not be the decision maker, or, may not be able to influence the decision maker.
2. What am I negotiating? Are the issues I am raising important enough to discuss? Are they really deal breakers? All too often, a deal may fall apart over an issue that, when examined, is really not that important to either side.
3. When do I negotiate? Again, one of the most common mistakes candidates make is beginning a negotiation far too early in the process. Most candidates mistakenly believe that the first interview is the time to begin negotiating. Nothing could be further from the truth. The first interview, and in most cases, the second interview, are times to "Sell" oneself. The objective of these meetings is pure and simple: To learn as much about the position and company as possible, and, to get the employer interested in you. Once sufficient interest is established, then and only, then, should the negotiation process begin.
4. Why? Is the issue important enough to negotiate?

### **Negotiable Issues**

Contrary to popular belief, most items are negotiable when it comes to a job offer. However, some are more negotiable than others. This is the variable that a skilled negotiator can determine. There are many factors to consider. One of the most important is to realize what type of job market one is negotiating in. If it is a candidate-driven market, or, if the candidate has skills that are in demand, than many other negotiable items increase. If the reverse is true, the pendulum swings back towards the employer.

Some of the more common items that may be negotiated are:

Salary, Title, Benefits, Hours, Perks, Review Period, Bonus, Sign on Bonus, Location

Each of these items carries with it nuances as to how negotiable they are. It is important to remember to ask oneself the question .... How important is this to me? Is it a deal breaker? What degree do I want to negotiate this to?

For instance, salary may be a primary motivation factor in your acceptance or decline of an offer. It is important to look at the full picture.. does the position carry other benefits with it that may outweigh the salary differential you are experiencing? In many cases, the salary differential is merely an arbitrary number that either side has focused on.

Consider negotiating a review period sooner than the normal one. Many employers will view this as an indication of your willingness to demonstrate your ability and be rewarded accordingly. I have a saying that I have used for years in my business: If money is the only issue standing in the way of an offer being accepted by either side, then the issue is not the money... there is something else that has not been communicated by one or both sides. The skilled negotiator needs to find out what that issue is.

The same holds true for just about each of the negotiable items. The key is to find how the employer and prospective employee can meet each other's needs in a win-win environment.