

THE SALARY QUESTION

The salary question is probably the most dreaded question in any interview as it often leaves you with uncertainties like do you give the Company a large figure to show them that you do not underestimate yourself, or do you give the same figure you are currently on to show that you are modest and want to learn, etc. And so you can keep yourself up at night on what the best route to take is. Below is some advice on the subject that I have shared with other candidates who have subsequently walked out of interviews, confident and with the right impression created during that critical first interview!

The golden rule is that you should try not to discuss salary in the first interview but only engage in salary negotiations once they have indicated that they are going to be making you an offer. As part of your preparation before you start in the whole job hunting process, you should already know what your parameters are as far as salary is concerned. In other words, what your ideal salary is and what your absolute minimal expectation is. You may try to find out what the company is willing to pay beforehand, by perhaps phoning their HR department to see if they can assist, just for your information in terms of preparation though, and NOT to be used as a bargaining tool within the interview! Be mindful when viewing other advertisements to use as a guideline of what a “market related salary” is, as advertisements do what they are intended to do, which is attract people and thus not always the most reliable, and more importantly, accurate source. Remember, salaries that other companies pay do not necessarily dictate what the company in question should / will pay.

The reason for not engaging in any salary negotiation in the first round of interviews simply is that you rather want the client to remember your skills and strengths when you walk out that first interview when impressions were created rather than the figure you mentioned and it being a target on your back – this might prove to be a bit more challenging than it seems so the best way to deal with the salary question in the interviews preceding the final interview is as follows: Explain to the company that you are negotiable and even though money is important it is not the only factor you are going to take into consideration when making a decision – you’ll also consider the company, the position, career growth etc – therefore you would need to gather that information in this interview and weigh all this information before coming to a final decision around finances. Tell the client that you will get back to him OR ask your consultant to get back to him with a figure once you have been able to make an educated decision. Last resort you can give an answer like “I am currently on R10 000 CTC per month, if you would like to make me an offer, put something on the table and I’ll be more than happy to discuss and negotiate from that point”

Salary is probably the trickiest question that is asked in an interview, and often prospective employers simply ask and push the issue to ascertain as to whether you are a money or career mover and they mostly appoint the latter. Think of this scenario: if you take a position with them purely because of financial reasons, what is to say that if you get a better offer 3 months down the line, you won’t accept/consider it – this poses a risk to potential employers because they have invested 3 months worth of training, time and ultimately money in you. Therefore, by trying the above tips on how to handle the dreaded salary question, it will show the client that you can be assertive in business decisions such as salary negotiations and stick to your guns (not arrogantly though!) even in tough / pressured situations.

Lastly, when making your decision about either accepting or declining an offer, do not let the monetary reasons outweigh the career potential and growth that any company can offer – you will soon realize that money do not necessarily make for favorable working environments and/or job satisfaction. Rather take the emotion out of the decision by looking at the facts, i.e. what your initial reasons where for looking for another job – it is advisable therefore to draw up a list of outcomes you want to obtain from the job hunting process and what factors you expect your next position to have BEFORE you start with any interview process – you therefore have clearly definable, achievable goals/objectives to which you can compare to the outcomes you've achieved. 9/10 times the answer will then be as clear as daylight and you can have confidence in the fact that you have made a sound business decision based on all the information gathered.