

Brin Bendon, Managing Director of Vector Training Ltd, gives some top tips for negotiating salaries and benefits

Your money or your life

'Let us never negotiate out of fear - but let us never fear to negotiate.'

John F. Kennedy

Salaries - a sensitive issue

Despite the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Greenkeepers Salaries and Conditions of Employment, Golf Greenkeepers often feel that many employers ignore these recommendations and prefer to negotiate with their employees individually. If greenkeepers wish to avoid disappointment they should learn to negotiate. That said, the thought of negotiating one's salary appears as a daunting prospect for some. However, with a little research and preparation, it need not be.

Salary discussions will probably be part of your selection interview, but they may also form part of your meetings with network contacts or recruitment consultants.

Of course, salaries are a sensitive issue and should be handled courteously and professionally, with both sides feeling they have reached a satisfactory agreement. We should not view these discussions as confrontational.

When to raise the subject

The keys to successful salary negotiations are timing and knowledge. Mention salary too early in the process and you will appear to be more interested in money than the job. But if you delay until the offer is in writing, the employer may be reluctant to negotiate.

It is important to distinguish between simple questions about the salary offered ('what range of salary do you think is appropriate for this

job?') and negotiating your salary. You will have to judge when it's appropriate yourself, but these points may help you.

If you already know the salary offered

- recruitment agencies, public sector jobs such as with municipal golf courses and advertised vacancies tend to state the salary, so there is no need to ask for information
- only mention it at the end of the interview if you think they are likely to offer you the job and it is appropriate to start negotiating
- you cannot normally negotiate with a recruitment consultant or agency, but you can find out salary bands

If you don't know the salary

Timing will vary according to the type of interview. What you should do will depend on the stage of the interview.

If it is just a screening interview

- you can ask for information about the salary range at the end of the interview
- it is not appropriate to start any kind of negotiation

If it is the main interview and they give you the salary range up front

- knowing their intentions puts you in a stronger position
- do not start any negotiations unless you are sure they are keen on you

If it is the main interview but they do not mention salary

- ask for basic information about the salary range at the end of the interview
- find out what the next stage is
- they may start negotiating with you. This probably means they are keen; start negotiating

Whenever you are sure that you are their first choice

- you can start to negotiate
- your strongest bargaining point is when they want you, but before they've got you
- if they say they will put their offer in writing don't wait! Broach the subject in detail and start negotiating
- if the employer asks directly 'How much?' try referring the question back by enquiring what range they have in mind; alternatively, state your requirement and gauge their reaction.

Your money or your life

Knowledge is power

You don't want to appear aggressive by being too firm, but you need to be assertive and have the confidence of standing on firm ground knowing what you need, what the market will bear and, ideally, what the employer can offer.

Know your needs and your value. Make a fair claim and back it up.

- you need to avoid over- or underpricing yourself
- review your financial needs and compare them with your current or ideal salary
- work out the total value of your package, before and after tax, so that you have figures ready for comparison
- include benefits such as pension bonus, car, shares, health cover etc
- weigh up their worth against factors such as job satisfaction, prospects, location

Know the market and know your worth...

- research the market value of someone with your skills and responsibilities
- BIGGA, network contacts, and job advertisements can provide this information
- if the employer asks your salary expectations you can then give a realistic range

Know the employer's limitations, and what they can afford

- public sector and some private sector employers may have defined salary ranges tied to a grading structure, possibly with defined starting salaries
- this means there may be little room for negotiation, although the salary is probably fair with a clear review policy
- more informal employers often do not have pay scales for jobs, and individual salaries and reviews depend on individual negotiating skills, management decisions and peer group salaries
- many of these types of employer want to obtain your services for as low a salary as they can negotiate.

Negotiating techniques

If the salary package is lower than

your expectations, try negotiating rather than rejecting it immediately, as there is often some leeway. It is better if you can get the employer to start talking first as you will be able to establish their entry positions. But don't start negotiating until you are sure that you are their first choice.

Make clear what you want

- start with the salary itself and then move to the benefits package
- explain that your minimum salary level is somewhat higher than the offer and that you would ideally like a higher figure

...but show it is well-considered and you are reasonable

- put forward a rationale to support your position
- refer to your research on market figures
- reinforce your commitment to the job

Be cautious about being offered a salary which looks too high; there may be unforeseen problems and you could be vulnerable in a future redundancy programme.

Be prepared to negotiate...

Learn to signal and recognise signals, that is, subtle hints that suggest possible areas for movement or concessions. Link proposals into a package using the "If you, then I" formula.

E.g. "If you would be willing to consider investing in my training for NVQ Level 4 and cover the costs of taxing and insuring my van, then I might be willing to agree to the salary on offer for the first six months pending a subsequent salary review."

If they won't negotiate

If the employer will not be flexible in their offer, or if their offer is not good enough, ask them for time to consider. You may have more offers in the pipeline or they may reconsider.

... still on a positive note

If it is clear that you are not going to reach an agreement or accept the job, be sure to end on a pleasant note. If the lack of agreement was simply

over salary or some other condition, they may approach you several months later and improve their offer. They may also remember you and consider you for other jobs.

Your current salary

You must avoid using 'sales tricks' such as deliberately avoiding answering questions about salary. It looks suspicious, so if the interviewer asks for your salary, tell them. Otherwise, only volunteer it if it is clearly to your advantage e.g. if you know the salary on offer and it is near your existing package

Who else may ask about salary?

Your network contacts may need to know your salary expectations so that they can arrange introductions at the appropriate level. Tell them honestly, giving them a realistic upper and lower figure. Anyone they refer you to may ask similar questions. This need not prejudice subsequent negotiations.

Recruitment consultants and agencies

Volunteer appropriate information

Agencies and consultants need to know both your current salary and your expectations. Employers usually ask them to identify candidates within specific salary ranges. The salary level also classifies people who approach them directly. This is why you should be realistic and do not pitch yourself too high or too low.

Employers who advertise

There is considerable debate on whether to include salary details or not. The dangers are that if your salary is higher than the one on offer, you may be regarded as too expensive, or with suspicion (why will he or she take a drop?). If it is significantly lower, you may be regarded as too inexperienced. Therefore...

- if the advertiser asks for your salary details, you should give them
- if there is no mention of the salary offered and they have not asked for your salary details, don't mention it
- if the salary offered was stated in the advertisement and they have

not asked for your details, only state them if it is clearly to your advantage

Speculative letters

If you make a direct written approach to employers, do not mention salary as they may reject you on salary grounds alone, before considering what you could offer them. When you are calculating the value of packages proposed by employers, you need to look beyond the salary figures. You are unlikely to glean all the information you need at interview without looking mercenary, but the written offer should give full details

Basic salary

- is it at the market rate?
- how often is it reviewed?
- is it based on performance?
- how is performance measured?

Bonuses

- do they pay them?
- what are they based on?
- are they pensionable?
- is there a profit sharing scheme?

Pensions

- what type and what sort of benefits?
- what contributions do you and the employer make?

Other benefits

- car
- medical cover
- service contract
- holiday entitlement
- notice period



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