

Getting Paid What Your Work is Worth A Salary Negotiation Basic for all Levels

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Here's a great word you won't find in the dictionary. You use it practically every day, and it can put money in your bank account nearly every time.

The word is "Hmmm"

In a job (or contract) interview, every time you murmur "Okay," it costs you!

How much can a little "Okay" cost? Bam! That one word may have...

- A. washed your new \$1,000 stereo system down the drain;
- B. ripped off your \$3,000 bigger, better home computer;
- C. cancelled your reservations for a \$5,000 two-week dream trip to an exotic location;
- D. shredded your \$15,000 in RRSP contributions you committed to do this year;
- E. stopped your kid from going to that great school, because you were \$25K short.

How could that one word be so powerful? Easy. "Okay" is what most people say in response to a salary offer or raise. That means "Sure, I'll accept what you've just offered, thanks."

Depending on where your salary is to begin with, you could lose A, B, C, D, or E. But you could also keep it, and more besides, if you learn even one small negotiating technique: change "Okay" to "Hmmm," and watch what happens.

If your daughter is going for a minimum wage job, the employer says, "\$6.85 an hour." An "Okay" will freeze it right there. But a "Hmmm" response could increase it, and just 50 cents an hour more will earn her \$1,000 extra in a year of 40-hour weeks. That's easily a fine new stereo system - or the car insurance - or a ton of clothes.

The same goes for your level, too. A simple "Hmmm" instead of "Okay" can change an entry level \$35,000 salary into \$38,000 and finance your home Pc. \$45,000 specialists can be pushed to \$50,000, affording you that much-needed two week vacation trip.

The "Hmmm" response can drop another ten grand in the bank for directors, and top-level execs can buy a \$25K year of private school, riding or camp for a child by swallowing the "Okay." If you can manage that bit of forbearance, you can negotiate a better salary.

Don't worry that the company will change its mind about hiring or promoting you just because you ask for more. If you've interviewed well (and you must have done that, or you wouldn't be getting an offer!), you're the front runner already. Choosing the second best person, or going through the whole recruiting interviewing-hiring process again, will cost a company more than \$1,000-\$5,000 anyway in the long run. Odds are, you'll get that little extra, and the employer will still consider it a good bargain to avoid that hassle.

The *Wall Street Journal* found that over 40% of the time, applicants at all levels could get 10% more just by speaking up. The very worst that can happen is you don't get more, but your new boss knows that you know you're worth it. You'll get treated better from day one simply because you negotiated.

Besides, you probably aren't even pushing your interviewer higher than they expected to go anyway. In fact good managers always start low to give themselves negotiating room. They might even really want to give you more, but if you say, "Okay," you tie their hands. Then there is no gracious way to raise the offer.

This hmmm-response can be called a "flinch." Even if you're so excited about the offer that you're ready to dance a jig, make your first response a flinch.

How do you carry off an effective flinch? First, make sure you repeat the figure they give you before going into the "contemplative" routine. (That way the interviewer knows you haven't fallen asleep or tuned her out!) Then, you say something like, "Hmmm," or "\$X/hour? Hmmm. Isn't that a little low?" Or, "\$X/hour. Hmmm, is that the best you can do?"

Paradoxically, when you do this, you don't just get more money from your potential employer; you make her feel better about it, too. How's that possible?

Well, say you're selling a car. Mr. Buyer asks, "How much do you want for the car?" You say, "\$8,500." If he says "Sold!" right away, how do you feel? What's your first thought? Right! You think, "Phooey! He agreed too quickly. I was too low. I could have gotten more."

Now notice what happens if he flinches and says, "Hmmm, is that the best you can do?" You say, "Yes. I have done my research; that's a good deal on this car; it's the best I can do." By the time you close the deal, you still get \$8,500, but you also get the inner satisfaction of winning in the negotiations by sticking to your price.

Now, the chances are, your future employer won't come back with a "Yes, I've done my research," etc. Instead, she'll offer a bit extra to sweeten the pot - she's got room to give a little, - remember? - and you'll both come out ahead. You, with more cash in hand; the employer, with a heightened respect for you.

No matter what your level, there's easy money to be made by changing "Okay" to "Hmmm."

Whether you're a PR assistant, a senior specialist, or a VP communications and marketing, in your next conversation about money, don't say "Okay"; say, "Hmmm." You'll be farther ahead and into other more intriguing problems like - so how do I tackle this big strategic plan I talked them into giving me and, what'll I buy with the extra money?

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