

Discussing Salary

One of the touchiest questions that come up in an interview situation addresses salary expectations. Many times employers want to know right from the start what you are looking for, to rule out anyone who is completely out of their league. While this can be a time-saving approach for the interviewer, it isn't best for you.

If you are applying for an existing position, then human resources has already budgeted a specific salary range for the position. If you are the first one to mention a specific salary figure, and it's lower than the one the employer had in mind, you risk getting hired for less than they might have been willing to pay you.

If at all possible, avoid discussing salary on the first interview. And don't bring it up yourself (it can create the impression that you are more interested in the pay than the position). If the potential employer asks you about salary expectations, it is perfectly acceptable to be polite but vague. "I'd rather wait to discuss salary until we both have a better idea of how I would fit this position," or similar wording, can help you get out of a sticky spot.

The second interview is the more appropriate time to discuss salary. Ideally you will receive a formal job offer, complete with salary and benefits package, and you can use that as your negotiating point. If there is a certain range of compensation that you feel you must receive, be upfront with the hiring manager without being demanding. And remember to use your negotiating skills to get to "yes" on both sides.

With the recent economic downturn, many job hunters are considering lower-paying jobs than they might have in the past. But don't sell yourself short. Know the industry, do your homework, and have a realistic ballpark figure in mind.

Typical Salaries

In their 2005 salary survey, *The Meeting Professional* reported that the average corporate salary for a beginning meeting planner in the U.S. (3 to 5 years' experience) is \$42,373. Those with 10 years or more of experience reported an average base salary of \$50,714. Event planners working for associations can expect to earn a bit less on average — about 84 percent of these figures. In Canada, corporate planners reported an average salary of \$54,681 CDN, and association planners came in a bit lower at \$50,835.

Salaries also varied by job description, gender, level of experience, and the type of business or organization you are working for. Communications and IT companies tended to be the best-paying ones, while public service and non-profit organizations came in lowest on the scale. Here were the results of their survey

broken down by job

title, based on 2004 total annual compensation:

| Rate | Job Title |
|----------|------------------------|
| \$68,840 | Director |
| \$57,513 | Senior Meeting Planner |
| \$49,429 | Project Manager |
| \$46,703 | Meeting Planner |
| \$45,677 | Coordinator |

SOURCE: *"Money Matters," by Dawn Myers, The Meeting Professional, September 2005*

Use these numbers as a guideline when considering your salary expectations, and be realistic about regional differences and the current economic climate. An excellent source for regional salary information is Salary.com. This site offers industry figures from all over the United States and includes other free information as well.

Salary.com <http://www.salary.com>

While **effective negotiations** can lead to a higher salary, if you really want an unlimited potential for income, then you should consider being self-employed.

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