

Interviews and salaries – all your questions answered, “Karieri.bg”

Sofia, Bulgaria – The salary question is one of the biggest taboos when seeking work. Companies rarely mention compensation when seeking to fill positions, although this can filter the candidates that are truly interested in a job opportunity, and in some cases can also stimulate interest. Conversely, job seekers prefer to avoid commenting on the topic for fear of low-balling, resulting in an offer below than the budgeted salary range for the position. In reality, things would be much easier if both sides dared to speak as openly and confidently about money as they do about experience, skills and career plans.



Here are some good approaches to common remuneration questions.

Do I have to indicate the salary in the job ad?

In most countries, it is a common and absolutely reasonable practice for the salary budget to be mentioned in the job advertisement. However, some countries such as Bulgaria, this is done very rarely.

In general, it is wise for employers to give some indication of the monthly remuneration, enabling the candidate to make a preliminary estimate and decide whether he or she will be satisfied with the package. Transparency only serves to facilitate the hiring process, eliminating candidates who have no interest because of the proposed salary level, or conversely, attracting more candidates with an attractive remuneration package. Employers may take a different approach depending on the level of the vacant position and their potential flexibility regarding remuneration, but in any case greater transparency will only benefit the participants in the selection process.

A “head-hunter” is calling me – do I ask about the money?

If you get a preliminary call by a recruitment consultant for the first time, listen carefully to the details of the offer. At this stage, it is too early to comment on the salary, which the head-hunter does not define or pay in any case. It's better for you to find out more about the potential opportunity that the job could offer you, and save monetary questions for when you meet the employer face-to-face. You are very likely to fall at the first fence if you give the impression that you are only interested in the money. It is a common practice for the intermediary firm to inquire about your financial expectations, so there is no need to rush into this question.

Can you talk about money at the first interview?

It is tempting to inquire about the money during the first interview, but it is wiser to wait. However, if you have been asked to share your salary expectations, answer confidently – do not answer the question with another question! You can think in advance about what sum would satisfy you, and how you would address such a question. If the employer does not raise the question, this may be because they consider it inappropriate for a first interview. However, if you do decide to ask, make sure you do so at the end of the interview, not the beginning. Perhaps it is best to raise this question alongside any other questions that you have about the work, the company's development plans, etc.

How can I avoid pricing myself too high or too low?

Companies usually have a preliminary estimated budget for each specific position, although some are certainly able to be flexible if they like a candidate. By asking salary questions, a prospective employer is trying to determine whether your expectations are “on the same page” as theirs. Many people are afraid to state a specific amount, and this reluctance is reasonable – however, failing to answer the question does not make a good impression. If you are uncomfortable specifying an amount, you could specify a salary range or diplomatically change the subject by saying that you have faith in the company, and assume that the expected salary budget is fair and commensurate with your abilities and skills. In any case, think about whether your current level of remuneration suits you, so that you can specify your preferred range.

Of course, everyone wants to achieve a salary increase when changing jobs, but this should not become an end in itself. If you consider that the position and employer are of extreme importance to you, and will be the perfect match for your professional career and personal qualities, then compromise is an option.

It is generally considered normal to ask for 15-20% above your current level. If the new job is associated with increased responsibilities, serious expectations and ambitious targets, then of course, there is nothing unacceptable about specifying a higher increase over your current salary.

Do not forget that the monthly salary is only part of the whole remuneration package. It is also important to take into consideration the other benefits provided by your current and prospective employers.

Of course, we all know that that an acceptable level of remuneration for one person may be a dream for another or a serious disappointment for a third. It is therefore important to consider what you think is reasonable and satisfying for yourself.

It is best to determine the absolute minimum salary floor below which you will not go, and indicate this as your minimum market value.

I am proceeding through the recruitment process – can I talk about money now?

Let's say that the first interview has been successful, and you have been invited to the second round. You may be talking to the same people or a new interview team, but the topic of remuneration has not yet been raised. At this stage, it is now advisable for you to raise the topic of salary. You can expect that the employer will request this information, and it is reasonable to make a specific offer.

I wanted the job, but unfortunately the pay offer was below my expectations – can I negotiate?

Yes, of course! There is always room for negotiations. Ultimately, recruitment is a bilateral process, and the parties should reach a mutually beneficial deal. If you have a job offer where the financial package is below your expectations (and below your previous discussions), then by all means ask for a meeting to clarify things. Some companies are quite flexible while others are very strict about their pre-set budgets, but nothing stops you from clarifying the circumstances with a future employer to negotiate a mutually beneficial option.

We liked a candidate but they are too expensive – what do we do?

If you know the market value of the qualities, experience and skills of your preferred candidate – or you know her/his expectations – you may need to decide whether you can be flexible in your offer. You may be still be able to attract the preferred candidate if you focus on the intangible factors that you can offer – perhaps the possibilities for personal expression or long-term development. Maybe a strong candidate would be willing to compromise himself. Before you end the conversation, try to understand the candidate's attitude as thoroughly as you can.

In conclusion, my advice is to discuss the topic of money boldly and confidently, at the second interview round if not the first. And to employers – understand that compensation should not be a taboo subject, and be more open about the levels of remuneration you offer.



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