

Managing Your Career In A Competitive Market

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Evaluating An Offer

You have spent the last few months updating your resume, working with your search consultant, evaluating companies, and interviewing. Finally, all of the hard work has paid off, and what you have been waiting for has arrived: the offer. However, while you may feel a sense of relief, accomplishment, and happiness, you may also feel a sense of anxiety and uncertainty. This is a serious decision to make, and before making it, you should weigh certain factors carefully.

Each of us, of course, is different; and determining what factors are important may vary greatly depending on the individual. You may attempt to negotiate a higher salary, additional vacation time, and better health benefits. However, these items are often part of a standard package determined by the company's compensation structure, and you may or may not be able to effectively negotiate them. In addition, other factors, such as a company's "culture," are also unlikely to change. Determining whether you can accept the offer and the company for what they are can tend to be as difficult a decision as any you will have to make during your job search. The following factors should be considered when deciding whether or not to accept an offer.

Compensation.

Even if money isn't what gives you the most job satisfaction, no one can argue its importance. Most of us want to make sure we are being paid what we're worth. This is where your search consultant can be of invaluable assistance.

Your search consultant can provide you with information as to whether the offer is in step with the company's compensation structure, negotiate on your behalf when appropriate, and provide you with information on how your offer compares to what others are making at companies of similar size and status and in the same geographic region.

Company Culture.

Every company possesses a culture that can range from the traditional and conservative to the entrepreneurial and liberal. This is where the impressions that you formed during your interview will help you determine whether the particular company environment is right for you. Were people talking to each other when you walked the halls? Were the doors closed or open? Was the staff treated with respect? How did the employees interact with each other? How formal or informal was the interview? How did people dress? Was the office decorated in traditional oak panels and dull colors, or was it modern, with bright art and lights? Finding an environment that reflects not only your personality, but also your ability to effectively develop professionally is a key element in your future success as an attorney. Certainly, many attorneys can be happy and thrive personally and professional in completely different environments. What you need to determine is what environment would not be the right fit for you.

Sharing a Common Goal.

Company culture also comprises other factors, including shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize a company. If you value your time away from the office, a company that consistently requires late hours and weekend sessions may not be right for you. On the other hand, the type of work you seek, the mentoring you require, the opportunities for growth, and the sophistication of the practice may also translate directly into more hours spent

at the office. What you need to determine is whether this is a company that shares your values, goals, and ambitions.

Fitting In.

Another factor that you should focus on is whether the people you met when you interviewed with the company are the type of people with whom you want to work. You are going to be spending a great deal of time at the office, working very closely with your colleagues; and the ability to get along with them may be critical to your success. The interview will provide you with insight to help you make that determination. This is also where you may want to converse with your search consultant to obtain additional information about the company. Networking can also be useful, and you may want to call your list of contacts and gather additional information about the company.

Each of these factors taken alone may not make or break your decision to accept or decline a job offer. Moreover, these are but a few factors to consider when making a decision. You may also need to consider additional factors that are particularly relevant to your job search. Whether you choose to accept or reject a job offer, you should first inform your search consultant of your decision and then discuss this and other factors with your search consultant directly. Then, you should contact the employer who made that offer in a timely fashion. Your rejection or acceptance should be done formally, in writing, as well as by telephone. The business community is huge, but you may at some point develop a relationship with that employer, albeit as a superior, a colleague, a client, or even your next-door neighbor. Therefore, irrespective of your decision, one of the most important things you should consider when mulling over a job offer is the importance of safeguarding the relationships that were created during this process.

