

Job-Offer Evaluation Checklist

by Paul W. Barada

Evaluating job offers can be unsettling, especially if you have only a vague idea of what you want from employers. You'll have to do a personal-needs assessment before you can judge whether an offer is right for you. Here's a three-step process for developing your own job-offer-evaluation checklist.

List the Basics

These are the things without which you cannot even contemplate accepting an offer of employment. For instance, determine the minimum level of compensation you'll need to meet your financial obligations. Then add your essential benefits. How important is health insurance? Do you need coverage for eligible dependants as part of the package? What other factors are most important to you? The commute? Flextime? Just make sure your list contains the bare minimum you can and will accept -- your personal bottom line.

Consider Your Needs

Your bottom line may rise or fall depending on whether you have a job and how badly you need this one. If you're employed and shopping for a better opportunity, you can be more selective. If you haven't been working for six months or more, you may discover there isn't much to evaluate. Being able to generate an income may be the only important issue.

Evaluate the Options

Theoretically, if a job offer meets your predetermined bottom line, you could accept it. But meeting the bottom line is really a prerequisite that allows you to progress to the third step: Evaluating options to make sure the total package is the best for you. Here is a basic checklist of options you can use as a guideline for evaluating a job offer and negotiating the best deal:

- **Compensation:** Does the offer provide a level of income that will at least enable you to maintain your present standard of living? Is the offer at least 10 percent to 15 percent higher than your most recent salary?
- **General Benefits:** Be sure to ask what the benefit package includes, assuming the prospective employer hasn't already made it clear.
- **Health and Dental Insurance:** Does the employer offer [health insurance](#)? Does the policy cover just you or eligible dependants also? How much of the premium does the employer pay?
- **Day Care:** Will you need day care? Does the employer offer any plan that will facilitate obtaining this service for your children?
- **Flextime:** Does the company provide for a [flexible working schedule](#)? If so, under what circumstances? Is working from home an option? If so, does using flextime or working from home change any other benefit, such as insurance coverage?

- **Retirement:** Does the employer have a retirement plan? How is it structured? Do you have to contribute to it? Are there any restrictions on accessing the funds in your retirement account? At what age can you begin receiving retirement benefits?
- **Vacations and Holidays:** How many paid holidays are offered? What is the vacation policy? Can unused vacation days be carried forward into the next year, or will they be lost if not used? Can unused days be converted into cash? Does the company offer any bonus or profit-sharing programs? What do you have to do to become eligible for these programs?
- Bonuses and Profit Sharing:
- **Signing Bonuses:** Will the company offer a signing bonus in lieu of another benefit?
- **Relocation Reimbursement:** If the job requires moving, does the company offer [relocation assistance](#)?
- **Personal Days and Sick Days:** Does the company allow personal days or sick days? If so, how many and under what circumstances? Can unused personal or sick days be converted to cash?
- **Maternity/Family Leave:** What is the company policy regarding maternity or [family leave](#)?
- **Performance and Salary Review:** Does the company have a policy about reviewing performance and salary? If so, how often? Are the opportunities for career advancement based on performance, seniority or both?
- **Travel Reimbursement:** If the job requires travel, what is the company policy regarding reimbursable expenses?