

Pitch perfect: Get your salary sorted with our guide

Salary discussions can be tricky. When you're going for a job, you don't want to undersell your experience or skills, but you also don't want to pitch yourself too high.

Similarly, if you're employed and [asking for a pay rise](#), you want to give yourself the best chance of success.

Proposing the right salary can be a delicate task, and one that can feel even more difficult in tougher economic times like those we've seen in the wake of COVID-19.

But if now is the time that you need to sort your salary, then the basics of research and preparation still apply. Here are some tactics to help you maximise your chances of getting the salary you're after.

The factors that impact a salary range

"The more in-demand your skills are, the keener a hiring manager is to secure your signature," says Andrew Brushfield, Director of Robert Half Australia. "If you are going to ask for a higher starting salary, you need to be able to explain clearly - ideally with the use of evidence and examples - why it makes sense to pay you more than the advertised rate."

"Employers may be interested in your level of experience, qualifications and educational background, plus your ability to sell, your industry contacts and personal clients, and perhaps even your knowledge of competitors," Brushfield says. "The more fact-based your submission is, the more likely the employer will decide to agree to your request."

How to get the best salary result

1. Be prepared

Do your research about market rates and be ready to talk about your salary requirements and why you're asking for a particular figure or range.

The best way to work this out is to look at what people doing similar roles get paid.

[Explore salaries in your industry](#), and search for salary information online that can give you insight into the latest salary benchmarks and trends, and help you make comparisons.

"Arm yourself with information by surveying friends in your industry and checking out salary guides to assess your market rate," says Brushfield. "If you do your research, you'll be better equipped to negotiate."

Before you talk money, Brushfield recommends putting yourself in an employer's shoes. "If you wait until you have proved your value as a serious prospect, you're likely to get the best result," he says.

2. **Give a range**

If you're asked to propose a salary, don't mention a specific figure. Draw on your research and instead give a preferred salary range. "A range doesn't lock you into a concrete figure," says Brushfield. "You want to leave some flexibility to negotiate if the employer's offer is below your expectations."

Employers can also search for candidates via the salary included in their [SEEK Profile](#). Adding a desired salary to your profile lets employers know what you're worth before reaching out with a relevant job opportunity.

3. **Be realistic**

While it can be tempting to aim high when suggesting a salary, it's important to be reasonable. Aiming way beyond any of the comparable salaries you've found in your research could make things harder for you.

"If you're negotiating a higher starting salary you could jeopardise your position altogether, with the job going to someone else," says Brushfield. "You also need to be wary of pricing yourself out of the market for new jobs."

4. **Consider other incentives**

Salary is undoubtedly one of the most important parts of a remuneration package, but also consider [alternative or additional workplace incentives](#) you'd be open to accepting.

"Perks, such as flexible work hours, additional leave and professional development opportunities are in demand by employees," says Brushfield. Think about [what matters to you aside from money](#), what benefits you would like and what this may be worth.

5. **Pick your time**

If you're interviewing for a new role, it's important to be ready to [discuss your salary expectations at the right time](#) – which is usually once you've shown that you're suitable for the job, but before you sign a contract.

But for current employees, opportunities can also occur during performance reviews or at the conclusion of big projects. [Prepare what you'll say when you ask for a pay rise](#) by looking back to what you've achieved in the past 12 months.

“Give concrete examples of why you deserve a higher salary, such as how your actions have benefitted the company and what the results of your efforts are,” says Brushfield. “If you can prove your impact on the business's bottom line, the chances of securing a higher salary will improve.”

Discussing money and salary expectations can be nerve-racking, especially if you're not feeling prepared. But by researching what similar roles are paying, preparing for salary discussions and considering other benefits, you'll have a better sense of where you stand and be ready to maximise your chances of getting the salary you're after.