

Employment interview and negotiation tips

Accepting a new job offer is a significant commitment. It is important for you to be well prepared for the interview and negotiation process. We recommend having an experienced physician-focused lawyer assist you. Whether you are a new or experienced physician, these tips can help you prepare for an interview and contract negotiations.

Interview tips

What to ask during your interviews

Bring a list of highly informed and specific written questions about the offer, the employer, the community and the local health care market. This will convey professionalism and help you to make an informed decision concerning whether or not to accept an offer.

Bring copies of your CV

Bring multiple copies of your updated CV printed on resume paper to the interviews. This will allow you to be prepared when being interviewed by multiple people within the organization.

Be a good listener

Listen closely to the employer so that you fully understand what will be expected of you. This will help you avoid misunderstandings about the employment requirements and will convey your interest in the position.

Tell the truth

If you are not truthful during the interview and negotiation process, discrepancies may come out during the vetting process, which will most likely end any chance of working for that employer. Even if the discrepancy is not discovered during the interview or negotiation process, it may come to light after you start working. If this happens, the employer may not renew your employment contract or may even terminate your employment, depending on the issue involved.

Also, do not say that another employer has offered you a position, unless it is true. If the employer discovers you lied, it will not only give them a bad impression about you, but also may prompt them to change their mind about offering you the job.

Negotiation tips

Identify your most important issues

When you review the employment contract think about what you want out of the arrangement. Identify the top 3 - 4 issues that are most important to you.

In addition to those three or four items, identify an additional 6- 7 issues that you would like to get but are not as crucial. This exercise will help to prepare and allow you to be flexible in your negotiations.

While negotiating back and forth, you can give up some of those additional six or seven things, with the hope of ultimately getting concessions on your top 3 -4 issues. If you start from your core 3 - 4 items, you will not have any wiggle room during negotiations and you may end up having to concede on some, or even all, of your top concerns.

Should you make the first offer?

If you can avoid it, do not make the first offer. It is generally recognized that doing so can be disadvantageous in negotiations.

Should you accept the first offer?

Do not, as a general rule, accept the prospective employer's first offer. The employer understands that it will be negotiating with you and will expect you to counter.

Be reasonable

Always be reasonable and flexible, but do not feel timid or self-conscious about asking for clarification or things that you want.

Hire an attorney

Some prospective employers may want you to sign a letter of intent (LOI), prior to exploring possible employment, to see if you are on the same page regarding key provisions of employment. These

typically include:

- | Length of the agreement
- | Compensation
- | Benefits
- | Start date
- | Responsibilities

A LOI is either binding or nonbinding. Always read any LOI closely to determine whether it is binding or nonbinding. If the LOI is binding, you will be legally obligated to its terms and you should have an attorney review the document before you sign.

If the LOI is nonbinding, you will not be legally obligated to its terms, but most will include a stand still provision, which prevents you from pursuing employment opportunities with other organizations for a set period of time, during which you will be committed to negotiate potential employment in good faith. Despite being nonbinding, it is still recommended that you ask an attorney to review this type of LOI prior to signing because agreeing to the terms can affect your subsequent negotiating position by setting expectations that might be difficult to deviate from later.

This article was written in collaboration with Wes Cleveland, JD, AMA Senior Attorney.

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Job Interview and Contract Negotiation Checklist

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Physician Guide for Contract Negotiation

Learn best practices and guidelines for contract negotiation from ReachMD (podcast).