

Show Me The Money!



There's an interesting contradiction that often emerges in the job search process.

It's never about the money. Until it's about the money.

Many job offer negotiations deteriorate once the subject of salary comes up.

It's not that job seekers are necessarily insincere when they suggest that the opportunity is more important than the money. When they say it, they likely mean it. There's a certain hopefulness that the juicy job offer will boast both an incredibly spectacular opportunity with an equally spectacular paycheck.

When the dollars don't measure up to expectation, suddenly the incredible opportunity doesn't seem quite so spectacular anymore. The words once spoken with conviction now fall flat. Despite the alignment on a number of other factors that can make it, the bucks break it. People start indulging their inner Tom Cruise with an attitude of "Show Me The Money!"

Is there a way to avoid this salary snafu?

Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say. You might sport a weekend t-shirt that reads "Will Work For Chocolate", but don't carry that sentiment into the job search. It's not realistic to expect or suggest that compensation wouldn't be a significant consideration, no matter how exciting the opportunity. At the same time, it would be a mistake to discount an opportunity based on the salary figure alone, without taking into consideration other factors. When the subject arises during the interview process, express your enthusiasm for the position while acknowledging your expectation of competitive compensation.

Know Your Worth and the Worth of the Role. Your expertise in a certain field may spike your worth in the marketplace. But if the job you're vying for doesn't require that expertise, there's no sense in selling it. You may think you're worth a million bucks, but what does the market say you're worth in that particular role? Find out what companies are paying employees with your background, in your geographic region, for that kind of job. If that figure falls considerably short of your expectations, you can either adjust your expectations to market reality, or look for something more in your league.

Consider Total Compensation. When evaluating the job offer, consider total rewards, not just salary. Determine the value of each element, including bonuses, incentives, car allowance, vacation time, benefits, club and association membership, learning and development, and anything else that's on the table. Other elements such as commute time, flex time, and work-life balance are also important to consider. The value of all these items may be measured in dollars, or in some other less tangible way such as work/ life balance, experience or security.

So, next time you find yourself channeling Tom Cruise, step back from "Show Me The Money!" and make a more informed and thoughtful decision.