

SALARY HISTORY / REQUIREMENTS - TO TELL OR NOT TO TELL – THAT'S THE QUESTION!

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A-1 Quality Resumes

I am frequently asked by job seeking candidates, whether or not they should disclose salary history or salary requirements, when responding to job advertisements or in initial discussions with hiring managers. The general consensus amongst career experts is a resounding NO! As quoted by Mark Collins (Chicago branch manager-Staffing Now) in the article "*Show them the money: Handling salary histories*" (*The Chicago Tribune*, CareerBuilder, July 6, 2003), "Most employers ask for a salary history, but I've never talked to an employer who would rule out a candidate because they wouldn't provide a salary history...it's not a smart hiring practice." In the recently published book, *Career Comeback*" (Broadway Books, 2004) the author, Bradley C. Richardson, succinctly states: "Don't send it [the salary history]. This is a screaming red flag that they are screening people based on salary. If you are too low, they think you are either a bargain they can take advantage of you or that you are too inexperienced. If you are too high, you will instantly be knocked out of the running because you are too expensive."

Don't give in to job ads that make salary information a prerequisite for consideration!

Despite the wise words of career experts, jobseekers still feel stymied about what to do, when reading job ads that sternly admonish: "Résumés sent without salary histories will not be considered." My advice is this: don't give in to this manipulative language or feel fearful that you'll miss out on an opportunity if you fail to disclose your salary history or requirements. Ads like these are sometimes a "cover" for a company wanting to create a new position, so the HR department can learn how much of a low ball salary can be offered to prospective employees. And, after these companies get the "market research data" from candidates who send salary histories, the "powers that be" may decide against creating this new position after all, leaving unsuspecting candidates to wait for a response that will never come. Other companies simply post these ads to comply with EEOC regulations, even though an internal candidate has already been selected for the advertised position.

The first person to talk "money" has weaker bargaining power.

Redirect salary issues in cover letters.

Most importantly, keep in mind that the first person throwing a salary number on the table, whether a historical listing or requirements range, is automatically in a weaker bargaining position, when negotiating for a salary. So, when you're faced with the inevitable "salary history" question in an ad demanding that you provide this information, all you need to say in a cover letter is: "My salary requirements are flexible and negotiable. I'll be glad to discuss this information at an interview or an otherwise appropriate time." It is also a prudent strategy to ask a hiring manager what the salary range is for a specific position. Either way, you'll be in a better position to negotiate the salary you deserve, without revealing your salary history or requirements too soon in the job search process.

To learn more about salary issues and salary negotiation, look to these resources:

1. Chapman, Jack. *Negotiating Your Salary: How To Make \$1,000 a Minute*. Berkeley, CA, Ten Speed Press, 2000
2. Tarrant, John. *Perks and Parachutes: Negotiating Your Best Possible Employment Deal, from Salary and Bonus to Benefits and Protection*. New York, NY: Random House, 1997
3. www.salary.com
4. www.salary-comparison-and-calculator.com/
5. www.wageweb.com

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