

# **ADVENTURES IN MEDICINE**

**Career & Life Planning**

# **Survival Guide**



*Understanding  
How to  
Negotiate  
Contracts*

*Discovery Resource*

**ST-17**

When the negotiation is complete, it's very difficult to go back and try to renegotiate terms that have already been agreed upon. We recommend that you communicate effectively during this process. In the event the terms are not agreeable, you need to decide if you are willing to walk away from the opportunity.

It's important to write down what's most important to you. If compensation is very important and location is secondary you may want to consider looking in different markets where there is much more flexibility.

## COVERED TOPICS

- **What items are open for negotiation in my contract offer?**
- **How do I recognize if something is or isn't open to negotiation?**
- **I don't feel that I'm a good negotiator. What should I do?**
- **Do I need an attorney to do my negotiation?**
- **How long can negotiations last?**
- **Who will I most likely be negotiating with?**
- **How do I know when the negotiating has come to an end?**
- **If I am considered a tough negotiator, will that be held against me when I'm hired?**
- **If I feel I am being taken advantage of and could use some help, who can assist me?**
- **What should I do if I am still dissatisfied at the conclusion of the negotiations?**



## What items are open for negotiation in my contract offer?

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In some agreements, none of the terms are negotiable and in other agreements some of the terms of the agreement may be negotiable, including salary, sign-on bonus and start date. Other terms that may be negotiable are vacation time, relocation package and type of compensation structure.

## How do I recognize if something is or isn't open to negotiation?

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One of the conditions on whether terms of the agreement are negotiable is the market. The more in-demand the position is the more likelihood for flexibility. Additionally, the geographic market may also play a significant role in whether there is room for negotiation. Opportunities in the Midwest tend to be more negotiable than opportunities in the Northeast. Mainly, negotiations



depend on supply and demand — the higher the demand the more likely it is the opportunity is negotiable. Furthermore, rural markets tend to be more negotiable than metro markets.

Additionally, flexibility increases as income potential rises. This may depend on the payor mix and the collections on billable dollars, as well as organizations that are more profitable than others — resulting in organizations minimizing expenses and maximizing revenue.

## I don't feel I'm a good negotiator. What should I do?

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Recruiting firms can be helpful in negotiating agreements; however, you are ultimately the one responsible for determining the ideal position is for work-life balance. Below are some tips:

### Know Your Market

- Is your field in-demand?
- Is your region in-demand?
- Is your community in-demand?
- What are other similar opportunities in similar communities paying?
- Make sure to compare apples with apples

### Know When You Are Ready

Under what circumstances would you accept the opportunity?

If you cannot answer this question, we recommend NOT negotiating!

If you are ready, make sure you are prepared to accept the opportunity if the organization agrees to your terms.



### Know Your Limits

Are the terms you're trying to negotiate reasonable?

### Know Your Positioning

Example of physician positioning:

"I have trained for more than 12 years and am ready to start my career. The interview process has been both exciting and overwhelming. During the past 6 months, I have interviewed at five different organizations and this is by far the opportunity that feels right and where I can make a strong contribution to your hospital and community. My husband and daughter are very excited about the possibility of us moving forward.

The last thing that I want is to come across as money hungry or self-serving. I want to make sure that you know that I'm looking at this opportunity long-term and the bottom-line is working toward the productivity bonus where I will be making much more of a salary. Although I have offers that are higher, this is the place that my family and I want to be and I'm trying to get comfortable with the terms so we can move forward.

After finishing up Residency and having debt of \$200,000, along with buying our first home, and the unknown of how long it's going to take to get up and running, I am looking for "X amount" and "X benefits" I am prepared to execute an agreement with you within 5 days of receiving the agreement."

## Do I need an attorney to do my negotiation?

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Attorneys may help with interpreting the language of the agreement and may have suggestions or recommendations. Generally, the attorney does NOT negotiate the agreement. Instead, you are responsible.

## How long can negotiations go on?

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After you provide the terms that you would accept, the organization should be able to provide you an answer quickly. If the organization comes back with a counter offer, you may have one more opportunity to go back and work out some small terms. The negotiations should not take longer than a few days if the negotiations are positioned the right way.



## Who will I most likely be negotiating with?

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Depending on the organization, you may negotiate with the CEO (generally at rural communities and small- to medium-size organizations), CFO, director, manager, in-house recruiter, or the recruiting firm that represents the organization.

## How do I know when the negotiating has come to an end?

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If the terms are reasonable, you should hear back soon, and the organization should be able to provide whether or not they can meet those terms. If the terms are not reasonable or, if you are asking something that is not customary, like negotiating a non-compete clause out of the agreement, there are times where the organization will not respond back. This is because those non-customary terms may be something they have identified as not being a match.

## **If I am considered a tough negotiator, will that be held against me when I'm hired?**

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As long as you present yourself well and communicate effectively, there is no reason that there should be any concerns. However, remember that it's not only important how you accept the opportunity but also when.

## **If I feel I am being taken advantage of and could use some help, who can assist me?**

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You can send an email with your concerns to [negotiate@arlingtonhc.com](mailto:negotiate@arlingtonhc.com). Arlington Health Care is an organization that is a Presidential Sponsor of The Balanced Life Institute and has agreed to donate their time to support you.

## **What should I do if I'm still dissatisfied at the conclusion of the negotiations?**

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Your career is a big part of your life and you should feel good about going into a new opportunity. Remember, not to take anything personally. Most of the negotiations have to do with the market and less about your needs.

We understand that it is hard not to compare the offers your colleagues are getting. However, remember that each region is very different as is each market within each region. Additionally, there are many types of different opportunities, so when a colleague is getting one offer, it may or may not be comparable to yours.

Finally, your colleague's needs and goals may be very different than yours. If you're reasonable, the market should take care of you.

