

# Accepting and declining job offers



Congratulations! Your preparation and hard work has led to one or perhaps multiple job offers, but your work is not done. Now your task is to decide whether you will accept or decline the offer. This is an important step in the process and a decision that should not be made hastily.

## How to decide whether to accept or decline a job offer

Ask yourself the following questions in order to decide whether to accept or decline an offer:

### **What are the core responsibilities and is this something I want to do every day?**

Re-read the job posting, paying special attention to the roles and responsibilities of the position. Be honest with yourself. Is that job something you actually want to do?

### **Will I be a good fit with company/environment?**

Even if the actual job is exactly what you are looking for, you still need to determine whether the company culture and environment are a match with who you are. Do you thrive in a fast-paced environment? Do you value quick decision-making? Is this particular company/environment a place where you will be happy?

## **Is there job security?**

The importance of this will vary by person. If job security rates high for you, take a look at the performance of the company as a whole as well as the area you will be working. There is never a guarantee of job security, but you should have a feel for what to generally expect.

## **What are the salary range and benefits?**

Does the salary range meet your needs for your standard of living? Although we would never recommend that money be the main driver for any job, the reality is that you do have to pay bills and you likely have responsibilities. Carefully consider the salary and benefits and make sure they will meet your needs and match your value.

## **Where is the job? Do I need to relocate? What will my commute be?**

This is important to consider from a quality-of-life perspective. If the job is 60 miles away and a 2-hour drive in traffic, are you prepared for what that means and the impact it will have? Are you willing to move? Do you have reliable transportation? Are there additional costs you need to consider that are associated with a long commute?

## **Are there opportunities for me to advance?**

If long-term growth with an organization is of high value to you, look at the organizational structure of your potential new company. Are there any career pathways established? Larger organizations may offer more options for new challenges and positions, and smaller companies or start-ups might have ways to create opportunities as you grow with them.

# **How to accept a job offer**

## **Say thank you**

By the time you get to the job-offer stage, both sides have put in quite a bit of time and effort and are eager to move forward. Express your gratitude and appreciation for being the chosen candidate. Be open about your enthusiasm for the job and your experience thus far with the organization and the people you have met. Keeping things positive and upbeat at this point is not only the professional route

to go, but puts you in a better position if you decide to negotiate the terms of the offer.

## **Receive a written offer**

Always request the offer in writing. The letter should include, at a minimum, the name of the position, your start date, salary and details about benefits. If you negotiated anything specific that is outside the regular benefit package for employees, those should be in the letter as well.

Having an offer in writing is good for both the hiring organization and the candidate since it clearly outlines agreed-upon terms of employment and increases the chances that the terms will be adhered to. People come and go in organizations and if you negotiate something in the future, perhaps an end-of-year bonus, and the person you negotiated with leaves, you don't want there to be any misunderstanding or confusion around what was promised. Keep in mind that an employer can change the terms of your employment at any time (assuming you don't have a contract, which most regular employees don't), but having agreements in writing is hugely beneficial in negating mistakes or the human aspect of simply forgetting.

## **Review before accepting**

It is wise to ask for some time to review the offer before accepting, even if you know you are going to accept. Taking even just a few hours to a few days in order to let it all sink in and carefully review the written offer is highly recommended.

When you receive your offer, ask the employer how long you have to give a final answer. This is very common and employers are used to accommodating this request. If they tell you they need an answer immediately, you should take that as a major red flag and proceed cautiously. You should never feel rushed (this is a big decision!), however, if you do your research in advance and ask questions along the way, it really shouldn't be a difficult one to make.

## **Accept the offer (verbally and in writing)**

Once you have decided to accept an offer, follow up with the employer to confirm your acceptance. Once you have verbally accepted, promptly follow up with a written acceptance, again expressing your gratitude and enthusiasm for the job.

If your job offer did not come in writing, your written confirmation of your acceptance should include the terms of the agreement, including the position,

salary, duties, benefits and start date. If you send this confirmation in an email, ask that they respond as an acknowledgment that you understand the terms correctly. If the employer refuses to respond and/or acknowledge *in writing* your outline of agreed upon terms, this should be a major red flag and you should proceed with caution.

*Dear Mr. Smith,*

*I am very pleased to accept your offer of employment as HR Generalist at XYZ Company. As per our conversation on Dec. 5, 2016, I understand that the position will begin on Jan. 1, 2017, and will have a monthly salary of \$4,250.*

*I look forward to reporting to work at 9 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2017, and get to know the staff team. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.*

*Sincerely,*

*Samantha Jones*

## How to decline a job offer

After considering a job offer and weighing the pros and cons, you make a decision: You don't want the job. The reality is, not every job is right for every person. Remember the purpose of the interview: It doesn't just give the company representatives an opportunity to decide if you're a good candidate, it's also an opportunity for you to evaluate if the position and company are the right fit for you.

It's perfectly OK to say no, thank you. You aren't the first person to decline a job offer, and you won't be the last. Odds are you weren't their only qualified candidate, so the job will simply be offered to the next person in line. If you know the job or company is not a good fit for you, declining the offer is the right thing to do for both you and the company. Hiring an employee is expensive. Accepting a job offer you are unsure of – and then resigning a few months later – costs time and money for both you and the organization.

If you find yourself in the position of needing to decline an offer, here are the four most important things to remember:

### **Be prompt in your answer**

As soon as you know this is not the job for you, notify the company. This goes for any point within the recruitment process as long as you are confident that you are

still being considered for the job. If you haven't been offered the job, but know it is not one you would accept, ask the employer to remove you from the recruitment process. Depending on the company and the job, the decision-making process of who to extend an offer to and what the package will look like can take a week or more. If during that time you know you will not be accepting the offer, let the company know so that they will not waste time pursuing you.

## **Say thank you**

There must have been something that kept both you and the organization interested through at least a few rounds of interviews. Be sure to give a heartfelt thank you to the person offering the job for their interest and their time. Doing so can leave a good impression and you may want to work for that company in the future! Strive to maintain positive rapport since this could still be an opportunity for networking and professional connections.

## **Provide a brief and honest reason**

Keep it concise and professional. "After much consideration, I've decided to accept another offer." "After much thought, I've decided it does not line up with my professional goals" or something similar will be plenty. If you have a personal relationship with someone involved in the hiring process, or someone within your network went out of their way to get you connected with an interview, you may choose to expand a little more on your explanation, but always keep it positive and avoid details.

## **Give them your decision verbally**

Do not decline the offer in a voicemail or email, you should speak with the person who offered the position directly and tactfully decline the offer verbally. If required, follow up with a written communication (e.g. email or letter). In large organizations, you may have been working with both the hiring manager and an HR representative. In this case, send a letter to the hiring manager and forward a copy of the letter to the HR representative. As with thank-you letters, decline letters should be written in a professional and concise manner.

*Dear Ms. Mathews,*

*Thank you for extending me an offer for the Assistant Manager position at XYZ Company. Although the offer was very generous, after careful consideration I must regretfully decline in order to pursue another opportunity that better aligns with my personal and professional needs at this time.*

*I sincerely wish you and your team continued success.*

*Best,*

*David Smith*

## How to choose among multiple job offers

Deciding which job offer to pick can be a serious challenge for some, particularly if both are jobs that you would be willing to accept. Here are four tips for helping you make the difficult choice:

### **Determine what is most important to you**

First and foremost, look inside yourself and determine what is truly important to you and what your non-negotiables are. Look beyond salary and compensation – what are the non-monetary things that bring you satisfaction at work and are critical to your everyday life? Depending on your personal circumstances these could be anything from flexible work hours, having a short commute, having a large team (or a small team), or perhaps the dynamic between you and the hiring manager.

### **You are the one that has to work there every day**

Try not to be swayed solely by the prestige of a company or the job title and how it will impress your family and friends. While certainly gaining outside perspective and guidance can be helpful, ultimately you are the one that has to show up every day and actually do the job – having your friends be impressed won't matter much if you're miserable. Did you like the environment and the people that you met? Can you see yourself going there 5 days a week? Pick which is best for you, not those around you.

### **Follow your instincts**

After you've looked at your lists and rankings, one offer may clearly stand out as the best and the one to take "on paper." But take a minute and check your gut – which one just feels better? Sometimes all the signs say you should go right, but something deep down is telling you to go left. Listen to this inner voice.

## **Nothing is forever**

Of course, you want to make the best possible decision and pick the right offer. But keep in mind that you are not committing your entire career to this employer – you can always leave. There will be something to learn from whichever employer or job you chose, even if it's learning what you *don't* want in the future.