

## Advice from the Pros

# Time to Talk Salary, But When?

Charles Taylor

While some recruiters post salary ranges for client companies' jobs, that unfortunately is not the industry norm in the biomedical field. This can leave job seekers adrift, unsure of how to handle this delicate yet critical question. Conventional wisdom would have the prospective employee tread lightly—avoiding the discussion until a job offer is extended.

However, experts in the field—hiring managers and recruiters—agree that the answer is not whether to ask, but when. When it comes to negotiating pay and benefits, should a potential employee inquire at the beginning of a job search when answering ads that list no salary information or near the end of the process, after a job offer has been made? Asking too early, some experts warn, may not pay off.

“Certainly if a job applicant comes in and that’s their first question, that’s going to turn you off,” says Virgil Smoot, director of biomedical services at The Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters in Norfolk, VA. He has been hiring biomedics for 30 years and currently is responsible for 6 BMEs and 7,000 pieces of equipment at 30 locations. Smoot says premature talk of money can send an employer the wrong signal about a candidate’s priorities. “You’d want to hope they want to work for your institution because of who you are, that they just want to be a part of the team.”

Smoot raises the salary issue with candidates, typically during the first interview. “I’d rather know that up front,” he explains, “rather than spend a lot of time with them and find out they want \$10,000 more than I can pay them.” In cases where the interviewer does not raise the question, Smoot recommends asking about compensation either toward the end of the first interview or at the second.

---

Charles Taylor is a freelance writer based in Washington, DC.

### Check Points

- ✓ Don’t disclose your desired salary until you’ve been offered a job.
- ✓ Consider negotiating non-salary benefits.
- ✓ Investigate the cost of living in your region before accepting a new job.

Charla Triplett is national director of Biomedical Engineering Alliance for Industrial Internships, a non-profit in Chandler, AZ, that works with the biomedical industry and university biomed programs. She says that broaching the salary issue too soon can result in a lower salary, especially for younger job seekers. “Sometimes students don’t know what the job salary is,” she says. “That’s why I tell them to wait to have the employer offer, because then there’s room to negotiate. If you tell them a salary range that you’re looking for, honestly, the salary that they are offering could be higher, and you could end up basically gypping yourself out of salary by doing that.”

So how does one find out salary information when none is given? That’s where doing your homework can be helpful. Call the Human Resources department and ask for the salary range for the job you are seeking, advises James Powell, author of *Mastering the Art of Salary Negotiation*, in an online column, “Salary Negotiation: the Art of the Deal.”

Triplett recommends reviewing recent salary surveys. [For example, see “AAMI’s Salary Survey ... How Does Your Salary Measure Up?” *BI&T*, Volume 39, Issue 6 (November 2005)]. Talk to others working in your field or contact trade or professional associations to learn



what others are paid for the same work, says Dawn Rosenberg McKay in an about.com article, “Do’s and Don’ts of Salary Negotiation.”

Matthew Kenney, a 27-year-old biomedical engineer at Jellico Community Hospital in Tennessee, agrees with that advice: “Look into the company you’re possibly going to be working for; get some feedback on them.” Kenney, however, hasn’t always heeded the advice of the experts. He hasn’t been shy about asking potential employers about compensation. Before landing his current job in May 2006 he had telephone interviews with several companies. He says he always asked about salary and benefits up front.

“They’re going to ask to see if I qualify before asking me to come in for an interview,” he reasons, “so why shouldn’t I, as a candidate, see if they qualify?”

Other advice for a successful salary negotiation:

- Know what it costs to live where you might be working. Stephens International’s Tim Hopkins recommends [www.BestPlaces.com](http://www.BestPlaces.com) for information about the cost of living in various parts of the country.
- Be honest and realistic, adds Hopkins. “I’ve had people that expect that if they make a change, they’re

**AAMI CAREER CENTER**  
FOR MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS

[www.aami.org/career](http://www.aami.org/career)

**Find qualified candidates at AAMI's Online Career Center**

*The job bank for the medical technology field.*

Nationwide Technical Recruiting Services

**ALA**

The Technical Resumebank  
Nationwide Opportunities

- Biomedical
- Medical Imaging
- Field Service
- In-house
- Tech Support
- Management
- Instructors
- Service Sales

**ADEL-LAWRENCE ASSOC. Inc.**

Call Larry Radzely  
(866) 252-5621  
(732) 566-4914  
[info@alajobs.com](mailto:info@alajobs.com)  
[www.adel-lawrence.com](http://www.adel-lawrence.com)



**HEALTH CARE RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT SERVICES**

*“Connecting Quality People, Quality Service”*

- We are dedicated to fulfilling your health care staffing needs.
- Specialized health care recruiting for permanent & temp positions;
- Alternative staffing services such as temporary or contract staffing.

**Contact:** Tim Hopkins or Cindy Stephens  
**Toll-free:** (888) 785-2638 (BMET)  
**E-mail:** [info@BMETs-USA.com](mailto:info@BMETs-USA.com)  
**[www.BMETS-USA.com](http://www.BMETS-USA.com)**

To place your ad here contact Vicki Cummins at [vcummins@aami.org](mailto:vcummins@aami.org) or call 888-777-6956

going to get a \$10,000 raise—and it just doesn't happen." Six to eight percent is "pretty much standard on what kind of (salary) bump you might get."

- Avoid disclosing your desired salary until you have an offer. On job applications under salary requirements, write "open," "negotiable," or "competitive," says Powell.
- Don't be too quick to accept the first offer, even if it seems reasonable, Triplett cautions. "I've almost always seen that companies are willing to go up to counter offers. And I always tell students to make a counter offer. There's no reason not to, it's not like they're going to take the job back."
- Be prepared with alternative solutions to cash. Stock options, signing bonuses, profit sharing, and performance raises are among the perks that can enhance

*"Barring a dramatic financial windfall, what you earn for years to come will be based on the starting salary you negotiate going in."*

a job offer. Kenney says at an earlier job that didn't provide health insurance, he was able to negotiate having his employer make COBRA payments so he could maintain previous insurance.

Finally, experts agree that no matter when the salary issue is

raised, think long term. Barring a dramatic financial windfall, what you earn for years to come will be based on the starting salary you negotiate going in, says Dave Jensen, who writes "Tooling Up," a career advice column, for the American Association for the Advancement of Science's website, sciencecareers.org. "Negotiating makes people uncomfortable," he says in a recent online column, "Salary Negotiation, Part 1." "Many people sacrifice long-term financial security because of a slight, temporary feeling of discomfort.

"If a 15-minute conversation can have such a large and lasting impact, why not pursue it?" ■

## FINALLY! A NEW WAY TO GET YOUR BS DEGREE!

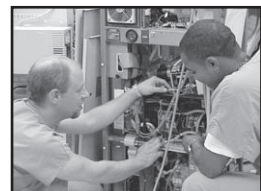
### WHY IUPUI:

- Earn Purdue University Degree
- Leader in Online Teaching and Learning
- Largest Grantor of Engineering Technology Degrees



### BMET BS DEGREE:

- Designed for working BMETs
- Degree credits awarded for CBET and DoD training
- Builds on Associate Degree
- Coursework available at a distance



## TECHNOLOGY THAT DRIVES THE FUTURE

**IUPUI**  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY—PURDUE UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS  
PURDUE SCHOOL OF  
ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

**BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY**  
For more information, contact: Barbara Christe  
317.274.7591 or [bchrist2@iupui.edu](mailto:bchrist2@iupui.edu)  
[www.iupui.edu/~bmet/degree](http://www.iupui.edu/~bmet/degree)