



# How to Negotiate Webinar NeurIPS edition

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**Welcome!**

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## About Me

- **Strategic Partnerships & Lead Advisor @ Rora**
  - Negotiated offers for quant finance firms, consulting firms, big tech companies, and startups
  - Put millions back into the pockets of candidates
- **Background Expertise**
  - **Go Bears!**
  - *Recruitment Consultant* for full-cycle recruiting and *Career Coach* - both for 5 years



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## Agenda

- Market trends
- Why you should negotiate
- How to know your true market value
- Standard recruiting journey
- Strengthen your BATNA
- HR Tactics/Scenarios + Pushbacks
- How to get more info pre-negotiation
- Negotiation strategies
- When to accept/decline
- Q&A

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**What's trending?**

- 
- Everything you're hearing is true (hiring freezes, hiring slow downs, layoffs, offer rescinds before a starting)
    - Don't let it stop you from functioning/applying
    - Know that there are exceptions to all of these stories


	Meta	Lyft	Shopify	Stripe
Salary	16 weeks salary + 2 weeks salary for every year at the company	10 weeks salary + 4 weeks salary for employees who've worked at Lyft for 4+ years	16 weeks salary + 1 week salary for every year at the company	14 weeks salary + additional pay for employees with longer tenure (details not specified)
Bonuses				2022 bonuses paid out
PTO	Unused PTO will be paid out			Unused PTO or leave will be paid out
Equity	Early vesting for RSUs that are due on Nov. 15, 2022		Equity cliff will be removed	
Health Insurance	Health insurance coverage for employees and dependents for 6 months	Health insurance coverage through April 30, 2023	Medical benefits will be extended for unspecified time period	Healthcare coverage for 6 months, or cash equivalent of 6 months of healthcare premiums
Immigration	Immigration specialist support for people who joined through an H-1B Visa			Support for employees on H-1B visas and help transition to non-employment visas if possible
Career Support	Career support from external vendor for 3 months	Recruiting assistance and coaching sessions on resumes and interviews	Unspecified outplacement services	

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## Can you negotiate severance?

- **After a layoff**
  - Similar to cohort equity - hard to negotiate by itself
  - Needs to be through a direct point-of-contact/power player, not just a general HR person
- **Choosing to leave**
  - Leverage within the company/tenure/visibility of position
  - Smoothness of transition
- **Being fired**



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- **Salary**
  - **COBRA payments**
  - **Termination date**
  - **Signing bonus retention**
  - **Equity termination period**
  - **Accelerated vesting of your equity**
  - **Early exercise**
  - **Company equipment**
  - **Outplacement services**
  - **Letters of recommendation**

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- Best suggestion:
    - Keep your options open and have your backup plans
      - Don't be so quick to turn down offers
        - Rely more on \*soft gracious declines
      - More important to continue relationships post declines
        - Decline graciously, give positive, personalized feedback especially to Hiring Managers

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**Why is the status quo so broken?**

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## Company's job is to protect their bottom line

**S O N D E R**

March 2020: Laid off 33% of employees  
June 2020: Raises \$170M at \$1.3B valuation



carta

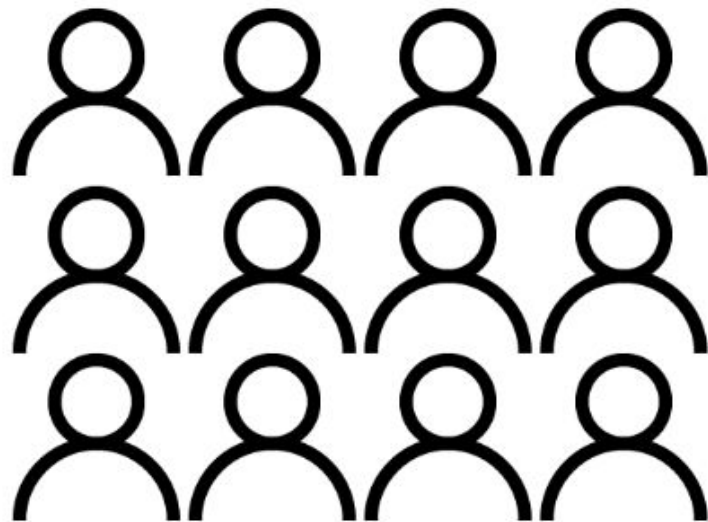
April 2020: Laid off 16% of employees  
May 2020: Raises \$180M in funding

**Opendoor**

April 2020: Laid off 35% of employees  
Dec 2020: IPOs at \$13B market cap



VS



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## Controlling your mindset is key

- **Scarcity vs. Abundance**
  - Go at the speed of trust
  - Be aware of the negative/anxious thoughts you tell yourself
  - Take account of the ways in which you are secure as you are
  - Talk to yourself as if your best friend was speaking to you

## Time to Even Out Information Asymmetry

- What do employees/candidates have?
  - Advisors/Mentors, friends, parents
    - for the most part they are on your side,
    - but unless they are in that world actively negotiating and seeing the trends, it's better to seek help outside that's objective
  - Whatever you can find on the internet - always concern of can you trust the info?
- GET HELP!!
  - With the volatility in the market, you need help more than ever

## Time to Even Out Information Asymmetry

- You only know what you know
  - Don't even know what questions to ask, where to start
- Been conditioned to think that any offer is better than what you're getting paid now
  - You can be grateful to have an offer AND still go after your market worth



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**Why does this matter? What does  
it mean for me?**

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## ~14+ more years to catch up

- In the long run, assume two individuals start with the same \$100K salary
- Individual A negotiates 5% better than Individual B
- After 25 years, Individual B will have to work 14.27 additional years to have a cumulative earnings equal to Individual A
  - This does not include the 5 other dimensions of compensation (annual bonus, equity, signing bonus, relocation bonus, time off)

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## Why it is important to negotiate

- Starting at baseline can not only cost tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, but also several years in your career
  - Promotions/raises from starting point
  - Need to leave to get paid more
- Invaluable information that comes up during negotiations, and even in conversations leading up
  - GS's story\*
  - KR's story\*

**\*all names have been acronymized to protect identity**

*Demonstrate how they can support you now = Good way to start ruling out companies with more predatory positions*

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- How transparent are they? (give you all details of your offer or do they say, “we can’t share that part”)
- Will they let you have additional meetings with your HM/Team/Skip?
- If you have concerns over how they treat D&I, can you meet someone in that demographic who have your position?
- How much are they making you feel guilty/greedy?

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**How do you know your true  
market value?**

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## Where do we look for market value resources?

- Glassdoor? Teambblind? Levels.fyi? H1B? AiPaygrad.es?
  - How accurate is this data?
- Peers who have entered industry prior
  - YZ's story\*

\*all names have been acronymized to protect identity

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## You Define Your Market Value

How do you define your market value?

Companies know they are competing with other offers you might have.

If you define your market value higher for one company and they give you that compensation, this is now your market value for any other offer you may have.

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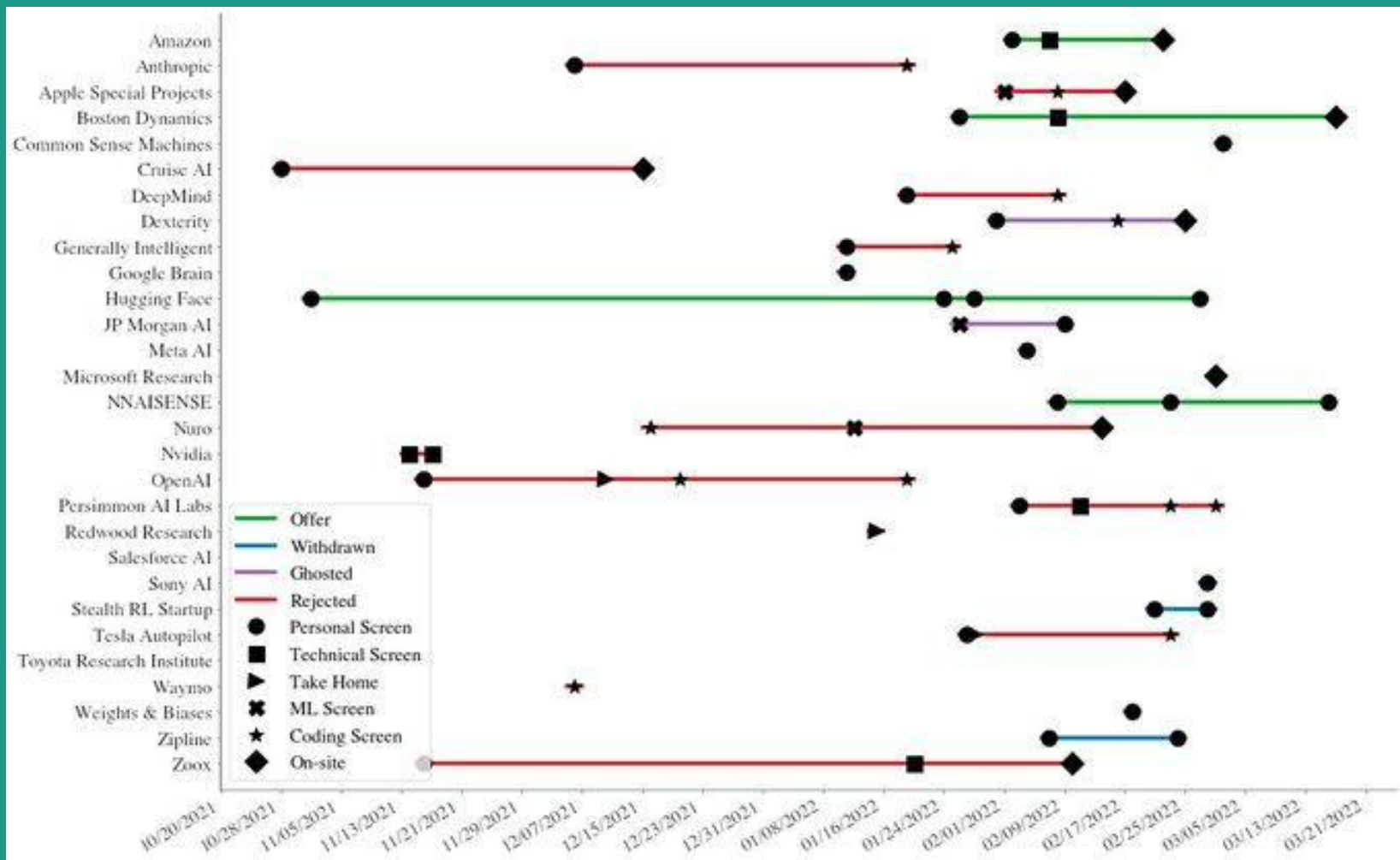
## So do I need data points?

- If data is so important, why isn't it called, "The Science of Negotiation?"
- Negotiation skill > Market data
- You can have all the data points and still not get an increase if played incorrectly.
- No need to play all cards at once!



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**What does the standard  
recruiting journey look like?**



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## **6 months/average process**

- Sourcing stage (application stage) - 1-2 months
- Interviewing stage - 1-3 months
  - \*critical stage for negotiations later on
- Researching stage - <1 month
  - Will touch on the significance of this stage later in presentation
- Negotiations - 1-3 months

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## Sourcing Stage

- Referrals
  - Advisors
  - Peers
- LinkedIn
- Conferences
- General application

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## The importance of timing

- Need to expedite decisions or slow down ones already received
- Space out apps for “slow” vs. “fast” companies, e.g. Google vs. earlier stage startup
- Timing and timeline
  - My ideal start date is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - I want to decide where I'm going next by \_\_\_\_\_.

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## Interviewing Stage

- Your goal is to get three (3) offers in each league
  - Big tech vs. big tech
  - Startup vs. startup
  - Finance vs. finance
- Why not 3 overall?
  - MD's story\*
- So, you can't negotiate with 1 or 2 offers?
  - Of course you can!
    - KR & SR's stories\*
  - Less leverage due to less iterations possible

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## Post-onsite/Offer Stage

- Information control is key
- Recruiters want to extract information before giving an offer and then create pressure to get candidates on tilt
- Goal: Have the company share info first. It almost never helps to share numbers first.



If negotiating feels like a gamble, it's  
because the companies are the house.



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## Scenario 1 - Info extraction

HR asks for your expectations

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## Potential Responses

“I’m not sure. I’d like to hear your offer first before doing my own research so that I can make an accurate assessment.”

“Can you provide me with more info on the salary band for this role?”

“What do you think is in range for me to expect given my background?”

“I’ll need to get back to you after doing some additional research.”

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**“We can’t move forward without hearing a number.”**

“Unfortunately, at this stage I do not feel comfortable providing an offer to myself. I would like to see X’s company’s numbers first.”

“I am still in various stages of the interviewing/offer process with several companies, so I will be sure to share relevant data as it comes in.”

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## **“Where else are you interviewing?”**

Your choice of whether to share. Generally apples-to-apples comparisons are best - companies of similar size, same industry, same type of role you are applying for.

“I am still in various stages of the interviewing/offer process with several companies, so I will be sure to share relevant data as it comes in.”

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## **“What other offers do you have?”**

“I know that you might need this information to advocate on my behalf, so I will be sure to provide details soon, but I want to be sure that I bring you the strongest offers possible.”

“I do have another offer with a tight deadline as I mentioned. I am still finalizing the details of that offer, so I am not quite ready to share.”

“Once I have more clarity on the terms of that offer, I will be sure to share whatever might be helpful to you when advocating for me.”

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## “What is your timeline?”

Goal: State what you realistically need plus **AT LEAST** two weeks.

“I am not looking to rush this decision. I also have a lot of responsibilities for my grad program. **INSERT OTHER REASONS HERE.**”

Expedite interview feedback, extend deadline(s).

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**“That is way too long of a timeline. We can only keep the offer open for 1-2 weeks.”**

“I will take that into consideration, although I think that could be a very tight timeline for me to make a decision.”

“This is a very big decision for me, and I am hoping to make a long-term commitment at the company I join, so I want to give this decision the attention and time it deserves to make a thorough evaluation of my opportunities.”

“I have also noticed that there can be many unexpected delays in the recruitment process as each company has their own way of doing things, but I will of course keep you updated on where things stand as I continue in the process.”

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## **If the recruiter declines your extension**

Supercede and go to manager

Never take what the recruiter says completely seriously - always double check with your manager to confirm any information around other candidates, headcount timeline, etc.



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## Scenario 2

HR provides numbers

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## **“Here are some initial numbers. How do you feel about them?”**

- Show gratitude, stay neutral in your response
  - “Thank you for updating me on the salary/salary range.”
  - “Are there specific components to the offer such as bonus and equity that we can go over as well?”
  - I am appreciative of you sharing these details.
  - I’ll need some time to digest the offer.
  - I’ll be sure to update you when I have had time to outline my feedback.

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## What are all components of an offer?

- Base salary
- Annual bonus (usually a percentage)
- Sign-on bonus (sometimes not included in initial offer)
- Relocation bonus: if applicable
- Equity (value of shares, # of shares, vesting schedule): if applicable
- Location:
- Position, Level, and Title:

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## **“Which way are you leaning? Are we your top choice?”**

- “I appreciate all the information that has been provided thus far and enjoyed going through the interview process.”
- “I am looking forward to reconnecting with the hiring manager and others on the team to learn more about the role and the expectations/potential projects I’d be working on.”
- I will let you know if there’s anything else I need more information regarding.”
- I appreciate your partnership through this process.”

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## Why you should not negotiate right away

- You have yet to collect all information on your leverage
- Hard to quantify negotiation numbers on the spot (might aim too low or too high w/o much backing)
- Reveals excitement

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**Now you have the offer...now  
what?**

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## Get the offer in writing and set up meetings

Email offer details back to recruiter (if they share them) - ask them to confirm and provide the full details in writing

Request info on any offer details that were unclear or missing - often this relates to equity

Request recruiter's help setting up any additional calls you may need to give you clarity on the role and help gather leverage points for negotiations

\*Use this time to request an additional month past the deadline if you are still waiting on offers, using personal reasons



**Recruiter's Job:** To get candidates to accept an offer as quick and cheap as possible for what they will accept.

**Manager's Job:** To achieve the company's business objectives through managing their direct reports.



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# Research Leverage Stage

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## Why it's important to meet with your manager again

- Gather important information on your leverage
- A chance to realign on what your specific contributions and future value add will be
  - \*Impact Roadmap
- Conditions for negotiating + signal collection
  - True deadline
  - Offer/interview pipeline
  - Support

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## Identify Your Leverage

Your negotiating leverage is based on

- Interview performance
- How long the company has been interviewing for
- Your work experience relative to the team
- How many individuals are they hiring?
- How many candidates are also at offer stage?
- How excited is your manager?
- How senior are the team members you have had chats with?

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## Negotiate for Information

- Why did the role open up? What is the current context of the work environment?
- Have you talked with team to understand your manager's management style? References?
- What would I have to achieve to be promoted?
- What is your manager's plan for his/her team and expectations for you?
- What are the biggest roadblocks?
- Who is your skip level manager? What is his/her plan and expectations for your team? What are the biggest challenges?
- Why did they give you an offer and not the other candidates interviewed?

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## The importance of having a good fit with your manager

- In a good fit, managers
  - Put their direct reports before themselves
  - Are good at negotiating for themselves
  - Make you feel safe
  - Has the time to invest/mentor you
  - Gives negative feedback
  - Has power/influence in the organization
- Success within a company is a political process and this begins with your manager

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## Why it's important to meet with your team again

- Gather important information on your leverage
  - What makes your background unique
  - How fast the team is growing
  - How long has this position been open for
- Understand if you've been leveled properly
  - If you are LX, meet with LX and LX+1
- Understand how your manager helps grow the team
- Comp info may come up!
  - \*RZ's story

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# Negotiation Stage

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Candidate Fear/Thought: *I am hurting relationships/career by negotiating*

- Negotiating is a standard part of any business relationship, it is the rule not the exception
- While it is new and uncomfortable for you, managers and recruiters are negotiating all of the time in other hires and work
- HMs are expecting you to negotiate
  - May even see it as a red flag when you don't



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## How to de-risk losing an offer from negotiating?

Understand your leverage before you negotiate:

- Are there other candidates that the company is also at offer stage with? How do you compare? What is the headcount this year?
- How much buy-in do you have from the team/manager/senior leaders?

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At Rora we see these four tactics all the time:

1. Basing salary off of previous history or low expectations
2. Deadlines
3. Verbal offers / pressure
4. Lowballing

These tactics prevent competition when a candidate is negotiating multiple offers.

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## Deadline example:

Sally, Economics PhD, gets an academic Assistant Professor offer at a college for ~\$100K/year.

***“We need an answer by the end of the week.”***

Mind you, Sally is approaching Rora with only 3 days left before the deadline.

Sally is still waiting to hear back from two other universities and a consulting firm, but the College is her #1 choice AND the only offer she has in hand. Keeping in mind their needs over her own, Sally is even afraid to ask for 3 extra days despite having other interviews and processes in play.

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## **Deadline Example Continued:**

Many candidates don't know that deadlines are negotiable and under recruiter pressure, they cave. Sally negotiates an offer deadline extension using Rora so she has time to hear back from at least one of the outstanding employers.

Sally not only was able to get those 3 extra days, but within those 3 days, a consulting offer came in offering her ~\$306K. She didn't even sign it right away and the employer raised the offer by another \$10K on their own.



## **Deadline Example Conclusion:**

Sally almost let the following cost her an additional \$220K per year:

- Fear of deadlines
- Fear of offending an employer by not taking care of their needs
- Fear of only having one offer in hand
- Completely ignoring her own needs



## **Deadline Example Conclusion:**

Sally's key to a successful negotiation:

- Negotiating and Controlling the timeline
  - Extend the deadline
  - Take her time with understanding her offer, her position and addressing her concerns
- She did not need market data to be successful

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## Why it's important to ideally wait for all offers

- Full range of possibilities is large
  - XH's story\*
- What if you ask for something another company gives you upfront?
- Sometimes offers can change +100%
- Can save the company you like most for LAST
  - Opportunity to practice
  - Much harder to play hardball with a company you are most excited about

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**“Soft Gracious Decline”**





Goal: Get Offer #2 without any mention of a counteroffer.

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## **XH's\* story continued**

- If you have two offers, \$230K Apple SPG and \$360K Cruise, and are waiting for more, and both managers are firm on deadline, what do you do?
  - Misconception is to get Apple SPG to match Cruise
  - How do you get Cruise up by itself?
- Value add and anchor high!



# The 1st Ask

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## Why counters should wait

- Negotiations can go longer with more iterations with additional information provided at each iteration
- Always want to see what a company is willing to do with only a certain amount of information given
- Providing them TOO early will give yourself a ceiling
- The way you introduce them is also important

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## **“Google is a data driven company. We need counters to negotiate.”**

- “I’d be happy to provide more info at a later time. Unfortunately I won’t be able to proceed where the offer is currently at without a change, because I am not willing to forego other opportunities without a change.”
- “At this time I would like to be evaluated independently by Google and am hoping we can work together to get to an agreement on what we believe is my fair market value based on my research and my fit for this team.”

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## Common pushbacks

[This compensation would be outside any \_\_\_\_] for new grads/people at your level. We want to set you up for success, not failure. You should come in at the right level of compensation and expectations.

We need to watch out for team equity.

We've been quite generous in the time we had allotted you, we do need a decision from you immediately. Otherwise we will consider other candidates. [*Let us know by two days later*"]

[The best we can do is X]

[Your compensation will grow as you grow at the company]

[I think you would be a better fit elsewhere]

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***“We have to think about internal equity with the team”***

- A rising tide lifts all boats, compensation teams pay more based off of retention or when new offers get too high.
- Companies use this argument while never providing transparency. Actual internal equity does **not** exist inside organizations.
  - YOU as a candidate have more transparency than current employees thanks to the new laws
- Promotions/layoffs don't happen as a team, they happen individually. Companies use internal equity argument when it fits their agenda.

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## Scenario

**Offer #2s are similar and not at goal number yet (JG's story)\***



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## You *can* use a lower offer to negotiate

- Why would you choose one company over another?
  - “Lean towards”
- Cost-of-living? Healthcare? Taxes?
  - On paper vs. take home
- Partner? Family? Immigration?
  - \*NM’s story

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## Scenario

**There's a close second candidate (FF's story)\***

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## When time is not of the essence

- If you are a manager's top choice, but they express that there is someone second who is willing to accept, can you still negotiate?
- Yes, but not as long or as hard
- Need to give them an offer you will accept, which is usually 5-10% higher than your current offer - does not allow for back and forth
  - Unless you have a strong counter offer to provide right away, and this is your top choice, need to do an "ask and sign"

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## Scenario

**This role is a generalist position / a manager has not been assigned (SS's story)\***

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## When NOT to negotiate (or at best, tread lightly)

- When the manager wants nothing to do with negotiations (ie no buy-in)
  - Social capital is limited, increases are minimal at best
- When you do not have a manager, and can only negotiate with HR
  - Team equity is at the forefront with a “set band” and there is no one advocating for you on the inside



## Offer Rescinds Rarely Occur

Yes you can lose an offer from negotiating, but the probability from our negotiations is <2% of the time.

It is precisely this irrational fear that prevents candidates from effectively negotiating in the first place.

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**Accept/Decline Stage**

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## Ultimately, it's up to you

- Once you've found your desired company and are in the throws of negotiation, it's up to you to know when to walk away
- Keep in mind your 3 #'s -
  - **#1 Walkaway Point:** The lowest offer you could realistically accept
  - **#2 Target:** Where you'd ideally like to end up in terms of comp
  - **#3 Aspiration:** What would make you sign the offer letter on the spot





# Ask & Sign

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## What to ask for and how to ask for it

- Cash? Remote? Start date?
  - \*CHD's story
- Best and final: from HM NOT recruiter

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# Q&A

Book (free!) additional time to discuss here!



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# Case study - return offers



At Rora, we saw how the same PhD new grads with Meta Intern Conversion offers were much more difficult to negotiate than Meta Non-Intern Full Time offers. Why?



The offer accept rate for Intern Conversion Offers is >90%

The offer accept rate for Full Time Offers is ~50%

They have the data to support them taking a bet that you'd accept rather than walk away or spend time/energy/resources to continue interviewing



Candidates get paid more when Meta has less data on their value, than candidates that Meta has more data on.

Why? Because full time candidates accept less often than interns do.