



**Professionals  
Australia**  
Gender and Diversity

# SALARY NEGOTIATING TIPS FOR WOMEN

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*The latest Women in STEM survey report found that 26.7 per cent of respondents had negotiated their own salary but of those only 30.9 per cent were confident or very confident about doing so.*

Because it is largely a function of the concentration of women in less senior roles and their under-representation at senior, management and leadership levels, it is clear that women cannot simply negotiate away the gender pay gap.

It is true however that women are much more likely to accept the salary they are offered and not negotiate their pay rate, and with pay compounding over the course of your career, failing to negotiate is likely to carry with it a pay penalty in the longer-term. Linda Babcock, author of the book [Women Don't Ask](#) asked people "When you got your offer, did you attempt to negotiate?" She found that about 7 per cent of women attempted to negotiate compared with 57 per cent of men. Of those who negotiated, they increased their salaries by an average 7 per cent.

## Recognising a job offer as an opportunity to negotiate

The option to negotiate salary is likely to depend on whether the role is in the private or public sector, is regulated by an Award or Agreement and the level of responsibility at which the role is being offered. It is critical to determine whether a job is being offered on a take-it-or-leave-it-basis or whether there is room to negotiate salary or over and above. Research suggests that many women make the mistake of assuming a job offer at a particular rate of pay is offered as a yes/no choice rather than an opportunity to negotiate while men assume it is an opportunity to begin negotiations. If you're looking at a job offer, do your homework to determine whether there is an opportunity to negotiate pay, variable pay incentives or conditions.

## Determining a counter-offer

If you've determined that salary is negotiable, prepare an evidence-base for making a counter-offer. Remember that even if base salary is not negotiable, it is possible that there may be elements of variable pay that are - incentives, bonuses, non-cash benefits such as parking, professional subscriptions, mobile phone allowance, etc. may be open to negotiation. If not, it may be that you can negotiate a commitment to a pay review in a shorter time frame than annual review.





## MISTAKES

### Lack of preparation and establishing the benchmarks

This is the most common mistake made in salary negotiations. Utilising salary benchmarks are one of the best ways to establish what you and the job are worth and Professionals Australia conducts a range of [profession based employment and remuneration surveys](#) to assist you with the benchmarking process. The aim is to know how much you want to be paid and be articulate about why you should be paid more. Where possible, you should also have feedback from your current or former manager to hand and be articulate around the contribution you make to the organisation and the value you could provide - that is, you need to prepare the cost/value argument and ensure your pay rise is understood to be an investment in the organisation and, if you have the insider intelligence, a solution to existing problems.

### Lower expectations

[Research suggests](#) that women have lower expectations in relation to salary than their male counterparts. The issue with this is that lower salary outcomes are inevitable when you have lower salary expectations. So, women receive less in salary terms not because they are women, but because their salary expectations are lower. Salary expectations should be in line with market rates and these can be arrived at by using salary benchmarking tools.

### Concern about reputational damage

Research indicates that women are more worried than their male counterparts about the [reputational risks of salary negotiation](#). The research also shows that they are correct in their concern whether they are negotiating with a male or female boss. Some women worry about looking greedy, overly ambitious or selfish and they are more concerned with the negotiation process appearing “unseemly”. They are concerned that they will damage the relationship with the person and/or organisation with whom they’re negotiating.

This means salary negotiations for women can benefit from reframing. Research suggests that women are better at “co-operative bargaining” - that is, bargaining in a way that will achieve mutually beneficial results - for the individual and the organisation. [As Kim Elsesser suggests](#), “In this type of negotiation, the negotiators optimise the outcomes for all parties involved. [It] involves asking a lot of questions and truly understanding the position of your negotiating partner, so that both of you can arrive at a solution that’s a win-win. In other words, you transform the negotiation from a competitive, conflict situation to a mutual problem-solving experience.”

What is required then is the creation of a nexus between your own competencies and what some refer to as a “[communal motivation](#)”. The negotiation becomes one that is on behalf of others as well as on your own behalf. This means you need to explain how your pay rise will benefit the organisation as well as yourself - you need to demonstrate your value to the decision-maker. According to [Margaret Neale](#), this means you frame the negotiations in terms that “it’s not about me, it’s about what I can do for you and this mitigates the negative reputational affects for women”.

### Dealing with self-doubt and the intimidating prospect of salary negotiations

[Research suggests](#) that self-doubt and the feeling of being under-qualified also impacts whether or not women are prepared to enter into salary negotiations. According to [Carol Sankar](#), when she delivers coaching on negotiating a pay rise, “there is always at least one woman in the room who will ask the question, ‘Don’t you think I should wait a few more years before asking for a raise?’” Sankar says there is often a feeling of doubt and the tendency to feel under-qualified when it is time to evaluate leadership performance and value at salary negotiation time and that “creates an added level of anxiety for women leaders”. The only solution here is for women to accept their inherent abilities and properly value their contribution or potential contribution to an organisation and negotiate to ensure proper recognition of that effort and value.

Good luck!!



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