

The Job Offer

Boston University
College of Engineering
Career Development Office
44 Cummington Street, Room 112
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 353-5731
www.bu.edu/eng/careers

Congratulations!

After all your hard work, you have received the highest compliment from the employer, the job offer! Before you immediately accept the offer, there are some factors to consider. The decision to accept or to reject an offer of employment is sometimes difficult. Receiving multiple offers is the dream of many, until it comes time to determine the merits of each position. Having only one offer may seem deceptively easy - of course you will accept since you want a job, however, accepting a job you really do not want can also be a great mistake.

It is important that you make the decision that most closely suits your personal and career goals. This may mean turning down a position because it is not what you want, does not pay enough money, or is in the wrong geographic location, even when there is no other job on the horizon. That is where the "risk factor" comes into play. Choices you make now are part of a lifelong process, even though you are not locked into anything forever. Ask yourself: How does this job fit into my long-term career plans? Does it take me in a direction I want to go? The worst dilemma to be in is to accept a job and then be offered the position you really want.

Handling Job Offers

If this were an ideal world and your job search strategy worked to perfection, all offers would arrive at the same time. Unfortunately, even the best of plans experience a glitch now and then. Let's suppose you receive an offer from Company X and you are still waiting on other possibilities. Depending on how quickly Company X expects an answer, you can do several things to maximize the situation to your advantage:

- You do NOT have to say yes immediately. Advise the company that you are pursuing a number of opportunities, assuming that you are, and that you will need some time before you can make a decision. Ask for time to consider, 24 hours minimum, and give a specific date that you will return your decision, 3-5 days maximum. This will allow you enough time to follow up on any other situations of interest. If the company demands an immediate response you may want to consider if this is the right employer for you.
- An offer is not an offer until you receive it in writing. You can and should request that the company send you an offer letter which provides you with the offer details. If the company declines or demands that you verbally accept the offer first before receiving a letter, politely insist that you receive the offer in writing.
- Contact employers in whom you still have an interest, and from whom you have had no response. Inquire as to your current status with that organization and explain that you have received an offer and need to make an employment decision soon. Such an inquiry may prompt some employers to expedite the decision process. Other employers may be unable to do so, and you will then have to decide whether you should take Company X's offer or risk waiting for another, perhaps better, offer.
- Do not accept an offer until you fully understand what you are accepting. Be clear on your daily responsibilities and who you will be your manager or supervisor.

Negotiation

The goal of salary negotiation is the same for both the student and recruiter: acceptance of an offer that is positive for both parties. Before you embark on the negotiation process, however, you need to consider objectively what exactly has been offered.

- Develop a list of criteria for your ideal job. This can include responsibilities, culture, location and travel, salary and benefits, preferred industries and companies. Next, evaluate how the job offered to you matches this criteria. Is the salary in line with industry standards?
- Before accepting, be certain that you know exactly what you are being offered. This includes job title, pay and benefits, who you will be reporting to, advancement opportunities and start date. If there are terms you would like to change, now is the time to negotiate them.

Negotiation Guidelines:

- Convey to the company your enthusiasm about working for them.
- Anytime you ask for something different than what has been offered to you, you need to have a concrete reason why you believe that you deserve more. This can include related work experience, a high GPA, or other offers that you have received. Be confident and convincing, but stay modest.
- Determine your lowest and highest expectations.
- Research the market rate for the position.
- If the salary is negotiable, inquire if it would be possible to be considered for \$_____ (generally no more than \$5,000 to \$10,000 above the stated salary)
- If the salary is not negotiable, negotiate on other items which may be changed. Make creative suggestions when a company will not negotiate on salary, such as a hiring bonus, relocation, increased number of vacation days.
- Be honest: if you have other offers, let the company know. If location is a concern, let them know.
- Only negotiate if you really want the offer and are prepared to accept it if your needs are met.
- Realize that not all offers are negotiable.
- When accepting an offer, call first, then follow up with a letter. The acceptance letter will help to keep your agreement valid should the hiring manager change any terms of the agreement.

Upon acceptance of an offer, immediately **notify the ENG Office of Career Development** and any companies with pending offers.

Job Offer Ethics

Receiving a job offer is a compliment, if you decline an offer be courteous and thank the employer for the opportunity.

Once you have accepted an offer, do not consider backing out. There can be negative ramifications for both you and the College of Engineering.

Backing out of an offer could mean getting your career off on the wrong foot and burning valuable bridges. You never know who you may be interviewing with again in the future. For the College of Engineering, such action could result in the employer failing to trust the word of future ENG candidates and impact its decision to recruit further at Boston University.

It is important that you carefully consider what you want before accepting a position. Suffering with a job you dislike is rarely worth it.

Sample Acceptance Letter

546 Strawberry Lane
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 382-1234

Date

Ms. Jane Smith
Program Manager
ABC Corporation
1234 Yellow Brick Road
Boston, MA 01234

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for the faith shown in me as reflected in your offer of the Software Engineer I position.

It is my understanding that the job reports to you and is responsible for projects involving aircraft and industrial signal processing, diagnostic, and data management applications.

The employment package includes:

- Annual compensation of \$49,000
- Immediate enrollment in your 401 K program
- Full Medical and Dental insurance benefits
- Stock options based on company performance

I look forward to starting with ABC Corporation on August 1, 2002.

Sincerely,

Gary Graduate

Sample Decline Letter

726 Penny Lane
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 382-4567

Date

Mr. Henry Jones
Program Manager
Big Corporation
5678 Cross Road
Boston, MA 01234

Dear Mr. Jones:

Thank you for the faith shown in me as reflected in your offer of the Software Engineer I position. I am very impressed with Big Corporation and have greatly enjoyed meeting with you and your staff. It has been a difficult decision, but unfortunately after much consideration I must decline your offer. My decision is based solely on the fact that I am unable to relocate to New York at this time.

I hope that you will consider my candidacy in the future should another opportunity in the Boston area open up.

Sincerely,

John Smith

Drug Testing And Other Possible Conditions Of Employment

Please be aware of the small section of legalese at the end of the employment application you will most likely fill out for the employer. Your signature on that document is what gives the employer the right to do pre-employment checks such as drug testing, credit checks and reference checks. So be ready to live up to the terms that you have already agreed to. By the way, if you look closely at your acceptance letter, you may notice that the offer is contingent on you passing whatever pre-employment checks and/or tests they may have. Even if it isn't in the letter, it was probably contained within the application you signed earlier. Most employers consider these tests to be "conditions of employment," and these conditions can be in effect even after you have started with the company. There have been numerous cases of graduates who have been hired and then fired by the new employer based solely on the conditions of that document. As long as you have been straight and honest, this should not be a problem for you.

The Very Best Question To Ask Before You Start Work

Want to really impress your new employer? Ask if there are any materials that you can read or study before you start work. Not only will it give you a jump start on the work at hand, it will place you very favorably with your future employer. Even if you will be part of a formal training program, just the fact that you requested to go above and beyond will place you in good standing. And if they don't have any work-related materials, you might ask for a recommendation of outside reading (books, articles, etc.). It will be duly noted that you are a potential superstar in the making.

A portion of this information is taken from Guide to Career Services, A Placement Manual Series Publication, published by CASS Recruitment Publications and <http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch>