

The Smart Woman's Guide to Interviewing and Salary Negotiation



...es valuable advice on addressing sexual discrimination in the
view, negotiating the best salary package you can get, and
...ering tough questions like, "Do you plan to have children soon?"

l i e A d a i r K i n g

**The
Smart
Woman's
Guide
to Interviewing
and Salary
Negotiation**

By
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Introduction

In a lot of ways, things were a whole lot easier in the old days. If a woman wanted a job, there were no long, stressful interviews to endure. No rigorous questioning about management philosophies, past accomplishments and career goals—in the first place, we weren't supposed to have any, and in the second, no one cared if we did. For the most part, all a career-minded woman had to do was prove she could type so many words per minute and make a decent pot of coffee.

Salary negotiation? That was a man's game, something the big boys did. Society said it was unladylike for women to concern themselves with crass subjects such as money. If a woman did dare ask why she earned half as much as a man doing exactly the same job, she would likely hear that it was because she didn't need as much money. Women just worked for fun and mad money, after all; the man had a family to support.

Well, that was then and this is now—thank heavens! Women today contribute to the work force in just about any capacity they want, at levels of the corporate ladder that were unthinkable 20 years ago. Thumb through *Working Woman*, *Executive Female* and other business magazines, and you can find all sorts of encouraging stories about women playing in the big leagues, commanding compensation packages that make the good old boys of the Fortune 500 blanch.

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The bad news is that although many things have changed in the working world, many things have not.

Fighting the same old battles

Corporate America is trying hard to accept the idea that women deserve equal status with men in the workplace. But old habits die hard. And in too many businesses, especially in fields traditionally dominated by men, women still do not get a fair shake.

Despite all the various laws that make it a crime, employers continue to discriminate on the basis of gender. Bias against women shows up in job interviews, in recruiting practices and in advancement policies. The laws haven't motivated employers to eliminate wage discrimination, either; according to U.S. Department of Labor statistics, women are paid, on average, approximately 25 percent less than men doing the *exact same jobs*.

Sometimes, the bias is unconscious. The employer honestly doesn't realize that a particular hiring procedure or management policy is discriminatory. Other times, however, the employer is fully aware that the company's actions are discriminatory and simply doesn't care. From a legal standpoint, such employers have little *reason* to care. Because of the way discrimination laws are written and the conservative nature of the courts at present, even if a woman does bring a discrimination lawsuit, her chances of winning are extremely, maddeningly slim.

Problems of our own making

Enough to make your blood boil, isn't it? But consider this: We women must shoulder much of the responsibility for our status in the workplace. If we don't get the jobs for which we're well-qualified, if we don't earn the salary we deserve, it's sometimes our own fault.

For reasons explored in Chapter 2, women often don't sell themselves as well in interviews as men do. We don't like to "brag" about past accomplishments. We downplay our successes and are quick to point out our shortcomings.

Many women—especially homemakers entering the work force for the first time or re-entering the job market after raising

children—lack confidence in their abilities. They can't convince interviewers they're worth hiring because they don't believe it themselves.

We often hurt our own cause in terms of salaries, too. Again, because of a lack of confidence, we may undervalue our skills and experience. We don't ask for as much money as a similarly qualified man might, and we back down sooner in salary negotiations. No wonder some employers view women as the best bargain around!

Even when it comes to career advancement, we can be our own worst enemies. Many women have the mistaken notion that good work is automatically rewarded. Instead of lobbying for the promotion or raise we've earned, as our male counterparts do, we sit back and wait, hoping our efforts will be recognized.

Of course, not all women suffer from these problems. But even if you're very well-educated, even if you've advanced into the management ranks, there's a good chance that at least some of your career wounds are self-inflicted.

What this book will teach you

If what you've read so far has you feeling a little gloomy, take heart. This book will help you overcome these challenges and more.

The first book in the *Smart Woman* series, *The Smart Woman's Guide to Resumes and Job Hunting*, provides step-by-step advice on how to create an effective resume and also offers a general overview of the entire job-hunting process.

The book you now hold in your hands, as its name implies, takes a closer look at two critical aspects of the job search: interviewing and salary negotiation. For most women, these two areas are especially troublesome, not only because of the way employers view women in the workplace, but also because of the way we view ourselves.

In the chapters to come, you'll learn to:

- Overcome cultural stereotypes that can affect the outcome of your interviews and salary negotiations.
- Sell yourself with confidence to prospective employers.

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- Find an employer who truly offers equal opportunities to women.
- Negotiate the salary you deserve, even in a tight marketplace.
- Convince your current employer that you deserve a raise.

You'll learn how to shine in job interviews and how to negotiate the best possible price for your services once the job offer is yours. You'll also discover the secret to negotiating a higher salary in your present job.

Not for women only

Although this book does focus on the special problems that await women in the interviewing and salary negotiation process, it also covers many job-hunting and negotiation pitfalls that have nothing at all to do with gender. Men, as well as women, can benefit from this information.

So if you have brothers, a husband or other male acquaintances in need of a career boost, pass this book along to them. If they're reluctant to accept it because of its title, make a book cover out of last month's *Field and Stream* or some other men's magazine. They'll get the information they need, and no one will be the wiser.

Advice from a broad range of experts

Many aspects of job hunting and negotiation have clear-cut rules. In resume-writing, for example, the experts all agree that a certain length and layout of document makes the most impact on employers. But when it comes to interviews and salary negotiations, things are not so black-and-white. It's not easy to say that any one interviewing or negotiating strategy is best, because so much depends on the situation. Different employers have different policies about how job applicants are to be interviewed and how much salary negotiation is acceptable.

In addition, the attitudes and personality of the interviewer or person handling the salary negotiations also affect how well a particular strategy will work. Employers try to be objective in

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hiring decisions, but the subjective opinions of the people involved in making those decisions are always a factor.

It's important that you look at the interviewing and negotiation process from many different viewpoints so that you can determine the best way to proceed in your particular situation. To that end, I've included in this book comments from numerous people who interview job candidates and negotiate salaries every day for a living. Their opinions are representative of what hiring managers, human resources directors, executive recruiters and placement specialists have to say about various interviewing and negotiation strategies.

A look at the chapters to come

Here's a brief preview of what's ahead:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the types of discrimination women face in interviews, in salary negotiation and in the work force in general.

Chapter 2 explores the flip side of the coin, explaining how traditionally "female" ways of speaking, acting and thinking can hurt women when they interview for jobs and negotiate salaries.

Chapter 3 discusses the ins and outs of the information interview, an often-overlooked job-hunting tool that can help you define your career goals, lead you to unadvertised job openings and give you an edge on your competition.

Chapters 4 and 5 help you overcome your anxiety about job interviews by taking a realistic look at the process and explaining the different interviewing approaches employers are using today.

Chapter 6 shows you how you can use the same techniques that salespeople use to sell yourself to employers.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 explore three of the most critical aspects of winning favor with the interviewer: creating chemistry, making a good first impression and communicating your skills with confidence.

Chapters 10 through 15 guide you through the process of preparing for your interview. In Chapters 10 through 14, you learn how to research the company, assess your skills, answer any interview question in a powerful, professional manner and deal with special interview situations, such as out-of-town interviews.

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You also learn how to interview the interviewer, so you can determine whether the job and the company are really right for you. Then, by completing the role-playing exercise in Chapter 15, you reinforce your newfound skills.

Chapter 16 walks you through important post-interview steps: writing a thank-you letter, assessing your interview performance and evaluating information you obtained from the interviewer.

Chapters 17, 18 and 19 explore the issue at the forefront of most job-seeker's minds: money. Chapters 17 and 18 show you how to negotiate a starting salary with power and finesse. Chapter 19 teaches you how to get more money *after* you have the job.

Chapter 20 offers a few parting thoughts on dealing with rejection and provides a list of additional resources that can help you with job-hunting and career problems.

There is no quick fix

Unlike some other books on the market, this book does not take the "quick-fix" approach to interviewing or salary negotiation. For example, you won't find scores of canned answers to interview questions or clever statements designed to fool the employer into thinking you're something you're not. Why? Because they don't work.

The only way to persuade employers that you are the best person for the job or that you deserve a certain salary is to convince them that you can solve *their specific problems*. That means that you must take the time to research the company and the position thoroughly. More importantly, you must take the time to learn about yourself—to assess your unique abilities, skills and experiences, and figure out how they will enable you to become the solution the employer is seeking.

This book leads you step-by-step through the process of learning about the employer, the job and your own qualifications and shows you how to use that information to develop powerful interviewing and salary negotiation strategies. I'll provide you with all of the guidance and assistance I can, but no one can do the necessary research, self-evaluation and preparation but *you*.

Yes, this approach takes time and effort. But I promise that if you commit yourself to it—if you read all the chapters in this

book and complete all of the recommended exercises—you'll gain advantages that far outweigh the cost. You'll not only develop the skills and insights you need to be successful in interviews and negotiations, you'll acquire a level of self-confidence that will automatically make you a more sought-after employee.

Getting ahead in the real world

When the world is a perfect place, all career-minded people, regardless of gender, will have the same opportunity for jobs, salaries and career advancement.

It's not yet a perfect world.

If you go into your interviews, salary negotiation or any other part of the job search denying that disappointing truth, you're hurting your odds of success. You need to be prepared for the biases you may encounter and know how to deal with them. You need to take a close look in the mirror and determine whether your own behavior is part of what's keeping you down.

As a woman, you still must work harder—and more importantly, work smarter—than your male counterparts to get the job and the salary you want. This book will show you how to overcome the challenges that await you and find all of the success and satisfaction you deserve.

1

It's a jungle out there

Imagine that you're walking through a deep, dark jungle. You round a bend and discover that a huge, centuries-old tree has fallen across your path, blocking your progress. What do you do?

Do you stand there kicking and cursing it, hoping that your outrage will convince that tree to move out of your way? Do you sit and wait, confident that someone, someday, will rescue you? Do you throw up your hands and turn back, accepting the fact that for now, you're not meant to go any farther?

The answer, of course, is none of the above. Being the intelligent, rational woman you are, you assess the situation and then figure out a way to either climb over or walk around that tree.

That, in essence, is the same approach a smart woman takes on her career path. By no means should you give up and accept the cultural stereotypes and gender biases that block your progress. Nor should you expect that if you wait patiently enough, some heroic employer will come to your rescue, delivering the job or raise you deserve. It simply won't happen.

On the other hand, kicking and cursing about the unfairness of it all won't do you any good either. Responding to an employer's sexist question or statement with an angry diatribe about women's rights may make you feel better, but it certainly won't win you the job or the pay raise.

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Instead, you must take an objective look at the obstacles on the path between you and the salary or job you want. After you understand those obstacles, you can plot out the best way to get around them.

In this chapter, we'll take the first step in the process by examining the major roadblocks you may encounter as a woman in the work force jungle. Toward the end of the chapter, we'll explore obstacles specifically related to interviewing and salary negotiation. But to fully grasp the nature and cause of those particular problems, it helps to look first at the general issues women face in today's workplace.

The glass ceiling: Still shatterproof

Despite all the attention focused on the glass ceiling in the past few years, opportunities for advancement into higher-paying, upper-level jobs remain limited for women. Yes, a few women have achieved executive status. But they're far outnumbered by the millions of others fruitlessly trying to break through the glass ceiling, that invisible barrier of bias that prevents women from reaching the top of the corporate ladder.

Pipelines of Progress: A Status Report on the Glass Ceiling, published by the U.S. Department of Labor in August 1992, documents corporate America's advancements in the area of equal opportunity for women. Unfortunately, there's little to cheer about. Women now make up nearly half of the work force, but we're still seriously under-represented in upper management. When it reviewed 100 of the top Fortune 500 companies that did business with the government in 1991, the Labor Department found that only 18 percent of the officials and managers were women.

The Labor Department also noted that hiring practices at upper levels did not demonstrate "good faith efforts to attract a broad, diverse pool of talent." Translation: Women and minorities aren't recruited for top jobs.

Who's to blame for this sorry state of affairs? It would be easy to conclude that the men who now control most of the top-level executive positions are all a bunch of sexist monsters, plotting together to keep the girls out of the tree house. And some of them