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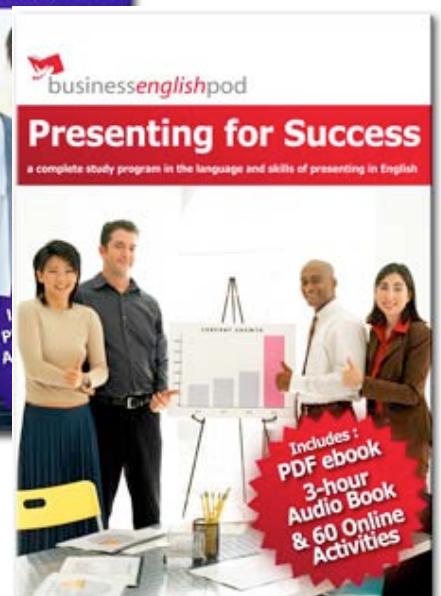
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Successful Interviews

A comprehensive business English study guide to job interviews in English

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BEP 311 – Job Interviews: Salary Negotiation

You've had your first and second interviews, you've performed well, and you've been selected. You're one of the lucky few – you've succeeded: you've got a job offer in hand. But now comes one of the hardest parts of the whole process – *negotiating your salary*. If you make a mistake here, all of your time and effort might be wasted.

For salary negotiation, preparation – doing your research – is obviously important. In the internet age, there are many websites that focus on salary information, so investigating the market is much easier than it has been in the past.

Knowledge, however, is not enough. We also need to have the confidence to *broach*, or bring up, the subject and the tools to *bargain up* the *initial* or first offer in order to *reach a compromise*. You will only get what you deserve if you *ask for it*. So in today's episode, we'll focus on the skills you need to successfully *talk money*.



Fun Beverages International has already emailed an offer to Yala Santos for an HR manager position in one of its Brazilian business units. Yala has written back asking to talk with the HR director, Ted, about the details. We'll be listening to their conversation.

While you listen, try to answer the following questions.

Listening Questions

1. Why does Ted say he needs Yala to begin work by the suggested start date?

2. How does Yala broach the subject of compensation?

3. How much over the median or average market rate does Ted say Fun Beverages offered Yala in recognition of her skills and experience?

4. What is the final compromise they discuss?

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Vocabulary

Recruitment season: Recruitment refers to looking for and hiring promising employees. Season is a time of year. "In the fall recruitment season, many employers recruit talented students from university."

To be coming up quick: To be approaching rapidly. "My start date at the new company is coming up quick."

To really be able to use something: Means something is very useful. "We could really use some rest and relaxation now."

Compensation: Payment / salary. "Compensation is above the market average at our company."

(To conduct) a competitive analysis of: Two possible meanings – 1) to conduct an analysis of the competition; 2) to conduct an analysis that is competitive. "We conducted a competitive analysis to determine what kind of offers our competitors were giving employees."

Market leaders: The leaders in an industry or market. "We're one of the market leaders in fast moving consumer goods."

To take (a high) average: To compute the average. A "high average" would be in the high part of the middle range. "We took the average compensation for this position."

In recognition of something: To recognize something "In recognition of your hard work, you are receiving a large bonus this year."

Median: Average. "We're offering you 10% over the median."

To be a little on the low side: To be on the lower end of a range. "I think, honestly, this offer is a little on the low side."

To be on the table: To be offered. "When he graduated from college, he already had several job offers on the table."

To reflect the gap in/between A and B: To be representative of the difference between A and B. "The emergence of luxury brands in many developing countries reflects the great income gaps there."

To offer a competitive market rate: To offer a salary that is competitive with other employers. "This is already a competitive market rate for this position, so I don't think we can go much higher than this."

Benefits: Non-monetary advantages of working at a company, such as healthcare, vacation, etc. "Benefits are an important part of the compensation package."

Advancement opportunities: Chances to get promoted. "You will start out in a relatively low position, it's true, but we have great advancement opportunities."

Salary history: A candidate's previous salaries at former jobs. "Please share your salary history with us."

Qualifications: The things that make you suitable for a job, such as skills, experience, scholastic degrees, etc. "He has great qualifications, including 10 years' (insert) experience and a PhD (degree)."

To have budgeted for something: To have planned in the budget for something "We have budgeted for unexpected situations."

To meet someone halfway: To compromise on something by arriving at a figure halfway between your suggestion and theirs. "He wanted 5, and she wanted 10, so they met halfway at 7.5."

(Specific) annual performance targets: A performance target is a goal you have to reach to demonstrate good performance, or work. Annual means yearly; specific means clear. "Meeting annual performance targets forms the most important criterion for determining your annual bonus."

Indicators: Measurements. "GDP is an indicator of growth."



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Dialog

Ted: You've seen our suggested start date. Is that something you can manage? Fall **recruitment season** is **coming up quickly**, and **we could really use** your help.

Yala: Yes, I can definitely make it, as soon as **compensation** is agreed.

Ted: Okay, let's talk money.

Yala: Well, just to get us going, can I ask how you arrived at your offer?

Ted: Sure. We conducted a **competitive analysis of the market leaders** and **took a high average**.

Yala: That seems reasonable. But I think I have more to offer than the market average.

Ted: I agree. **In recognition of** your skills and experience, we're offering you 10 percent over the **median**.

Yala: I see. But don't you think the figure we're working with **is a little on the low side** for a senior HR manager? In my research, I've been seeing numbers closer to 15 or 20% above what's currently **on the table**.

Ted: Well, to a certain extent, that might **reflect the gap** between national-level managers and business unit managers. For this position, I'm confident **we're offering a competitive market rate**, especially when you look at the **benefits**.

Yala: I agree that the benefits are great, and so are the **advancement opportunities**. Considering my **salary history** and **qualifications**, though, 20% over your base would enable me to accept the offer immediately.

Ted: Honestly, **that's more than we have budgeted for the position**. But we typically offer 6% annual raises. **With good performance**, you can get up to 10 or 11%, so I'd say it would be possible to **reach your target** within a year.

Yala: Okay, could we **meet halfway** and discuss a number closer to 15% initially, then agree on a 10% annual increase, with good performance?

Ted: That's definitely something we could consider.

Yala: I suppose the next thing to discuss, then, are the **specific annual performance targets**.

Ted: Sure. We have very clear performance **indicators** and **expectations** for senior management, right across the business.



Debrief

It sounds like Yala and Ted are well on their way to reaching a compromise. Let's examine the language they use.

As job candidates (or employees) in a salary negotiation, the first – and sometimes hardest – thing we need to do is actually *broach the subject* of compensation.

How does Yala bring up money? First Ted asks her if she can start in time for *fall recruitment season*. Recruitment refers to finding and hiring promising new candidates. *Fall recruitment* usually takes place among upcoming graduates at university. Can Yala *make it* or start by then? Yes, but only under one condition...

Yala: Yes, I can definitely make it, as soon as compensation is agreed.

Ted: Okay, let's talk money.

Yala: Well, just to get us going, can I ask how you arrived at your offer?

To keep the negotiation positive, it's important to focus on what we *can* do. Yala demonstrates this kind of *can-do* attitude: She "can definitely" start by Ted's suggested date, *as soon as* compensation is agreed.

Next Ted says, "Okay, let's talk money," and Yala responds by asking him how he arrived at his offer. The ball is now in Ted's court – that is, the next move is for him to make. Yala has thus followed the two basic rules of bringing up compensation: 1) *Be positive*; and 2) *Let the other side make the first move*. In other words, you can "start the game," but try not to be the first person to mention a number - we don't want to start too low.

Now, let's review some more language we can use to broach the subject of compensation.

- Before we finish, I'd like to raise the issue of compensation.
- I wanted to discuss compensation and benefits with you so that I could get a clearer picture of how you arrived at your offer.
- Can we talk about compensation?
- How did you arrive at your offer?
- I was wondering what factors were considered in coming up with this offer?

What happens next? How does Ted say Fun Beverages arrived at Yala's offer?

Ted: We conducted a **competitive analysis of the market leaders** and **took a high average**.

Ted is saying that, like many employers, Fun Beverages has surveyed salary levels at its leading competitors. They have "taken a high average" to arrive at a "base salary" or "base" – that is, the basic salary for the job. Ted is saying that the base of their company is actually higher than that of many competitors.

Notice Ted is being *vague* – like Yala, he avoids bringing up definite numbers. How does she respond?

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Yala: That seems reasonable. But I think **I have more to offer than the market average.**

At this point it's important for Yala to state her reasons for why she deserves more than the base. To do this, she shows confidence in her ability by saying she "has more to offer than the market average." This is a clever move because Ted is likely to agree with her – *of course* he wants to hire above-average employees.

How else, as candidates, can we demonstrate confidence?

- I am sure that my skills and experience will be a great asset to your organization.
- I believe that my skills and experience place me well above the market average.
- Your organization needs good people who have what it takes to help the company succeed.
- I am sure I can make a strong contribution to your organization.

So Yala has said she deserves more than the market average. Let's listen again to what Ted says in response.

Ted: I agree. **In recognition of** your skills and experience, we're offering you **10 percent over the median.**

Ted is prepared for Yala's strategy – he says that they are already offering her 10% more than the "median," or average.

Now that Ted has brought up an actual number, Yala replies with some figures of her own.

Yala: I see. But don't you think the figure we're working with **is a little on the low side** for a senior HR manager? In my research, I've been seeing numbers closer to 15 or 20% above what's currently **on the table.**

Here Yala is *bargaining up* the 10% over the base salary that Ted says he is giving her. She uses a negative question to be diplomatic – "Don't you think it's a little on the low side?" Then she refers to her salary research – she says she has seen numbers 15 or 20% higher than the one *on the table*, that is, the one currently being offered.

Let's review some more expressions for bargaining up.

- In my research, I've been seeing numbers closer to 15% or 20% above what's currently on the table.
- Don't you think that might be a little on the low side?
- The offer seems a little low, but I am really excited about the job.
- An offer 10 or 15% higher than this one would give me something to seriously consider.

In addition to the phrases we have just heard, another effective strategy is to *use silence* – simply nod, say, “uh huh,” and wait for the person sitting across the table to reply. Often the *more* the other side is talking, the *better* you are doing.

How does Ted reply to Yala’s attempt to bargain up the base salary? He *stays firm*.

Ted: Well, to a certain extent, that might **reflect the gap** between national-level managers and business unit managers. For this position, I’m confident **we’re offering a competitive market rate**, especially when you look at the **benefits**.

First, Ted implies that there might be an error in Yala’s research. The *gap* or difference in salaries that Yala is seeing might just *reflect* or represent the difference between local business unit HR managers and country-level HR managers. Yala is applying for a local business unit job.

Next, Ted shows confidence in his offer – he’s “confident they’re offering a competitive market rate,” especially when you *look at*, or consider, the benefits.

Staying firm is a useful negotiation skill for both employer and candidate.

Let’s look at some more useful language. First, let’s study some phrases you can use as an employer...

- We’re confident that this is a competitive market rate.
- That’s as high as we can go.
- To be honest, that range is outside of our budget.

Now, what can you say to stay firm as a candidate?

- I’m confident that I’m asking for a fair price.
- That’s as low as I can go.
- I’m not prepared to accept less.

So Ted is staying firm with his offer. How does Yala choose to respond? She uses very *positive language* to make her case.

Yala: I agree that the benefits are great, and so are the **advancement opportunities**. Considering my **salary history** and **qualifications**, though, 20% **over your base** would enable me to accept the offer immediately.

When negotiating compensation, it’s often important to be very clear that we are not just motivated by money. We should make positive statements about the job, and why we think it’s a good opportunity. In this spirit, Yala agrees with Ted that the position represents a great chance for her – she discusses the benefits and also the *advancement*, or promotion, opportunities.

Notice that Yala avoids saying “if” – she does *not* say, “If you give me 20% over your base, I will accept the offer immediately.” “If” can also mean *if not*, so “if” always includes the possibility of failure. Instead of “if,” Yala says, “Twenty

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percent over your base would *enable me to accept immediately.*" *Enable to* is much more positive and confident – it emphasizes what we *can do*, and doesn't suggest any possibility of failure.

Now, listen to more examples of positive language that we can use in making offers and counter-offers.

- I'm excited about this opportunity.
- I agree that the **benefits** and **advancement opportunities** are great.
- Some upward movement on the salary **would allow me to** consider the offer seriously.
- An offer 20% higher than what's on the table **would enable me to** sign the contract immediately.

In these examples, "*would allow me to*" works similarly to "*would enable me to*" to keep a positive emphasis.

What does Ted think about Yala's proposal? He says that, honestly, it's a little more than they have budgeted for the position. But he brings up annual raises, or increases, in salary. Typical raises are 6%. With good performance, Yala can expect 10% or more. So it would be possible to reach her target of 20% over the base within a year – in other words, he is offering her 10% now, and 10% a year later.

Ted finally appears to have made a concession – that is, to give up something in order to reach an agreement.

Listen to Yala's response.

Yala: Okay, could we **meet halfway** and discuss a number closer to 15% initially, then agree on a 10% annual increase, with good performance?

This exchange represents the key moment in the negotiation, for which the previous discussion was merely preparation. Having first made a counter-offer of 20% over the base, Yala is now asking to "meet halfway" with Ted at 15%. In addition, she keeps the concession that Ted has already made – 10% annual performance increases.

Ted responds positively to Yala's suggestion.

Ted: That's definitely something we could **consider**.

Now, let's study phrases that are helpful in reaching a compromise.

- Why don't we meet halfway?
- That's something we could seriously consider.
- That's getting closer to a figure that I can really accept.
- We've both made concessions – I think this is a good offer.
- We're really excited to have you onboard.
- I'm looking forward to working here.

How does the dialog finish? Yala asks Ted to discuss *specific annual performance targets* for her annual raise. She doesn't want to accept the job only to find later that these targets are unrealistic. Ted assures her, however, that they have clear performance *expectations* and *indicators*, that is, clear measurements for performance. Yala and Ted are talking specifics and moving closer to a *final agreement*.

Now let's practice some of what we've learned.

First, let's practice positive language. Imagine you are negotiating your salary with an employer. Use "would allow me to" and "would enable me to" to make your case.

For example, if you hear:

Example cue: 5% over your base; start the job immediately. <beep>

After the beep, you can say something like:

Example answer: I'm excited about this opportunity. An offer of 5% over your base would enable me to start the job immediately.

Now you try it:

Cue 1: 10% over your base; consider the position seriously.

Learner 1: _____

Cue 2: Annual raises of 15% with good performance; accept the offer right way.

Learner 2: _____

Here are some example answers. Bear in mind that there are many possible correct responses.

Answer 1: This is a great opportunity. An offer of 10% over your base salary would allow me to consider the position seriously.

Answer 2: I'm very excited about this job. Annual raises of 15% with good performance would enable me to accept the offer right away.

Now you'll hear a series of sentences with a verb *blanked out* or replaced with a *beep*. Repeat the whole sentence saying the missing word.

For example, if you hear...

Example cue: How did you <beep>? at your offer?

You will say...

Example answer: How did you **arrive** at your offer?

After each response, we'll play the correct answer.

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Cue 1: Before we finish, I'd like to raise the **<beep>** of compensation.

Learner 1: _____

Cue 2: I am sure that my experience will be a great **<beep>** to your organization.

Learner 2: _____

Cue 3: I'm not prepared to **<beep>** less.

Learner 3: _____

Cue 4: Why don't we meet **<beep>** way?

Learner 4: _____

Answer 1: Before we finish, I'd like to raise the **issue** of compensation.

Answer 2: I am sure that my experience will be a great **asset** to your organization.

Answer 3: I'm not prepared to **accept** less.

Answer 4: Why don't we meet **half** way?

That's all for this episode on salary negotiation.

We've studied how to *broach the subject of compensation, demonstrate confidence, stay firm, use a positive approach and reach a compromise.*

Don't forget to check out the study notes for this and other episodes at www.businessenglishpod.com. There you'll find complete transcripts, vocabulary explanations, and language review exercises.

Thanks for listening, and see you next time!

Study Strategy

What is your dream job? Use an internet search engine to perform research on the average salary for this job in the geographic region you would like to work. Then write out a salary negotiation dialog using the language we have studied.

Language Review

A. Broaching the Subject and Showing Confidence

To practice useful language for broaching the subject of salary negotiations and showing confidence in your abilities, select the best expression for each blank from the box below.

contribution	compensation	benefits	arrive	above
issue	picture	factors	asset	takes

1. Before we finish, I'd like to raise the _____ of compensation.
2. I wanted to discuss compensation and _____ with you so that I could get a clearer _____ of how you arrived at your offer.
3. Can we talk about _____?
4. How did you _____ at your offer?
5. I am sure that my skills and experience will be a great _____ to your organization.
6. I believe that my skills and experience place me well _____ the market average.
7. Your organization needs good people who have what it _____ to help the company succeed.
8. I am sure I can make a strong _____ to your organization.

B. Staying Firm

Put the jumbled sentences in order to practice useful phrases for asking about differences. Type the correct responses in the gaps below the jumbled words. (You don't need to add any punctuation, i.e., ", " "." etc.)

1) that are market this is confident competitive a rate we

2) go as we high is that as can

3) is range our to be of honest that budget outside

4) that our is offer final

5) I confident am am that I asking price for a fair

6) not I to less prepared accept am

Answers

Listening Questions

1. Fall recruitment season, when new candidates from university are recruited and hired, is "coming up quick," that is, very soon. Ted says they "could really use" or need Yala's help with this.
2. Yala broaches the subject by saying that she can definitely make the requested start date "as soon as compensation is agreed." Later, she asks Ted how he reached the offer.
3. In recognition of her skills and experience, Ted says Fun Beverages offered Yala 10% over the market rate.
4. Yala wants 20% over the base or market rate. Ted says that 10% increases can be negotiated each year with good performance. At the end of the discussion, Yala suggests 15% over the market rate and 10% annual performance increases. Ted says they can definitely consider this proposal.

Language Review

A. Broaching the Subject and Showing Confidence

1. Before we finish, I'd like to raise the **issue** of compensation.
2. I wanted to discuss compensation and **benefits** with you so that I could get a clearer **picture** of how you arrived at your offer.
3. Can we talk about **compensation**?
4. How did you **arrive** at your offer?
5. I am sure that my skills and experience will be a great **asset** to your organization.
6. I believe that my skills and experience place me well **above** the market average.
7. Your organization needs good people who have what it **takes** to help the company succeed.
8. I am sure I can make a strong **contribution** to your organization.

B. Staying Firm

- 1) We are confident that this is a competitive market rate.
- 2) That is as high as we can go.
- 3) To be honest that range is outside of our budget.
- 4) That is our final offer.
- 5) I am confident that I am asking for a fair price.
- 6) I am not prepared to accept less.

Online Practice

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