

# Factors to Consider when Evaluating a Job Offer

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Congratulations! The hard part is over - you've gotten through the interview process and have a job offer in hand. You are now faced with an important decision - should you stay or should you go? How do you know if this offer is the right offer for you? It could be a no brainer - maybe this is your "dream firm" - the place you've been dying to work at since law school. Or you may have a gut feeling that this is the right place for you. Perhaps you have several friends who work at this firm and you are getting yourself into. But what if none of the above scenarios apply to you? We all know that lawyers tend to overanalyze and making an important career decision can seem overwhelming. So how do you effectively evaluate a job offer and decide if accepting the position it is the right career move? First, spend some time thinking about what you are looking for in your next job. Once you have identified what is important to you, you should evaluate your potential employer to see if they stack up. Consider the following factors when evaluating your job offer.

**1. Compensation** - Even if money isn't the driving force behind your [job search](#), you probably want to be compensated at market value. Your recruiter can provide you with accurate salary data and inform you on how your offer compares to what other attorneys are making at your level, in your practice area, in your region and at a firm that is similar in size. There are other aspects of compensation to consider and evaluate besides salary. Be sure you have adequate information on the following:

**Bonus:** Is there an annual bonus? Is it guaranteed? Is the bonus performance based, hours based or a combination of the two? What is the hours requirement for a bonus? When are bonuses paid out? Are you eligible for a prorated bonus in the middle of the bonus year?

**Salary:** When will you be eligible for a salary review? What have the increases in salary been historically for the attorneys at the firm? Are they based on performance and/or hours billed?

**Other:** Does the [firm offer](#) reimbursement for moving costs, bar admission, CLE classes?

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**2. Firm Culture** - No two firms are alike and often times, [firm culture](#) will differ dramatically between offices as well. When assessing a firm's culture, talk to as many partners and associates as possible at the firm and try to get a good sense of the following:

**Collegiality:** How friendly do the attorneys seem? Are office doors opened or closed? Do the attorneys know each other (have you heard of partners introducing themselves to each other as they drop off the interviewee)? Do the firm's lawyers seek out opportunities to participate in social situations?

**Firm's Identity and Values-** How does the Firm describe itself? Visit the firm's website and listen closely to how they describe the firm in your interview. You should be able to assess whether the firm is traditional, entrepreneurial, conservative, etc. You should also get a good sense for what the firm values - you can usually decipher this by looking at the types of behaviors are rewarded. Are associates rewarded for high billables, client and business development, firm participation in recruiting, diversity initiatives, etc., pro bono participation, mentoring younger associates, community involvement, etc.?

**3. Opportunity for Career Growth** - How will this firm help to advance your career? You need to ask associates in your practice group the following questions with respect to career development and growth:

How is work assigned? Does this group do the type of work you want to be doing?

What is the criteria for [making partner](#)? Is there a certain "type" of person who succeeds in this practice area?

How are cases/matters staffed? Will you have a lot of responsibility early on? Will you be exposed to new and challenging projects?

Is there a formal or informal mentoring program?

Are you expected to develop business and bring in new clients? If yes, are there adequate resources and training in place to help you do so?

What do the firm's formal training and development programs look like?

What does the review process look like? When are you reviewed and how is feedback given?

**4. Job Flexibility** - Technology has made it easier for attorneys to work outside of the office however, face-time requirements differ among firms and even within practice areas. If working from home is important to you, make sure you know what the "norm" is for your group. Also, determine if attorneys have the flexibility to take vacations, work from home, or leave a day to attend a child's school event.

**5. Travel** - Be aware of the job's travel requirements. If you don't want to travel, make sure you aren't going to be in a case or deal that will require you to be away for the next 6-12 months.

**6. The Intangibles** - What is your gut telling you? Do you feel like you connect with the attorneys you would be working with? Are you excited by the thought of working at this firm? If you don't have a good feeling about your potential employer, tell your recruiter about your hesitations and schedule a return visit to the firm. Often times, a follow up visit can help you determine whether the firm is the right fit.

Whether you choose to accept or reject a job offer, you should always discuss your decision with your recruiter and it is imperative that you make your decision in a timely manner, adhering to the offer deadline given to you by the firm. You may know when you might encounter partners at this firm in the future and it is important that you do not burn any bridges. Always work hard to maintain positive relationships regardless, of your decision.