

## Negotiating for jobs tricky, but not impossible

South Florida Business Journal - by [Bill Frogameni](#)

Though the recession has been declared officially over, unemployment is still hovering in double-digit territory and it's still an employer's market. While that has made negotiating for a new job especially tricky, there is still some wiggle room, staffing professionals say.

"Companies are still willing to negotiate if it's the right person," said Matthew Beck, managing director of the Mergis Group's Miami office.

Whether or not a company negotiates may also depend on its particular balance sheet and the industry, he said.

The Mergis Group, a division of Fort Lauderdale-based SFN Group (NYSE: SFN), mostly handles financial and accounting professionals, so candidates tend to have more leverage, he noted.

"The majority of the folks we deal with are degreed professionals 10 years into their career," he said. "There's a little more demand for these pros."

Still, it can be tough moving potential employers on the starting salary issue – especially if the employers are public companies, which tend to have more strictly defined pay scales. So, there are other approaches to make the match, Beck said.

Paid time off tops the list. The right candidate can often manage to get an extra week or two of vacation, he said.

And, if a company won't budge on the starting salary, it may be willing to define the bonus (or a bonus range) the hire will receive after a review periods, he said. "People like to have guaranteed compensation."

Another popular tool is negotiating shorter review/raise periods, said Deborah Vazquez, CEO of **Protech**, an IT staffing firm in Boca Raton. Instead of having a review at one year, hires may negotiate earlier reviews – at nine, six or three months, she said. This is the most common thing she has seen new hires succeed at negotiating.

New hires are often able to get an arrangement that allows them to telecommute, which, because of the nature of IT, can be easier to do than in other professions.

"We've seen situations where the candidate has asked for a couple of days a week of telecommuting," she said. "In IT, usually companies are open to doing that."

When companies are particularly interested in a candidate, they may even go so far as to pay that new hire's health insurance costs until the hire's new insurance kicks in after 90 days, she said. This happens when the candidate has been out of work, but he or she is purchasing the health insurance out of pocket – an ugly proposition that may run as high as \$1,500 a month for people with families, Vazquez said.

Despite the still-challenged economy, companies know that they have to be flexible in order to attract the best talent and succeed as organizations, said Tom Shea, Right Management's regional CEO for Florida/Caribbean. "People can negotiate life/work balance issues like working from home."

With the average employee's tenure at a company lasting less than four years now, companies understand that the threat of going without a paycheck can only motivate a person for so long, Shea said.

"In today's world, everybody is a free agent," he said.



Mark Freerks  
Deborah Vazquez says a popular tool is negotiating shorter review/raise periods.