

Did you know employers sometimes pay a premium for the right education and experience? Or that you might be able to earn more by doing the same job in a larger company? In fact, these could be some of your strongest negotiating points in your next performance review, job interview, or request for a promotion.

Employers typically adjust their market data when determining how much to pay a specific employee to do the job. In other words, they price the "space" - the position in the organization - before they price the "face," or the person doing that job. After they determine the value of the position by researching the data on pay practices for comparable jobs at comparable companies, they adjust the data to reflect the employee's background and experience.

Employees now have access to the same caliber data as HR departments, including data that reflects salary secrets like the eight things that can boost your pay.

Finding the Best Data

The data in the [Salary Wizard](#) is a great starting point for determining what employers are paying for a specific job in a specific location. The salaries are national averages to which an adjustment has been applied to account for broad geographic differences in pay. The Salary Wizard starts to put a value on the space, but not the face.

The next step is to dig deeper into the numbers. In addition to geography, other factors have an influence on how much a job pays, including the size of the organization and the industry in which the employer does business. Geography, company size, and industry all affect the value an employer puts on the "space." The [Personal Salary Report](#) provides data pertaining to jobs in a specific combination of industry, geography, and company size.

Eight Things That Can Boost Your Pay

The value of the "face" - the person doing the job - is the value of the "space" adjusted for characteristics known to have an influence on an individual's pay. Salary.com calls these "personal variables," adjusting for eight personal variables in the Personal Salary Report.

They include the following.

1. Years of experience
2. Education
3. Performance reviews
4. Boss
5. Number of reports
6. Professional associations and certifications
7. Shift differentials
8. Hazardous working conditions

Years of experience

Typically, more experience results in higher pay – up to a point. Similarly, if the position calls for someone with 10 years of experience in a particular occupation, and you don't meet those requirements, you may find yourself on the lower end of the pay scale. **Negotiation tip:** emphasize your years of experience if you have slightly more than what's required; if you have too much experience, you may be overqualified.

Education

The match between your education and what's normally required for your job usually affects your pay. Plus, the quality of education can affect salary. Earning a degree from a top program typically has a positive influence on pay, while earning a degree from a school that's considered weak in a particular field may decrease your earning potential. **Negotiation tip:** emphasize your education if it is more than what's called for in the job - and it's relevant.

Performance reviews

Since most employers base their pay decisions at least partly on individual performance, this is an important variable when being considered for a pay increase or promotion. Even when applying for a new job, this information may be important to your prospective employer, as it gives a more complete picture of your abilities. **Negotiation tip:** performance has a significant impact on pay, especially incentive pay.

Boss

The more discretion and latitude you have in relation to your company's success, the more directly your decisions and actions will affect the bottom line – and your own. And if your boss is higher on the corporate hierarchy, his or her recommendations concerning your pay have less chance to be overridden in the cycles of review. **Negotiation tip:** in the interview process, find out who the position reports to, along with the position's potential for growth.

Number of reports

The more employees you manage, the higher your pay in certain jobs. Of course, your level of success is also based on the performance of the employees you manage. **Negotiation tip:** emphasize the successes of those who report to you or who reported to you in your previous position.

Professional associations and certifications

Certifications and memberships in professional organizations or trade associations can have a positive effect on pay. However, if a job calls for a certification you don't have, you might not get the job or your pay might be set at the lower end of the range. Some employers require employees without certifications to work toward them. **Negotiation tip:** if you have a certification that is optional, but considered a plus, that means you can expect to earn a little more because of it.

Shift differentials

In certain jobs, workers may be expected to perform tasks during less favorable shift times. These employees are typically paid a premium due to the higher social and physical costs involved in working outside "normal work hours." In jobs that don't normally operate on more than one shift, the differential is negligible and usually only taken into account when a nonsalaried employee works overtime or on a special project. **Negotiation tip:** you can expect to earn a little extra for working the second or third shift.

Hazardous working conditions

In certain jobs, workers are expected to perform tasks under dangerous working conditions. Dangerous working conditions can be defined to include anything from handling dangerous chemicals in a research facility to walking a police beat in a dangerous section of town. Jobs that fall into this category are usually regulated by outside authorities, including labor unions and the government. **Negotiation tip:** ask for hazard pay if you are put on a temporary assignment in a dangerous location.

- Regina M. Robo, Salary.com News Editor