



## UNHEALTHY NEGOTIATIONS

Healthcare plans are taking a backseat to other concerns for new hires

*The greatest wealth is health. ~Virgil*

The hardest part of placing any recruited candidate is coming to a final compensation agreement. Candidates typically want too much, clients usually want to offer too little. Finding an agreeable middle ground is where elite recruiters earn their pay. With so many moving parts, it is vital that a recruiter keeps them all greased and moving smoothly. One wrong move and the deal can be dead.

Last month, I took a small, unofficial poll of the recruiters in my office and other search firm owners that I trust and respect. I was trying to determine what the most important negotiation points were for candidates. I was startled to discover their findings were similar to mine.

The most asked about and negotiated points were:

1. Base pay
2. Bonus, equity, or stock
3. Relocation assistance (when applicable)
4. Vacation time
5. Health insurance
6. Position title

In a country where healthcare dominates the headlines and most heated debates in government, healthcare appears to be taking a back seat for people taking a new job.

I wish I had some insightful explanation as to why this is happening. Perhaps candidates just assume all healthcare plans are similar and their new one won't affect them much. Maybe their spouse has a terrific plan that they are on and won't utilize their new employer's plan. Some employees are young and don't have families, so insurance may not

be perceived as very important right now. Sometimes I think candidates just assume all the plans stink and they will be going from one stinky plan to another without much fanfare.

The reality is healthcare plans can vary greatly from company to company and should be considered carefully before taking any new job. Here are some things you can do to protect yourself:

- Ask what the waiting period is for your new plan to start. You may be able to negotiate reimbursement for Cobra coverage from your new employer to bridge any gaps in coverage.
- Talk to HR. Most decent human resources departments can give you a ballpark estimate of what out of pocket expenses will be on the new plan. If they are considerably higher, you may be able to use that as leverage for a larger base salary.
- Find out if moving your start date will speed up your eligibility for the plan. Sometimes starting on the last day of a month versus the first day of the next month will move up your coverage by 30 days.
- Determine if the plan covers just the employee or also covers family. The cost difference can be dramatic.
- Think long term. Some plans have retention incentives that lower your cost as tenure rises. It may be beneficial to take on a short-term expense for a long-term reward.

They say the greatest wealth is health, so don't let your health take a backseat to salary negotiations. 🍌

## EXECUTIVE SEARCH

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