

9 ways you could ruin your next salary negotiation, according to hiring managers

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You *could* learn from your own salary negotiation mistakes—but wouldn't it be much easier to learn from the mistakes of *other* employees?



Threatening to quit your job may not be the best salary negotiation tactic. University of Michigan School of Natural Resources & Environment/flickr

That's why we asked nine hiring managers to share the some of the most memorable salary negotiations they can remember, describing exactly what the employees did wrong so that *you* can do better.

Here's how nine employees' recall employees and candidates ruining their chances for better salary.

1. Using a personal financial situation as a negotiating tool

"One of my employees requested a meeting to negotiate their salary. They came into the meeting and right off the bat started to discuss their personal financial situation at home: She was getting married and the wedding was costing more than she and her fiancé had anticipated. She used the wedding as a bargaining tool to ask for a raise.

"At the risk of sounding less compassionate than I really am, I must express the importance of leaving personal issues out of the conversation when asking for a raise. As much as I empathize with financial struggles, an employee can create a more compelling argument for a raise by providing evidence of his or her hard work." — *Lori Bizzoco, cofounder of NV Media, Inc.*

2. Lacking confidence

"I remember one employee who failed to be confident in what she had to offer. She failed to outline what her unique accomplishments were and how well they stacked up to the job description and therefore lacked the ammunition she needed to make a logical argument as to why she deserved the compensation. Confidence is key. You should know what you're worth and be able to list the reasons why." — *Jason Hill, founder of Sound Advice*

3. Lying about a current salary

"After a long recruitment search for the perfect candidate, I finally found someone who passed my interviews with flying colors. He had great experience, said all the right things during the interview, and was an interesting person to boot. But as we were going back and forth through salary negotiations, he made a fatal mistake: He lied about his current salary. He threw out a number higher than what was indicated in his initial paperwork.

"With such an amazing candidate, it was hard to believe he would lie. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, we directly asked him about the discrepancy. He admitted he was mistaken and that the lower number was his actual salary. This immediate sent red flags. Knowing that a lie already crept up even before he joined the team, I questioned his integrity. For the hope of earning a few more dollars, he blew his chances to join the team." — *Mary Grace Gardner, career strategist at The Young Professionalists*

4. Asking for a raise when performance doesn't merit it

"The biggest mistake I've seen from employees over the years is asking for a raise when their performance is average or sub-par. For example, I've had sales people asking for raises when they are in the red and not able to close — or worse, people who take frequent vacations, use all their sick days ... who have a general sense of entitlement and an attitude of 'I deserve a raise because I'm just awesome.'

"If these employees had shown they're really worth their salt, by showing up to work on time and working as hard as they could, I would have given a them a raise." — *Joanna Bialeckians, vice president of operations for JBA*

5. Getting defensive

"I negotiated with a candidate who really ruined his chances of moving forward. When I presented my offer, he got defensive immediately. He negotiated a higher amount, and I returned with a salary that still did not meet his expectations — and that is when things went from defensive to downright rude. I asked that we remain amicable and keep the door open so that I could return if things changed with the salary.

"But the candidate reminded me I would not find anyone of his caliber who would take the offer I presented him, and he went on to badmouth the assessment tool that the organization used for his role. His tone continued to be very combative. When you are negotiating ... be polite and don't take an offer personally. Being anything less than that can ruin your chances of getting hired even if you are a top tier candidate." — *Devay Campbell, career coach*

6. Using scorched-earth tactics

"We were trying to hire a business director — someone well-connected to other businesses to help establish relationships. We took a chance on someone who knew the right people but had little experience working for a small company, and his negotiating strategy was scorched earth right off the bat, demanding almost twice what we had effectively agreed on in his previous interview.

"Playing that style of hardball might have been effective in larger companies, but in an open workspace with your new colleagues casually eavesdropping, it was off-putting for them to hear, embarrassing for my business partner and me to talk through, and made for such an untenable start that we ended up not hiring him." — *Mike Catania, chief technology officer of Promotion Code*

7. Asking for a raise before meeting performance review goals

"A particular employee hadn't received a raise in about a year, and although we'd had a performance review detailing what he needed to do to be eligible for one — goals that he'd help set previously — he told me that he deserved a raise. My first reaction was that he didn't quite yet, but after the meeting the conversation stuck in my head. My issue was that it is *my* job to determine who deserves a raise.

"One of my responsibilities is observing my team, evaluating their work, and acknowledging those who've performed well. I like to think I'm fairly good at it. The implication of my employee's demand that he deserved a raise is that I was unaware of his performance — that I wasn't doing my job. And while he certainly had no ill intentions — he just wanted more money — I found it off-putting.

"As such, I was less inclined to offer him higher pay. Eventually, he did get a raise, but only after we'd talked about it, and he had also reached the goals we'd set. My advice: avoid telling your manager what you deserve, and instead prove that you are deserving." — *Lauren McAdams, career advisor and hiring manager at Resume Companion*

8. Making threats to quit.

"I remember an employee long ago who was interested in a salary raise and was very open about the fact that he was willing to leave the organization — right away! — if he wasn't granted a pay increase. While [we were] interested in keeping him, the fact was that this employee's skill set wasn't particularly rare or otherwise 'in demand,' and as a result, his threats to leave the organization really didn't hold much weight, and there really was no incentive for the organization to give him a higher salary.

"In this situation, I would recommend a softer approach. Instead of threatening to leave, an employee should make a reasoned, well-thought out case for a raise or promotion. However, if this is the route you choose to take, be very certain of the value of your professional skill set within your industry. It's no use to threaten to leave an employer if what you do for a living can be done by hundreds of other people." — *An employer at Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences*

9. Negotiating every. last. detail.

"I had a candidate who received a verbal offer but chose to negotiate his title and responsibilities before negotiating salary. In most employment offers, there are three main negotiating points: salary, title, and responsibilities. It's tough to negotiate all three after the initial offer is made.

"This candidate first asked that his VP title be bumped to an SVP title — that was approved. Then the candidate asked that his future sales region also include the Florida area — and the company agreed, so that was included also. Lastly, the candidate decided that the salary and bonus needed to be increased. But by the time we were discussing salary, the firm already thought he was high maintenance and dropped the offer. This individual should have negotiated his compensation first." — *Peter Keseric, managing consultant with Korn Ferry*

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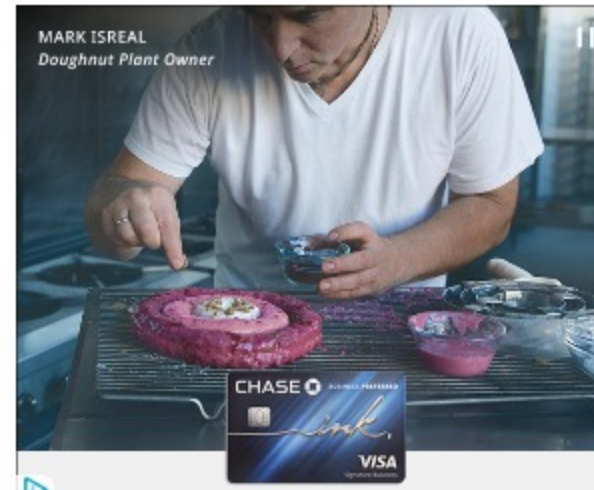
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