

## Evaluating Job Opportunities

Evaluating job opportunities is something that begins as soon as you start considering career options and continues throughout the career planning and job search process. As you make decisions about which companies to respond to on campus, which organizations to focus on in your networking, you are evaluating and making decisions about potential opportunities. The evaluation process shifts gears, though, once you have an offer in hand.

In interviewing, you are primarily a marketer, presenting yourself to potential employers, persuading them of your skills and abilities. As you receive offers, however, you will find yourself thinking and reacting as a consumer, not as a salesperson. Most students who receive offers go through some mental readjustment. It's a bit of a jolt to discover that there are few perfect jobs in the world (even with an MBA), that some trade-offs or compromises are necessary, and that the courtship process (which can be exciting and fun) will come to an end. Most students also feel that they need additional information in order to be able to make a good decision.

You will want to evaluate the position, the company, the potential for career advancement, the compensation and benefits, and how all of these factors relate to your own professional and lifestyle needs. Take some time to consider the questions below. Not all of these questions and criteria will be important for every student. Each person should identify the elements that are most critical to his or her own decision making process. You should feel free to ask additional questions of the employer to request an additional site visit (if this is important to you), to contact alumni working at the organization for their input, and to talk with your other industry contacts about the company. Students are often shy about taking these steps, but from the standpoint of the employer, the effort you put into this process is a positive - it shows that you are seriously considering the position.

Many MBAs find it helpful to create some sort of chart or table to assist in the evaluation process. You might make a list of the key criteria in your decision making and rate the offer on a scale of 1 to 10 on each criteria or make a list of positives and negatives for each offer and then weigh the importance of these. No one system leads to the "right" answers, but any mechanism that assists you in clarifying your own thinking can be useful. There are many factors to think about, but after all the effort you have put into your job search, it only makes sense to choose the job that best meets your needs and goals.

### The Position

- **Day-to-Day Tasks:** Are they routine or project-oriented? Will you use the functional skills you gained in business school? Will you work as an individual or on a team? What degree of independence will you have? What degree of variety? What degree of intensity.
- **Performance Evaluation:** What will you be evaluated on? How will you be evaluated? Are these expectations ones you will be able to meet? What could cause you to fail? How high is the risk you run?
- **Skills Needed:** What percentage of your work involves skills you do not yet have? What effort will it take to learn these? What training or support is provided? What pressure will

your supervisor expert while you're coming up to speed? Are these skills you want to gain?

- **Your Current Skill Base:** What parts of the job are you already competent in? What percentage of your time will these involve?
- **Resources:** What resources will you need to accomplish your work? Are they available? What resources does your group as a whole need? Are they available?
- **Work Groups:** How big is your work group? What's your role in it? How does the group work together?
- **Hierarchy:** To whom do you report? Will this relationship work for you? To whom does your boss report? Does this relationship seem to work?
- **Supervision:** What degree of independence will you have? How formal or informal is the supervision of your work? What kinds of decisions will you make on your own? Which will require approval from a supervisor?
- **Position History:** What's the history of the position you've been offered? Have others been successful in it? Where do people go when they leave the position? If others have failed in it, why?
- **Strength of Position:** If the position is newly created, does it make organizational and strategic sense? Is it intended to solve a problem? If so, is the problem one you can solve? Are there political issues around the new position and will they impact your effectiveness?
- **Office Environment:** Do you have an office, a cubicle, or a desk in a bullpen? Are the environment and your colleagues congenial?
- **Hours:** Is there a difference between stated hours and expected hours? When do people in your position arrive at work? When do they leave? What about supervisors? Are weekends required? Is the work seasonal? Can you expect project-based overtime?
- **Travel:** How much travel is required? Are they short, home-based trips or longer-term assignments? Will you have to travel on weekends?

## The Company

- **Industry:** Is it right for you? What issues is the industry facing and what is their potential impact on the company and on your work?
- **Reputation:** Does the company have a good reputation regionally? Nationally? Within its industry?
- **Success:** How large is the company, and what are its annual sales. Is the company profitable
- **Growth/Positioning:** Who are the key competitors? How does company assess its position? How do industry experts? How would you?
- **Stability:** Has the company downsized or reorganized in the recent past? What is the possibility of this happening in the near future? What impact might this have on the division or group you are joining?
- **Corporate Values:** Is the company known for its integrity? Does it maintain high ethical standards? Are its values in sync with your own?
- **International:** Does the company have international operations? Are international opportunities available for you?
- **Contribution:** How valuable is your group or division to the company as a whole?

- **Quality of Management:** Where do the senior managers come from? Do employees at your level respect them? From your research, is the company well managed?
- **Management Style:** Is it hierarchical? Is it team or consensus-oriented? Do people wander into each other's offices or call meetings? Do they communicate by memo, by phone, or by email? Do they communicate informally across levels? Are discussions or meetings confrontational or supportive?
- **Ownership:** If it is a foreign-owned company, how does this affect management style? How does it affect your opportunities?
- **Corporate Culture:** Does the company value innovation? Accuracy and precision? Results? Risk-taking? People? Does this fit your values?
- **Employee Diversity:** Does the company welcome and value people of differing cultural, ethnic or racial backgrounds? Has it developed programs to support or retain its diverse workforce?
- **Future:** How does it look for the company as a whole? For the department or group in which you'll be working? For the industry?

### Potential for Career Advancement

- **Your Goals:** How does this position fit your longer-term career goals? Do the company's attitudes towards employee career development suit your needs?
- **Examples:** What do you know about the career paths of higher-level managers in the organization? Have they experienced rapid advancement? Are there possibilities for mentorship?
- **Promotions:** How rapidly do they occur? Is there flexibility for exceptional performance? How does this match with your own sense of when you will have mastered his job?
- **Lateral Movement:** Is there opportunity to move cross-functionally?
- **Transferability of Skills and Experience:** Will you have the ability to transfer after a two-year, three-year, or five-year tenure? Will you be able to move within the company? Within the industry? To other industries?
- **Additional Training or Education:** Is it available? Is it valued by the company?
- **Transfer Requirements:** Is a transfer or relocation necessary or desirable for career advancement? At what stage of your career? Will it be domestic or international?

### Compensation and Benefits

- **Salary:** What is your base salary? How soon and frequently can you expect raises? How are they determined (individual merit vs. departmental profitability vs. cost-of-living)? What is the average increase in recent years?
- **Compensation Potential:** What is your earning potential within this company? Is compensation in-line with increases in responsibility?
- **Bonuses:** What is the bonus potential? Timing? How does individual performance affect your bonus? What opportunities exist for equity or profit-sharing?
- **Benefits:** Will you receive medical insurance? Dental insurance? Sick time? Are there pension/retirement provisions?

- **Moving Expenses:** Are they provided? How are they paid (i.e. reimbursement with receipts or lump sum beforehand)? Does the company provide assistance in finding
- **International Assignments:** Consider such other issues as: tax equalization policies, currency bands to protect against wide FX swings, whether pension benefits are maintained according to home or assignment country policies, home leave policies, cost-of-living allowances, etc.

### **Lifestyle Issues**

Your responses to all of the issues outlined above will be affected by your lifestyle needs and choices. Some additional issues to consider are:

- Location
- Proximity to family or friends
- Proximity to major urban center
- Availability and cost of housing
- Other living costs (e.g. taxes)
- Child-care and education systems
- Recreational and cultural opportunities
- Employment opportunities for spouse or partner
- Commuting costs and distances
- Climate
- Social prospects for yourself and your partner or spouse
- Your longer-term financial goals
- The longer-terms professional and personal prospects for yourself and your partner or spouse