



ESTABLISH THE STAKES

Starting Salaries in Canada

POSITION	PERCENTILES			
	25TH	50TH MIDPOINT	75TH	95TH
DESIGN & PRODUCTION				
Creative Director	\$ 115,000	\$ 140,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 190,000
Creative Services Manager	\$ 75,000	\$ 95,000	\$ 105,000	\$ 115,000
Art Director	\$ 73,750	\$ 93,500	\$ 102,750	\$ 112,750
Project Manager	\$ 67,500	\$ 77,500	\$ 85,000	\$ 97,500
Studio Manager	\$ 58,750	\$ 65,000	\$ 72,250	\$ 93,750
Production Manager	\$ 72,750	\$ 83,250	\$ 88,000	\$ 95,500
Graphic Designer	\$ 54,000	\$ 62,500	\$ 72,750	\$ 89,750
Production Artist	\$ 52,000	\$ 60,250	\$ 68,750	\$ 73,000
Production Coordinator	\$ 51,500	\$ 57,500	\$ 63,250	\$ 67,500
Production Assistant	\$ 30,500	\$ 34,000	\$ 37,500	\$ 41,000
3D Animator	\$ 62,500	\$ 72,250	\$ 83,250	\$ 92,250
3D Modeler	\$ 57,500	\$ 63,750	\$ 73,500	\$ 87,500
Multimedia Designer	\$ 56,000	\$ 62,250	\$ 68,500	\$ 75,000
Presentation Specialist	\$ 50,000	\$ 57,750	\$ 65,750	\$ 78,750
Package Designer	\$ 55,000	\$ 63,250	\$ 69,500	\$ 75,000
Environmental Designer	\$ 49,500	\$ 55,000	\$ 60,500	\$ 68,500
Illustrator/Infographics Designer	\$ 56,250	\$ 62,500	\$ 69,000	\$ 76,500
Photo Retoucher	\$ 51,500	\$ 55,000	\$ 67,500	\$ 77,500
Photographer	\$ 45,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 54,500	\$ 60,250
Traffic Manager	\$ 57,250	\$ 60,250	\$ 63,500	\$ 73,500
Traffic Coordinator	\$ 47,500	\$ 52,500	\$ 58,750	\$ 63,250
Digital Asset Manager	\$ 40,500	\$ 45,000	\$ 50,500	\$ 55,500
Desktop Publisher/Layout Artist	\$ 32,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 43,750	\$ 57,500

All salaries listed are in Canadian dollars.

POSITION	PERCENTILES			
	25TH	50TH MIDPOINT	75TH	95TH
DIGITAL DESIGN & PRODUCTION				
User Experience (UX) Director	\$ 97,500	\$ 108,000	\$ 118,750	\$ 137,500
User Experience (UX) Designer	\$ 77,000	\$ 88,500	\$ 98,750	\$ 125,000
User Experience (UX) Researcher	\$ 65,000	\$ 78,750	\$ 93,500	\$ 115,250
User Interface (UI) Designer	\$ 68,000	\$ 78,000	\$ 98,750	\$ 120,000
Instructional Systems Designer	\$ 71,000	\$ 79,000	\$ 99,750	\$ 121,500
Interactive Art Director	\$ 72,500	\$ 83,500	\$ 93,250	\$ 123,750
Interaction Designer	\$ 68,500	\$ 81,000	\$ 89,500	\$ 114,500
Information Architect	\$ 74,500	\$ 90,250	\$ 107,500	\$ 132,250
Front-End Web Developer	\$ 58,250	\$ 65,000	\$ 77,000	\$ 103,500
Interactive Producer	\$ 62,500	\$ 75,000	\$ 89,750	\$ 95,750
Mobile/Responsive Designer	\$ 69,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 91,500	\$ 107,750
Visual Designer	\$ 68,750	\$ 79,750	\$ 89,500	\$ 102,500
Motion Designer	\$ 62,500	\$ 69,500	\$ 78,750	\$ 104,000
Web Designer	\$ 60,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 93,500	\$ 114,500
Web Production Artist	\$ 43,750	\$ 48,750	\$ 56,750	\$ 71,250
Video Producer	\$ 67,500	\$ 73,250	\$ 77,750	\$ 100,000
Video Editor	\$ 54,000	\$ 64,500	\$ 76,250	\$ 84,750

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

Proposal Specialist	\$ 56,750	\$ 65,750	\$ 73,750	\$ 93,250
Content Strategist	\$ 55,000	\$ 68,500	\$ 83,750	\$ 107,750
Content Manager	\$ 51,000	\$ 63,750	\$ 71,500	\$ 89,750
Web Content Manager	\$ 47,750	\$ 52,000	\$ 56,250	\$ 67,500
Web Content Coordinator	\$ 40,500	\$ 45,000	\$ 52,000	\$ 58,000
Copywriter	\$ 58,250	\$ 72,750	\$ 90,000	\$ 104,000
Interactive/Web Copywriter	\$ 57,500	\$ 72,250	\$ 89,750	\$ 100,750
Technical Writer	\$ 53,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 77,500	\$ 85,750
Copy Editor	\$ 52,000	\$ 64,500	\$ 76,750	\$ 87,750
Proofreader	\$ 51,500	\$ 63,250	\$ 73,750	\$ 78,750

All salaries listed are in Canadian dollars.

After graduating with a degree in interior design, Arianna took a municipal position helping the mayor envision possibilities for the city's iconic central train station. The six-month project resulted in a keynote presentation and print document that Arianna created. The entire project played to her strengths, as she had both graphic and interior design skills. Additionally, her role was well defined, so she was okay with the leadership expected of her.

No question—the train station project was a great launch for her career. The mayor gave her an award of excellence for her leadership on the project, and local interior design professionals celebrated her effort online.

Flush with optimism from this initial success, Arianna moved across the country to interview with large architectural firms that had in-house interior design groups. It was late 2008, and although

her recent acclaim had paved the way to several encouraging interviews, no positions materialized. 2008 was not a typical year; after all, most firms had suffered significant layoffs. It seemed the only opportunities were freelance or contract.

After weeks of fruitless searching, Arianna was offered a contract position: no health care, no vacation, and no benefits. Worse, it was for just one month. She was actually considering taking it when her dad said, "Taking a gig like that would be like throwing yourself under the bus!" He was thinking about all the years and expense—school, internships, laptops, and training—that she'd invested to get, what, a month's contract? "Unacceptable. Absolutely unacceptable," he said.

"But Dad, I'm almost out of money. At the very least this will connect me to people actually working in the field."

Arianna's dad was a highly sought-after physicist. He worked in the medical field designing ultrasound machines, and his services had always been in demand. In fact, his reputation was so well established that he never even had to seek work. His advice to Arianna had always been, "Be humble, be a top-notch performer, defer to authority, and they'll come to appreciate you." Once, he'd even boasted that he'd "never had to negotiate a fee." And that was true. Early on it was all about grants, but even when he transitioned to corporate clients they always paid whatever he requested. Negotiation is demeaning, was his stance: "Just do good work, and you'll be fine."

Arianna thought, "Sure, but he hasn't had to

scrape for an entry-level job during a recession. Isn't this different?"

Just as Arianna was about to accept the one-month contract, a three-month offer from a larger firm with a stand-alone interior design group fell in her lap. She took it instantly.

Arianna immersed herself in the work and the team soon recognized that her combination of graphic abilities, interior design skills, and mastery of the software was a real asset. Arianna found herself building presentation after presentation that showcased the team's thinking. Even though she didn't always think the firm's solutions were as strong as they could be, as a temporary contractor she kept her doubts to herself and focused on making the work look the best she could.

Throughout these early weeks Arianna plugged away on her own, often working through lunch and into the evenings. She had always been quiet and introspective; long-term friendships were what sustained her. But here, all the way across the country from where she'd grown up and gone to school, she was feeling lonely.

When the three months were up, her supervisor, Mary, called her in for a review. "Arianna, your work has been great, and we'd like to extend the contract for a couple more months," Mary said. "We're in a big push for new business, and we need your fine hand on the presentations the partners are requesting. However, there is one thing that has been a disappointment: We need you to be more involved. Previous staffers always gave their

opinions and would point out where the designs needed improvement."

Arianna was taken aback as Mary went on. "In those reviews, when we're all gathered around the plans, you never say anything. Why, Arianna? Your work is terrific. I'm sure you could contribute something. Okay?" She continued, "Actually, I just heard that I have the budget to hire a designer for the interiors team. Are you interested in full-time status?" Arianna's heart leapt. Until now she had been depressed over the feedback, but here was a real job. "Yes, I'd love that!"

"Great," Mary replied distractedly. "Thanks, Arianna, I need to dash to a meeting..."

Arianna walked out of the office on cloud nine, completely forgetting the "You don't speak up enough" comment in the review.

With new motivation to impress, Arianna redoubled her efforts, working late, skipping lunch, and keeping her nose to the grindstone.

A few weeks later, one of her team members called her attention to a job posted on the firm's site. It described Arianna's position perfectly. Apparently it had been posted for a while, because fifteen candidates had already submitted applications.

The next day a new designer was introduced to the group and Mary dropped by Arianna's desk to introduce him.

"Brant, Arianna is on contract here as a specialist. There are two more weeks in her contract." Turning to Arianna, Mary said, "Could you spend some time filling in Brant on our requirements

before you go? That would be a big help. Thanks, Arianna.”

In a daze, Arianna excused herself and made a beeline for the restroom. She was heartbroken, completely taken by surprise, and crying her eyes out. After a few minutes another woman in the group came in and gave her a hug. “Don’t worry, Arianna, I heard about another firm that’s hiring, and I know someone there. I can’t believe how horrible Mary was. We all thought you were perfect for the job, and we were just as shocked as you when the listing went up on the site.” In truth, her teammate had communicated doubt to Mary about Arianna’s ability to collaborate, but she was eager to make Arianna feel better (and relieve her own guilt while she was at it).

Arianna recovered over the weekend, then trained Brant, who was not a bad guy. She finished out the contract and toughed out a trying five weeks before being hired by the other architecture firm (for more money than she was earning at the first one, as luck would have it). She was thriving at the new firm, but when Arianna shared this story two full years later, it was still so painful that tears came to her eyes.

What can we learn from Arianna’s experience?

Success takes more than keeping your head down and doing the work you’ve been assigned. In creative settings, a collaborative nature is expected.

Ask what is important to your supervisor when you accept a position. Any position. In her haste to say yes, Arianna made the common but erroneous

assumption that a contractor is not a “real” member of the team.

Resist the urge to be a lone wolf. Personal interactions are key to creating a bond with one’s group. Without them, chances are low that anyone will advocate on your behalf.

Still waters run deep? Not in most creative departments. If you don’t speak up, your team will think you have nothing to say.

Sometimes one’s family and life experience can shape actions the wrong way. Even a successful person who cares about you might be in the dark when it comes to the nuances of your situation. Arianna was right to use her own judgment.

When you receive challenging personal feedback, take time to talk about it. Find out what it means. Ask for suggestions. Understand what you can do to change. (If a supervisor doesn’t assist in your efforts to improve? Simply put, it isn’t a good workplace. Start looking for a new position.)

Resilience is immensely helpful. Because Arianna bounced back quickly, she was able to pursue what turned out to be a better job than the one she was leaving.

And, finally:

Emotional pain stays with us, often for life. We always remember when people make us feel bad. Remember that when you have power over others.



If you're asked what you were paid in the past—and most interviewers will ask—your answer will determine whether you will (a) be fairly compensated for what you're worth, or (b) walk away from income that should be yours.

Wondering how one might sidestep this inevitable question? Here are some things to say that will shift the focus away from old salaries to your current worth:

Turn it around with a question

“What are your expectations for this position? I'd like to get a feeling for what you're looking for.”

Let them know that you hold their interests in high regard

“I'd like to find a job that's a good fit for me and my next employer. I expect to be paid current market rates for my skills and experience—to be paid fairly for what I contribute.”

Position the interviewer as the expert with the knowledge

“I assume you have a budget and a fair idea of what this position is worth to your company.”

Emphasize that past pay isn't relevant

“What I've been paid in past positions is not relevant to my current value or future performance. I've added valuable skills and experience since then.”

The it's-none-of-your-business answer

“My past compensation is a private matter between me and my last employer. It would be a violation of that trust to reveal it.”

And finally, just say no

“No, I won't do that.”

I know this feels awkward. It may even feel inappropriate. You naturally feel like you need to accommodate the interviewer. You think you have to be compliant and obedient, and you feel extremely eager to please. But all those feelings work against you. You will appear to be much more valuable, and more powerful, if you politely refuse to answer this loaded question. If you do tell, the interviewer will peg the new offer to your past compensation, and you'll leave money—and more important, respect—on the table.



When you're negotiating, sometimes it feels like it would be so easy to tell a little lie to advance your position, or to avoid an uncomfortable confrontation.

There you are at the bargaining table, and you're asked what your salary was at your previous position. You know it's a really bad idea to tell. You know that if you do tell, your chance of getting a significantly higher number will be greatly reduced. You know that you're supposed to politely explain that it's none of their business. But in that instant you think it would be so much easier to just add a few thousand dollars and tell them a number. Confrontation avoided. Problem solved.

You think to yourself: "It's just a little fib. In the scheme of things it's nothing. They'll never find out. No one will ever know. And I'm really worth that number anyway."

Don't do it.

We all know lying is wrong, but at a weak moment when we feel vulnerable it can seem like the easy way out. And who doesn't feel vulnerable when their self-worth is being negotiated? But here's the thing: When you lie you miss the opportunity to demonstrate your real value—the value of your character. Your power, self-confidence, and the opportunity to show that you believe in yourself are too valuable to risk. Because above all, prospective clients and employers want to work with people who are capable and confident—people who are comfortable in the way they conduct themselves in the world. Asking for what you need is a demonstration of those traits.

So, uncomfortable as it may seem, politely saying no to their request actually raises your value in their eyes.

People lie all the time on résumés and in employment interviews. They add degrees not completed and universities not attended. They list positions not held and responsibilities they weren't responsible for. It costs them directly when they are discovered, and it takes a personal toll even if they're not discovered.

Never forget that if you do lie and exaggerate your past compensation, your employer may find out later. The revelation will ruin the relationship—it's unlikely to be forgotten or forgiven.

Finally, if you're anything like me you'll constantly worry about it. It may not keep you awake at night but that lie will reside in that special corner of your mind, where the unresolved issues dwell for a very long time. Also, fibs and exaggerations

Negotiating your first salary presents a major challenge. You have not been trained in the art of negotiation. You face strong competition, have a deep emotional connection to your work, and often feel some insecurity about your talents.

The following tips are designed to help you get what you need.

TIP 1: PLAN

Negotiation produces anxiety, and anxiety is caused by unknowns. Negotiation has lots of unknowns: Will they offer me a job? How much salary should I ask for? Is my work up to their level? Will they like me? Luckily, planning diminishes uncertainty. Make a list of the unknowns and knowns. The more items you can move from the unknown to the known side of the paper, the better you'll feel. Even just the process of making lists and

planning will reduce your anxiety and prepare you. Professionals never negotiate without a plan.

TIP 2: KNOW THE RANGE

Every negotiation that involves money has some kind of a range. Salary, consulting, and freelance ranges are published regularly by professional associations. These third-party sources provide credibility for the amount you request, and they're updated annually. Just knowing the range should reduce your anxiety considerably.

TIP 3: ASK FOR THE TOP OF THE RANGE

Get your salary request out first. Research has shown that the first number mentioned establishes the range in the context of the discussion. If you ask for the top of the range, or a little more, it's more likely you'll get a higher salary or fee. Assume that your negotiating opponent knows the range. If they pretend to be shocked, cite your sources. Just getting your request out on the table should help reduce your anxiety.

TIP 4: DO NOT ACCEPT THE INITIAL OFFER

If they do state the salary or fee first, assume there is more money available. In business, some attempt to negotiate is expected. It's expected that the initial amount will be challenged. The initial offer is never the real budget; if you don't ask for more, they'll lose some of the respect they initially had for you. This applies to all settings—in-house and staffing agencies too!

I've always believed it's up to me to show others my value to them. It's my job to let people know how I can help them. (Or not.) My skills, and yours, are not right for all, but they are exactly right for some. So I enter every final negotiation with the assumption that the other party wants to hire me, and that I'm there to confirm that feeling.

TIP 5: SHOW RESPECT

Be respectful, and expect respect in return. I was once asked why I wanted so much money, and I answered with, "Respect. Respect for my skills and experience. If you don't respect me, I won't be able to help you." It is entirely appropriate to have a high, but realistic, opinion of yourself and your accomplishments. Remember, you've spent your whole life preparing for this moment. Asking for what you need shows that you respect yourself, and that you expect respect in return. Those who ask for what they need get respected. (It took me years to learn this one and to act on it. I hope you'll be able to use it much earlier in your career than I did!)

TIP 6: STUDY THE FIRM—BE INFORMED

Study their website, LinkedIn info, Twitter feeds, and Facebook. Do a news search. Ask friends, family, and any connections you have in common about them. Know why they're hiring. Have a general understanding of what they're looking for, and the issues they seem to be facing.

TIP 7: LISTEN MORE, NARRATE LESS

Use your research to prepare a few relevant questions. Remember that asking is much more powerful than telling.

Listening is a powerful tool. Listen, take notes, read back what you wrote, and ask for clarification. You'll learn what they're really looking for and how it will shape the interviewer's personal future as well as that of the company. The more you learn about the firm and the more informed you become, the more comfortable you'll be negotiating with them.

Ask them why they're interested in you. When they answer you'll know more about what your value is in their eyes. When follow-up questions come to mind, ask them.

This is a good time to point out that being really listened to is immensely flattering and engaging. You'll learn more about the opportunity—but you'll also build a personal bond with the interviewer if you're an excellent listener. Here are some examples of what you might ask:

- Why have you created this position?
- Why this project at this time?
- What are the company's goals? What are your goals?
- What effect will it have on the company, division, yourself, the world?

- How do you envision moving forward?
- What effect will it have on the market? On competitors?
- Who will I report to, and why?
- Who will we need to get approvals from? And why?
- Who will be on your project team?
- What are competitors doing that will impact our efforts?
- What's the model for success? For failure?
- Have you undertaken anything like this in the past? What was your experience?
- How is this effort viewed in other departments within the corporation?
- Are there groups that will be advanced by the project?
- Are there groups that will feel threatened?

Remember to always hold back one question that you can use at the end of the interview when you're asked, "Do you have any further questions for me?"

TIP 8: AVOID TALKING TOO MUCH

Talking too much is a sign of discomfort and neediness, which a trained negotiator can exploit. Don't do it. Your prepared questions should help you avoid this trap.

TIP 9: DON'T GIVE THEM ANYTHING FOR FREE

If you don't value your work, they won't value it either. Always get something in return for everything you provide to the client. In the market economy we live in, everything that is of value is measured in money. If you don't ask for a fee for what you provide, the client will not value it.

TIP 10: NEVER RUSH TO CLOSE

Recognize that negotiating is the first step in a creative process. Take all the time you need to understand every step, every detail of the process. Be guided by the phrase, "I have all the time in the world." Rushing to close is another classic sign of weakness and insecurity. You must guard against this feeling. Often we're so uncomfortable negotiating that we race through the bargaining so we can get to the work. No surprise there; doing the work is our first love. But don't let that derail getting paid what you deserve.

TIP 11: NEVER REVEAL YOUR PAST SALARIES OR FEES

We're all needy. We all want others to know that we're valued. Often, in a misguided attempt to prove that we're valued, we reveal too much. Feeling compelled to tell what we were paid in the past is an example of trying to prove our worth.

Don't do it. Past compensation is a private matter between you and those who paid you. If asked directly what you were paid, just respond that you can't say because it's a private matter. If that doesn't feel right, revisit the other options in "They'll Ask; Don't Tell."

Rest assured that interviewers will use it against you if you do tell. Worse, they'll feel taken advantage of if they're paying significantly more than what you'd earned in the past. They'll ask; don't tell. It's that simple.

TIP 12: GET AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

I know it sounds harsh. But that's what negotiating is all about: getting what you need to be successful for them.

I don't believe in "win-win" negotiating, because it sets you up to give away too much right from the outset. Most people don't really study how win-win negotiations are practiced and written about by the pros. People commonly think it's as simple as giving up something first, so the other party will see that you're a nice and reasonable person. But that's achieving a different goal.

Of course your goal of getting as much as you can is balanced with your need to create and maintain a successful long-term relationship (everything rests on that beneficial relationship) but don't enter with the mindset that you're going to give things away that matter to you.

