***PA Career Coach***

**Assessing the Offer Worksheet and Negotiation Strategies**

Interviewing offers crucial opportunities to research the culture and values of a workplace and determine how well it fits with your professional needs and priorities. The following exercise is a resource to assess a PA position.

TheCareer Self-Assessment worksheet available at www.pacareercoach.net is available to help determine the most important aspects of a position at this point in your career. After receiving an offer, it is a good idea to step back and assess it carefully and identify areas to negotiate. How closely does it correspond with your professional priorities in terms of both clinical content and compensation, and how can you negotiate improvements to it?

Let’s explore in the offer greater detail using the worksheet below, giving each aspect of the position a priority rating (1-4, with 4 being most essential). Next, write out your assessment of what is being offered. Finally, brainstorm negotiation points with which to improve the offer.

**Working in a Particular Specialty/Practice Area**

Priority rating:

*Questions for the employer: What will be my clinical role and responsibilities in this position? Are you familiar with PA’s typical scope of practice in this specialty? What is your vision for my role in this practice/institution? Do you see it expanding over time?*

**Assessment of Clinical Role and Negotiation Notes:**

**High-quality relationship with partnering physician(s) (note: key to all success in all PA positions)**

Priority rating:

*Sample questions for the physician(s):*

Have you *worked with a PA before? If so, have they stayed employed with you? What do you see as the benefits of team practice? Are you available to mentor me in this specialty (if you are new to a specialty/role)? What do you most hope to accomplish by hiring a new PA? What inspires you in your day to day practice of medicine?*

Ask yourself: do the physician(s) seem to listen and communicate well? Will they be accessible and available? What are their clinical expectations of you (and for team practice)? Do those expectations fit with what you’d like to do in this position? Will there be opportunities for your growth and development?

Is there a commitment to appropriate mentorship by partnering physicians if you are in a new practice area? If you are a seasoned practitioner, do you sense they will give you appropriate autonomy? Are there physicians on staff who may not want to work with PAs? This could signal trouble ahead—a consensus about working with PAs is important in group practice settings.

**Your assessment of prospective partnering physicians and negotiation notes:**

**Salary**

Priority rating:

How does the salary offer fall along your low to high range? How does it look in the context of the fringe benefits package, another key aspect of compensation? How does it compare to what other PAs are earning in this specialty and in your state, and with your years of experience?

A number of factors should determine your salary target and acceptable salary range (as well as walk-away point!) in order to assess the compensation package you’ll be offered. They include:

* Specialty
* Your years of experience (in a specialty and as a practicing PA)
* The regional and local economy where the position is offered
* The position and its level of responsibility/hours
* The financial value/quality of life value of your fringe benefits package

**Salary assessment and negotiation notes**:

**Fringe Benefits**

Benefits are an essential aspect of your compensation and have a huge impact on your quality of professional and personal life. In this section, consider the Fringe Benefits being offered by the employer and assess them, particularly in the areas of your highest priority categories. Are they sufficient? Which require some negotiated improvement? Are certain benefits offered that you consider less important that might be traded off in favor of higher priority ones?

**Negotiation notes for specific benefits:**

Paid Vacation

CME Funding

Paid CME Leave

Liability Coverage

Loan Repayment (if applicable)

Paid Sick Leave

Health Insurance (individual, family)

Retirement program

Other benefits—specify and assess here

**Schedule/Location(s)/Commute**

Priority Rating:

A schedule that allows for healthy work-life balance and includes a manageable commute is key to one’s quality of life.

*Questions for the employer: What will my typical schedule be Hours per week? If I am to provide services at more than what location, where are they, and what will my typical schedule be at each location? Will I have call duties, and if so will they be compensated in addition to my salary and what are their hours? Is there an option for adjusting the schedule so that I can meet family obligations?*

**Negotiation Notes:**

**Leadership and Ownership opportunities**

Priority rating:

*Questions for the employer: How do you see my position evolving over time? Are there opportunities for PA participation in committees, management, and leadership in this organization? Would you consider making a PA a partner/co-owner of this organization?*

**Assessment and Negotiation Notes:**

**Patient-centered medical care**

Your Priority rating:

Questions for the employer: How many patients a day do you expect me to see/treat? What is your philosophy of patient care? What drives the mission of this organization/practice? How do you hope to improve the lives of patients and their families?

**Assessment and Negotiation Notes:**

**Variety of clinical responsibilities, appropriate and interesting scope of practice**

Your priority rating:

Questions for the employer: What would a typical day in my clinical practice here consist of? What will my scope of practice be—what will be delegated to me? If you are interested having a specific procedure/clinical responsibility as part of your scope, ask how they see this.

**Assessment and Negotiation Notes:**

**Stability (financial and institutional stability, low rate of clinician turnover**)

Your priority rating:

Questions for the employer: Have you employed PAs in the past, do you employ PA currently? How long have they been with you? Will I have a chance to interact with them as I interview with you? Do you anticipate any major changes in the ownership of this practice/institution in the next year or down the road?

**Assessment and Negotiation Notes:**

**Learning a new specialty/starting in a new practice area**

Your priority rating:

Questions to ask: Will partnering physicians be available to mentor me as I learn new procedures? Are the SPs I’ll be partnering with comfortable with providing additional time and attention and address questions I may have as I learn?

**Assessment and Negotiation Notes:**

**Creating an Effective Negotiation Strategy**

1. Assess the overall quality of the offer: does it meet enough of your expectations to merit further consideration and contract negotiation? How well does the position correspond to your highest priority Position Elements?
2. If the offer has good potential, the next step is negotiating to improve specific elements where needed, clarify mutual expectations and create the groundwork for a win-win partnership.
3. Knowing what is essential to you in a position, potential trade off elements, and identifying positive elements in the offer addition to areas for negotiated improvement are all keys to success.
4. Approach negotiations with in a spirit of creative cooperation: the goal is to forge a positive professional relationship in which both parties feel that their key needs have been met. As you endeavor to improve specific areas of the offer, look for other areas where you can compromise and show the employer that you can see their needs as well as yours. Share your enthusiasm for building the most optimal practice with a potential employer: one in which you are in a position to grow, work “at the top of your license,” and team together to unleash the innate creativity and ingenuity of the PA-physician practice model.
5. Research will be key to both assessing the original offer and negotiating modifications to it. Salary and fringe benefit data is available from AAPA as well as some specialty practice PA organizations and provides a helpful yardstick for measuring the fairness of the salary and benefits package offered.