

What's In The Offer Letter

We talk a lot about the resumes, interviewing and the other aspects of finding a job. The question arises about what to do when you are offered a position. One of the crucial pieces of this process is the offer letter. This letter should outline all of the terms and conditions of employment.

So, you ask “what terms and conditions.” The first things that will pop up at you are the salary and the start date. Everyone always focuses on the salary. I ask you to step back a minute. Salary is only one (yes, a crucial one) of the total compensation packages. You are now faced with understanding the complete picture that will include the medical and other health benefits, the sick leave, the vacation leave, or these may be combined into a package called personal time off.

Other benefits may include short term and/or long-term disability insurance, life insurance, various different health savings accounts, childcare and even pet insurance. A car allowance or a company car may be included depending upon your position. In a downtown hotel, I received free parking and dry cleaning.

All of these may make up the compensation package that is outlined in the offer letter. One line that is included in the offer letter that comes with living in a “at-will work” state such as Texas is the line that clarifies the company’s ability to terminate the employment for any reason (without having to identify a “just cause”) and without warning. The qualifier in this statement is that the reason cannot be unlawful, say for discrimination of any kind.

So, these are the main elements in an offer letter. Employers may add or not include as they see their needs. However, these may also be up for negotiation. As you read the letter – and do so carefully so that you fully understand it – make sure that you have your priorities straight. Try to get a feel as to how flexible the employer is before you engage in negotiations. Then posture the conversation to engage in a win/win outcome.

Best of luck. Clarity can lead you and the employer to an open relationship once you are on board.

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