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Contract Negotiations

Negotiating with a practice you want to join can seem daunting. You want to get the best deal you can but you want to do it in a way that leaves everyone with a positive feeling about the new relationship. Here are some pointers that experience has demonstrated will help you do just that:

1. **Only begin negotiations once you completely understand the offer.** Review the salary, complete benefits package, call schedules, reimbursement for call if applicable, and how bonuses work. Many organizations bury key parts of an offer in human resources policy manuals and other arcane places. If something seems to be missing, just call them and ask— tell them you are giving their offer serious consideration and want to know about these details.

2. **Make a list of the items you want to add, delete or modify in the contract.** Keep it reasonable. The larger the group, the more difficult it is to accommodate specific requests that have not been granted to the physicians who have already joined the organization. Make sure your list is complete and prioritized before you begin to negotiate. Discuss your highest priority items in your list first. Without a complete list, you may not remember what you really want and where you can be flexible.

3. **Know what you can live with.** Keep a list outlining your needs. Ask yourself the following questions, and know the answers:

   What is going to make you love your job?

   What will make you proud to come to work every day?

   What do you hope to earn? What is the least amount you would accept?

   Draw up a detailed list of what you "want to have" and "need to have."

4. **Consider sending an e-mail to the physician(s) or other person**(s) with whom you have had the strongest connection. This can allow the group to prepare for the negotiation process. Be sure to thank them for the offer, express your enthusiasm, and reiterate your intention to join the organization. List the items that you would like to discuss and express your interest in having a conversation soon to resolve.

5. **Deal directly with the principal decision maker**. The more people involved in communication, the greater the chance of a serious misunderstanding.

6. **Be friendly and positive when beginning conversations** regarding the negotiation.
   a. Affirm that you would like to accept the position and join the organization.
   b. Comment that after reviewing their offer, you have a short list of items to discuss.
   c. Tell them the number of items you want to discuss. They won't be surprised if the list gets long.
   d. Get them to repeat back their understanding. Clear, concise, communication is critical at this point.

7. **Know what a "deal killer" for you is, and what is not**—where you can bend and where you can't. List your priorities from "most important" to "least important."

8. **Express gratitude for concessions** and a willingness to be flexible about requests. Ask for a counterproposal.

9. If further conversation is required, close the conversation by reaffirming your intent to join the practice when final details are resolved. Confirm a date for the next discussion.