

Rate & Rate Negotiation Pro-Tips

You always, always need to negotiate. If your client says “Yes” immediately, it generally means you low-balled yourself. It’s a delicate balance though, don’t go over the line because an immediate no is no-good either.

Aim a little higher than your target. That means you have some play to negotiate down to the number you actually need to hit.

Don’t aim much higher than your target, as you’ll likely immediately get rejected. “So nice to meet you!” A \$1000 day-rate for a junior developer who was born after 9/11 is probably not going to fly (until maybe 2028). There is still a hierarchy to years-of-experience, that frankly, is mostly correct.

Reverse engineer a typical day to get to a good rate based on the actual work you're doing :

- An \$1000 day-rate might scare away your client, but if you follow production pricing, suddenly, it’s not so scary. \$70 / hour with 1.5x overtime after 10 hours and 2x overtime after 12 hours, with an overtime penalty if turnaround time is <10 hours. That means a 12 hour day is a \$910 day, and a 14 hour day (sadly, common in production), comes in at a hot \$1,190.
- So: breakdown your rate for them. “\$700 for a 10” is common language that is understood as \$700 for a 10 hour day, with pro-ration/possible OT after 10. Delicately balance being specific *and* casual about your terms if they ask.

On a union production, If you work through lunch, you should count that towards OT, or your day should be shorter. Again, following production pricing, you need to be given breaks, and if you don’t, your client needs to compensate you for that. I mostly work through lunch and don’t count it towards OT. I’m told that the greatest financial-value white collar crime in America is wage theft. The silent killer!

On a long contract, with no OT, my opinion is that you must require comp time for overtime after a typical 40 or 50 hour week. This isn’t a legal requirement, but if your client doesn’t agree to this, it’s ethically dubious. Comp time means: you get paid days off equal to the time you worked over time. It's the right thing to do. It is rare that this isn't the case!

Stick to your guns on terms. You’ll be respected for it. Especially if you’re cool about it and you're not a jerk. I interviewed and hired someone a couple years ago who did this flex and I still think about how smart it was. Ended up being a good decision to work with them, too!