Evaluate a Job Offer

By Peter Vogt, Monster Senior Contributing Writer

You've just been offered your first professional job in the real world. You breathe a sigh of relief: The search is over. Unfortunately, it's not. In many ways, the real work, deciding whether this job is really the one for you, is just about to begin.

Looking for a job after college is difficult enough. Deciding on a job offer when it comes is often even more challenging. After all, you're not only talking about one, two, three years or longer of your life. You're talking about the launch of your career. A sound decision will make that launch a successful one. But a poor decision could mean entry-level career disappointment. How in the world do you decide whether a particular job offer is right for you? Here are a few of the main factors to consider:

- **Yourself:** Obvious? Perhaps. But it's too easy to fall into the trap of basing your accept/don't accept decision on someone else's desires. This is not the time to take a job because you think you're supposed to or because your parents want you to. This is the time when you have to consider your own wants and needs first, because, ultimately, you will be the one who has to invest your time and effort in the job.

- **Salary and Benefits:** This too might seem obvious, but many new college graduates have only a vague idea of what they want and need in terms of the money they'll earn in their first job. Now is the time when you need to define your ideas about what is a good or acceptable offer, both in terms of salary and benefits.

- **Job Duties:** Does the job you've been offered honestly sound interesting to you? Will it challenge you, or will it bore you to tears in short order? Will you be able to apply some of the experiences and skills you've learned in your courses and internships? You'll likely be spending more than 2,000 hours a year (assuming you'll be working full-time) on the job. Certainly you want that time to be stimulating and fun.

- **Company Culture:** What is this company or organization really like? For instance, do employees in the organization seem to like each other and work well together? Admittedly, this is very difficult to judge when you're still on the outside, but you've no doubt developed at least some sense of the corporate culture from your on-site interviews. If your head, heart or gut keeps whispering words of warning to you about the company culture, it's a very good idea to pay attention.

- **Growth Opportunities:** Will this job give you a chance to experience things you haven't experienced and learn things you don't already know? Are there any opportunities for you to receive additional training so you can learn a new software program, for example, or an up-and-coming approach to Internet marketing? And does there seem to be a good chance that you'll be able to move up in the company or organization over time?

- **Your Boss:** Your direct supervisor has the power to make your first job a wonderful experience or an exercise in misery. If you have a sense that you'll be able to talk to your supervisor and learn from this person, wonderful. But if you feel your supervisor is likely to be distant and unaccommodating, beware. If you and your supervisor aren't on the same page (most of the time, anyway), you might be in for a rough time.

- **Company Location:** Will you be working in a busy city even though your heart yearns to work in a smaller area? Will this new job force you to endure a long, dicey commute each day? If so, is that OK with you?

These are just some of the many factors you'll need to consider in deciding on an offer. If you find yourself overwhelmed, you're not alone. That's why it's a good idea to work with a campus career counselor if at all possible. But if you carefully examine these factors and others that are important to you and then, most critically of all, make sure you remain truthful with yourself, you will make the most informed decision you can.