

Audio file

[Podcast Session - Craig Nelson mixdown.mp3](#)

Transcript

Speaker 1

Welcome to our podcast salary negotiations made simple. I'm your host, Dorothy Mashburn, and welcome to salary negotiations made simple. Here I show you how negotiating does not have to be over. I break the entire process of negotiating into easy to learn steps that you can use in any salary negotiation situation. Whether you're starting a new job or preparing to ask for a raise, expect to receive practical, actionable strategies that are based on real life experiences I'll be sharing. Tips that have been proven to work where professionals like you have netted anywhere from \$5000 to \$40,000 more in compensation. It's payment for the skills you bring, so you need to know how to ask for payment for those skills. Are you ready to learn how to boost your earnings? Let's dive in. Have you ever wondered in a job interview if you could understand what the other party was thinking? We have a special treat for us today. We are diving deep into the mind of an executive who has interviewed hundreds. Of talented high performing professionals from across the globe. We are talking about what he looks for in candidates. What are the keys to success when going through a job interview and what is his thought process when a candidate asks for more in a salary negotiation. There's going to be a lot of exciting tips and insights from a hiring manager. Let's dive in. Today we are talking to Craig Nelson, who is an accomplished leader with extensive experience in operations and innovation within the global medical technology industry. Currently serving as the Vice President of Operations Innovation at a prominent medical technology company, Craig is known for his strategic vision. I had the pleasure of speaking with Craig about his remarkable career trajectory. He generously shared his experiences, shedding light on what he looks for in future employees and providing valuable. Advice on career? Hi Greg, how are you today?

Speaker 2

I'm wonderful. Thanks for having.

Speaker 1

Me working. Thank you for joining us on salary negotiations made simple. We'd love to get an introduction from you and we'll dive right into our topic today.

Speaker 2

Sounds great. I appreciate you having me. I'm a vice president at a large medical device company. Coming up on my 23rd year at an inflection point in my career actually making a big change. In a week. And moving on to a CEO and President role and a contract manufacturer, so. All career one company. And really started as a material handler at this company. I'm the only person to ever start as a temp while I was in college and and somehow. Navigate myself through a whole lot of luck and a bunch. Of great leaders to the vice President rule that. I'm in today.

Speaker 1

Very best of luck in your new journey. Thank you. You also have a lot of engineering background and a lot of. Other things top of that, right?

Speaker 2

Yeah, that's correct. I mean. I was really. Fortunate early in my career. I, as I said, started as a material handler as a summer job. I actually moved away from. Home for college. And I was going to college for electrical engineering. Started as electrical engineer my sophomore year, I got a call from a friend saying I got you into this to this company as a material handler. I I get a. \$100 bonus. So I said sure I started the the spring of that year and never left. And the reality is tremendous. Growth over the 22 years created tremendous opportunities. I worked two jobs two full time jobs while I was in college and continued. On with my. College career. Ultimately graduating as a degreed engineer. Very, very fortunate to.

Speaker

Be able to.

Speaker 2

Go and show up in that first few months and realize what electrical engineers did and you know, completely changed my trajectory. Relative to college, right? I moved from the electrical side of the world to the mechanical like, you know, that's something that I found. There's a passion and then really supply chain and it all goes down and back to. That material handler. That's really the basics of supply chain. Getting something from point A to point B and this opened my eyes to that whole world of manufacturing and global commerce. So I spent pretty much my entire career in various supply chain roles and sourcing. Goals, primarily negotiating really just fell in love. With it so. I I'm very, very fortunate to us had no. Idea what supply? Chain or sourcing was as I entered college. Which have found the great synergies between the engineering degree and my chosen profession, all influenced by my really my career journey.

Speaker 1

You're headed to a CEO role, so quite a progression. Congratulations on that.

Speaker 2

Thank you. Thank you.

Speaker 1

If you. Want to look? Back and think about one or two things. That have really. Helped you in your success and obviously you're a hard worker based on all of the. Also you've done. What were the keys to your success?

Speaker 2

Solving problems and focusing on. People, both the people that you need to know in. Order to get things done. And the people on your team? You put great people around you and you will succeed every single time. Probably one of the most important pieces of advice I received. Very early on. In my career. Was this concept of talent to task? Everybody has talent. Everybody the trick is, is being able to identify what people's talents are and not getting sucked into this job description role that says you've got to be

everything. Well, you can be great at these things over my career. What I found is I. Crafted roles for people I see talent and I created. A role that focused. 80 to 90% of their time. In their sweet spot. You know, if you take a batter and you throw them the perfect pitch, they're going to hit a Grand Slam every single time or certainly more often than not. So keep putting the ball in the same place right where their swing is. Perfect, I think. That ultimately translates to both success for myself. Success for the people around me and ultimately success for the business, which is why they chose to keep me around for.

Speaker 1

This long pulling on that thread a little bit, Craig. So when you are interviewing new candidates, what are you listening for in their pitch?

Speaker 2

Passion at the end of the day, passion. What are you excited to do? I had no idea what I was. Excited to do? When I started this job. 20 almost 23 years ago, and certainly that job was not. The passion, but I found. Things that was really interesting, I wasn't experienced. I wasn't skilled. That that passion alone allowed me the opportunity to learn and and people to take the legal safe on me because they seem that I was excited about it. So first and foremost is passion and 2nd is can we get along with other. You know, at the end of the. Day there is no role or I can't think of any rules, that's. Just based on what you can do. It's about what you can. Do with everybody else around you so. Being able to leverage other. People's strengths see that and play a team game in a team sport rather than just an individual contributor. That's a rock star. You know, when I was. Much, much younger. We had a very talented football team, big chunk of the team had gone up to, been pulled up to the varsity football and believe it or not, splitting the team in half, we were more successful apart than when you put us together and I think about that a lot and it's. Because we had too many. People, when we were all together, they. Were out for themselves, they. Wanted to be the superstar. So all of a sudden. You had this infighting and. And people trying to be the one. Making it to the to the. Some instead of understanding that I have to be a great blocker so somebody else can be in the. End zone.

Speaker 1

Right.

Speaker 2

In this case, it's the same thing in. The business world. It has to be a team sport.

Speaker 1

I think you're spot on when you say that there is no longer a job that only you can do, you have to leave on your team and others. Presumably you've hired a lot of talented people over the years. What are some of the key buzzwords that you're listening for?

Speaker 2

For me, it's not buzzwords it's thought process. I'll tell you, I had in. In this interview was probably. 10 years ago the. Most impressive interview ever been on was a gentleman that was working at a well known automotive company. He actually was really fortunate. A I'm a car guy. He was really fortunate to be part of their testing crew, so you get to drive brand new cars around race tracks and the incredible

role, you know as a young person out in the workforce. I'm I'm thinking man. If I got to do that every day, why would I ever leave that job? So I asked it, you know, why are you here. Why are you? Interview and why are you thinking about this change in? He was an engineer and his response? Because look, automotive is. It is something I'm passionate about. However, the investment just isn't there. So as I. Started assessing where I wanted to go. I found them. In the medical. Device industry because I looked at all industries and I looked at who invests the most amount of revenue back into R&D. Because ultimately, that is the ultimate commitment for innovation in the. Future and the medical device industry is by far. At the top of that. So he had done the research. He had known what he. Wanted to do. And he had understood the market frankly better than I did. You know, my response to him was, man, I wish I was that thoughtful. And seeking out my. Next employer if he puts that much thought into who he wanted to interview with, he turned the tables on me. He was interviewing me and the company I worked for. Rather than me interview.

Speaker 1

The deal then for you.

Speaker 2

Without a doubt. He's certainly been a great hire. He's still with the company today. Very, very successful in the company. Again, it's about thought process. That's just one simple. Example there's many. Many out there. But it's not a word, it's not behavior. It's really. Understanding who they are. You know, we talk a lot today, thankfully about diversity and inclusion. For me, diversity inclusion is that it's thought process, it's somebody that's different from me. I can tell you I'm. An 80% guy. I love the strategy. I love making things work and getting it to that point. I'm not the maximizer. I'm not the 80 to 100. It's just not me that's necessary. Which means I know that I need. To have people but. That is their strength. That's where they love to be. Now when I bring those folks on board, I understand. I'm not going to them. And talking about five years from now. That five year strap plan is not going to be a place where they enjoy their job. Yeah, I've got to work with other people that have that skill set and then include them in. OK, now how do we get this done? So it's about that talented tasking finding the right person for the right. Portion of the. Being to make sure that they're wildly successful, great talent can fail miserably. In the world.

Speaker 1

Yeah, yeah. To that interview with the engineer, Craig. Since he impressed you so much. I'm wondering how the salary discussions went and how much leverage do you think he had after he had value with his presence and his research.

Speaker 2

That's certainly when you think about 10 years ago, the medical device industry was not on the leading edge of salaries. It was about mission. It was about purpose. It was about culture. Least mostly were smaller companies growing into be big companies. You're competing with the automotives. They've already gone through that maturity shipping curve and understand and and typically pay in the higher quartiles of the market rates, just the nature of these. So it was an interesting. Because as I said, he put me in a position where he was interviewing me. Yeah, made me feel like I wanted him more than he

needed me, so I can tell you as a 22 year negotiator. He he certainly likely beat me on that negotiation. Now. I so-called a win win. He's with the company. He's done tremendous things and and frankly.

Speaker

Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2

The return on. For his salary is exponentially larger, so there isn't a win or loss, right? We can certainly say that he put him as himself in a very, very strong position for negotiating, and he didn't back down, so certainly he was hired at A at a much higher rate than than. Was more typical at that point in time.

Speaker 1

Yeah. Yeah. We talk often on this channel and it's really interesting to hear you say that and almost validating because we talk about about 60% of professionals don't negotiate the data that's out there. For fear that the job might get rescinded, or fear that you're starting on the wrong foot with your employer and then people don't and the data is just not there because employer is about 55% of employers expect you to negotiate. So similar to what you said about him. Having more leverage.

Speaker

I mean, we have a doubt.

Speaker 2

When you look. At the macroeconomics of a single hiring decision. That 5020 thousand, 30,040 thousand dollars. Is nothing in the grand scheme of. Compensation budgets for a whole company. You know, we talk about capital and business, capital equipment, capital purchases and the ROI associated with those. However, we all know that the human capital is the most strategic asset in any single business. You have to be thinking about that way and I can say when you look at the cost of recruiting the cost of the recruiting staff, all the interviewing, my time, the teams time that that's doing the interviews, it hails the incremental cost during that negotiation pales in comparison to going through that. In and sending exponentially more trying to find the next candidate.

Speaker 1

Does it ever backfire when somebody pushes you on self?

Speaker 2

I can tell you there are a few things for me personally that would trigger me to to be in a position where I'm less likely to concede on salary negotiations and that's trying to be in a competitive bid. I don't do that. I don't handle that well. I respect people that know the market. They've done their homework and said, you know, here's. What the market? Commands for this type of role and this. Type of skill set. What I don't do well with is, oh, my current employer came back and offered me this great say now, perhaps just I'm a little more old school. I think that's becoming more common to see that today, but for me it's it's still certainly is an area that. A lot less. Likely to to give in the negotiation. And just take the take the lump and go after the next candidate.

Speaker 1

I think that's the piece that we also talked about, you know, probably looking outside of your company for a reason, not just a monitor, right? There's a culture. There's a growth aspect that you are looking for, so you should take that into consideration.

Speaker 2

Certainly. And and and. Considering the full compensation package, it's so big stated it's fixated on the base salary and forget about the 401K and equity options and all these other things that really round out. Now remember 22 years. Was recruiting and hiring for procurement and sourcing and supply chain roles. I mean, these are these are professionals that negotiate for. A living. Yeah, yeah. I can tell you I would. Believe that statistic. In the number. Of people that actually negotiated and these are professional negotiators and they certainly have allowed money on the table if they chose to not at least ask. You know, there's only one guarantee and that is you don't get what you don't. Ask for.

Speaker 1

Right. Very well said. Yeah, especially women professionals when they negotiate for others, they do a great job. So if you have a supply chain professional who's a female, they will do a great job negotiating for our company, but not necessarily for themselves when it comes to salaries.

Speaker 2

Yeah, certainly, I I didn't listen to your podcast on impostor syndrome. Yeah, and and certainly that can play play into that. You're exactly right, and you're doing yourself no favors, certainly in in the roles that I was hiring for, I expected. I'm hiring you to do this on behalf. Of the company. Expect you to negotiate for yourself, but if you don't, you got some questions on whether or not you've chosen the right career, to be honest.

Speaker 1

Right. I'm curious about that. So probably so well, how do you how do you weigh that? So if you were hiring a negotiator? There and they. Don't negotiate for themselves. What is it about process look like at that point?

Speaker 2

You get to an office stage. I'm still obviously very, very committed, but I will absolutely provide that feedback become an employee.

Speaker

I will provide.

Speaker 2

That feedback? I'm transparent guy. That's how I operate. I believe at the end of everything. All humans, and we're all here for the same reasons. So I I do provide that feedback that you probably missed an opportunity. And you know I have. Faith in in what you're. Capable of doing for the. Company, but certainly this this raised the question on why did you choose not to?

Speaker 1

Yeah, that would be great feedback for anyone, right? Because then they know that the fear of the unknown was not justified or rational.

Speaker 2

That's right. And it and it. Doesn't have to be uncomfortable. You know, companies hiring managers understand. That we all work to make a living. What I want? To see is a balanced thought process in priorities. As I mentioned earlier, if it if somebody is interviewing and saying that I'm I'm looking for the next opportunity for growth or for whatever other reason and then I end up in a in a bidding war against their current company. They're just telling me what their true and only motivation is. They're not interested in. What they told. Me, right? Hence why I get. Turned off, yeah. It's finding that right balance of making. Sure. You're you're. Treating yourself and what your priorities are, it's fine. Is it financial?

Speaker 1

Financial yeah.

Speaker 2

No, I've. I've spent 22 years at 1:00. Company and I know. Just by the nature of that, every stuff I'll tell you. Likely to be underpaid and under compensated. It's just the nature of how things work within within companies, so I am going to market because it's time for me to to make changes that will change my financial future. That's OK answer.

Speaker 1

And then with. Yourself as well as how you're entering the other job.

Speaker 2

That's right. And. And people that. Are minor. I've spent. A lot of time to understand their motivations.

Speaker 1

Yeah, you know.

Speaker 2

How do I develop?

Speaker 1

How do I?

Speaker 2

Provide care and feeding all of this plays into it. Just understanding it. If you can't be transparent, you know you're really not starting off on the right foot anyway.

Speaker 1

Very true. What advice do you have, Craig for professionals who are starting out in their careers? One or two things from an advice perspective so they can get to their dream destination of a career.

Speaker 2

The first one is really easy. Don't be in a hurry. Don't be so focused on a title or position on the board that you miss the real opportunities. Don't put yourself on a clock. Stay true to yourself and what matters and what gets you out of bed. Every single morning. My last 7 roles did not exist. Before I had them. Well, how do I career plan? For an ever evolving market. That is creating new jobs. You look at AI today and where that's going. Those are all new opportunities that people in the market today didn't have yesterday. So don't be in too much of a hurry. However, the other piece of advice will be not something that I did myself. But it's something that I perhaps should have done as I look back at my 22. Years I feel. Very, very fortunate. I had an. Incredible group of leaders work with throughout my career that were advocates and opening doors and providing opportunity. Now I. Had to do something with it. I wasn't certainly getting. Now everybody's that fortunate, yeah. So I can say the other piece of advice that I didn't follow, but certainly would advocate is at least once a year sit down and reflect on where you are, where you want to go. Don't focus on the title or a you know a specific role in your company where. Do you want to go? What cool things do you wanna learn? What opportunities do you want to present or find for yourself to help guide you? Because you also don't want to. Find yourself five years later doing the same thing and stealing like your clothes into a closet and have no opportunities. That's not helpful either. So it's finding. That right balance of. Not being too eager, not being too active in trying to jump around the organization, I've seen a lot of people do that in their careers and get lost because they were just moving to the next thing and not stitching together a story of this is what I really. Want to do for a career? I think the difference is don't look. At it as. A job. Look at it as. A career, and if it isn't incremental and a creative to your career, then don't do it. Even if. It's a bigger title and an opportunity. To manage people, don't do it. Tell it to. Make sure that you're staying in that sweet. Spot for yourself. Nobody knows yourself better than than.

Speaker 1

When you said in the annual reflection, I really like that there are some companies that are not as talent focused. Some companies are more siloed. You have to follow this regimen and in in that one year when you do the reflection, you also think about it. This is the right fit. For you and you, should you be looking. Outside, if your. Growth is not supported by companies, mission or vision. Or whatever it is.

Speaker 2

Look, I'm. I'm certainly aware. Of that, not every. Company is as town focused as the one I was fortunate to work for for so long. But what I will tell you is every single company is results focused and those norms are only norms because somebody hasn't broken it yet. Even in the company that I am in today and. I've been with for 22 years. Early on my career. We have that structure. In order to manage people, you had to start at managing production employees and then work your way up through the organization. One of my early on opportunities and flashing points in my career was an opportunity to go do that or an opportunity to move to another part of the business. For a role that was not really defined, a conversation on this is what we're trying to achieve. In a part of the business that I knew nothing about with people that I didn't know yet, and I decided that my path in leading people and developing people who wasn't starting on the production line and build those relationships with those folks through my

material handling days, but I knew. It's just the style of leader that I was. I wasn't going to be really successful in that. You showed the six and you need it to kind of structure. That's just not who I am. So I took the lead and I. Went into this big unknown and said well, you know, if it doesn't work, I'll just go do.

Speaker 1

Something else after that, right?

Speaker 2

That is probably the single biggest decision in my 22 year career. I wouldn't just jump to, I have to leave. Yeah, change is about people and people create change. Find that opportunity. It may look a little bit different. Like I said, it may not be a spot on on your chart today, right? Find the problem solve the problem. And I promise you any company out there recognize you for it and that's going to create new opportunities. You never know where it's going to go.

Speaker 1

That is powerful. Like reflect inward first before you make that outward decision.

Speaker 2

Without a doubt, without doubt.

Speaker 1

This has been really insightful on so many different levels. On corporate navigation, several of my listeners have asked questions about, you know, there's so much tacit understanding that when you first go in and you don't really know what you don't know. So any advice on that piece before we close today?

Speaker 2

Yes, probably. There's been a handful of things. That I've picked. Up over 22 years that have stuck with me through everything. I was fortunate to have an opportunity to be. Part of the Harvard. Executive Leadership program a number of years ago, probably 8 or so years ago. Great program, but during that there was one professor and one lecturer that really resonated with me and it was the 6th cognitive distortions. And it was you making assumptions or somebody else making assumptions. The analogy that the professor gave me was at Harvard. The grades are largely rated based on participation, not necessarily tests and quizzes, but really participation. In the room and he had shared this branding semester. Somebody in the back of the room, he had told them that they needed to be the dissenting voice, so they were very, very active. The professor actually took the other side of the debate at the end of that debate. Eight class ended and. The professor grabbed all of the stuff. And add another. Class on the other side of campus grabbed all the stuff and very quickly moved. Out of the. The room and headed off to his next class, well on his way past this student, they said hi and he he didn't even mentally recognize. That high didn't acknowledge. The person. At the end of the day, that that student. Sat there in the very. Quickly went from Wow. I said something wrong. They are going to fail me. There's no way I'm going to pass this class. Cause a professor. Hates me. I need to drop this class before the semester really gets started and they bail. Now the professor. Actually thought that they were widely talented and exactly what they were looking for in. In a student of that. Unfortunately, jumping to conclusions and

making up your own narratives and torpedoing yourself now this works in. The corporate world and applies and I'll. Get there very quickly. Don't make assumptions that executive that's. Walking, you know, I can recall early in. My career sitting in the queue. And the names. The wall around the building. And being incredibly intimidated by those individuals as a 20 nothing. You know, I think it was probably a material coordinator that, that, that career buyer, whatever it was. And I made assumptions that it wasn't OK to just. Go knock on. Her door. Say hi. Get to know them. So I would say don't make those assumptions, and even if you naturally will 6 cognitive distortions, you will likely set them aside, deal with it, have the emotional intelligence to understand it. Set it aside and. Take that leap. I can tell you. I would see myself as a Vice President walking through the hallway. I see myself as another employee. I've been fortunate enough to have a great relationship with one of. Our cool presidents. And I've given him the same feedback. Not just going to call you your group President and his answer is. I'm just an employee like you. We're all trying to do the same. So even today, 22 years later, I'm still making this mistake navigating the corporate environment is forgetting your charter and understanding that everybody is just a group of individuals, a group of people, and you can learn something from everybody. So take the opportunities to build relationships. From the janitor all the way up to the. CEO, be thoughtful. Be respectful. But I have yet to run into anybody that is not willing to help, and that is internal to my company or external to my company. I've made just as strong relationships with executives from other companies as I have within the company that I'm in and. And see opportunity to go lead a business now. Yeah, that came because somebody called and said I've seen you. I know you. And I know who you are. I don't have to interview you. Understand whether or not. You're getting. I've seen it.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 2

Opportunities and their comments in the craziest places. Again, don't be in a hurry.

Speaker

I like that.

Speaker 1

That's a great way to close out today, Craig, thank you so much. That's a lot of great wisdom and that really, really appreciate your insights.

Speaker 2

I appreciate the opportunity. Dorothy, thank you very much for.

Speaker 1

Having me, thank you so much. You take care and good luck on your.

Speaker 2

Journey. Thank you. Take care.

Speaker 1

There you have it, my friends. Great insights from Craig on what he's looking for in a candidate and what are some things that we can do in order to own our career, stand up for our worth if you're the candidate. Who has the passion and the drive to solve problems for the organization? It's very likely the hiring manager expects you to negotiate. Check out my website dorothymashburn.com/fight for your worth, subscribe and boost your income with a step by step audio training guide on salary negotiations for free. Thank you again for listening and bye for now.