Two Job Offers and FOBO

Idea In Short

When facing two job offers, evaluate industry, company strength, function, geography and optionality. Make a decision based on logic and gut, then commit without looking back. FOBO and FOMO only reduce happiness and performance.

The Paradox of Multiple Offers

Smart, disciplined students combined with a strong university recruiting engine and a healthy job market produce multiple job offers. It is a remarkable achievement and a well-earned blessing. Yet having too many choices can make you feel worse, less happy and less grateful. A nagging sense of uncertainty, dread and loss creeps in.

Students ask how to choose between two very different companies and offers. They worry about choosing incorrectly. They fear missing out on the other opportunity. These questions reflect a natural anxiety that accompanies abundance.1

Breathe and Recognize No Wrong Choice

Take time and pat yourself on the back. It is okay to feel happy for a moment. You can always worry more tomorrow. First, an internship during college is not a life sentence. It creates more options, not fewer. You would not have applied, gone through HireVue and survived multiple interview rounds if you did not think the opportunity was worth it. The situation looks like cake versus cookies. Job A is cake, which is awesome. Job B is cookies, which is awesome in a different way.

Life Is an S-Curve Not a Train Schedule

Formal education is predictable. There is a course catalog, syllabus, assignments and a grading rubric. Everything operates on a 4.0 scale. The world divides neatly into school and non-school. After graduation, there is no syllabus. As often told to students, when you join the corporate world your manager will not give you a multiple choice test on Monday.

Think of your career as a series of S-curves with peaks and valleys. You lean into the turns, speed up and slow down. Some people know from day one what they want professionally, but most do not, and that is perfectly normal. Your title or role from 2035 probably does not exist yet. Think about emerging strategy and pick a general direction, then make deliberate steps. Consider which job helps you learn more, hustle less complacently, grow as a person, increase your market value and augment your resume.2

Compare the Offers Systematically

Compare your two offers across several dimensions. Consider the industry or type of industry, whether retail, technology or business-to-business. Assess whether the company has a strong market position and growth prospects. Evaluate the department, function and job that interests you. Think about geography and whether it is where you want to be post-graduation. Consider company size, whether 200 people, 2,000 or 200,000.

For juniors, an internship is a trial for both you and the company. The stakes are lower and the chance of re-recruiting in the fall is somewhat high. If you have the chance to work for your dream company or dream job, take it. After you do great work and get the full-time return offer, senior year becomes amazing. Your sophomore or junior summer is the ideal time to experiment.

The timing of your academic career shapes the stakes significantly. A sophomore has two more summers to explore different paths, while a junior faces higher pressure because the junior summer often determines the full-time offer. Understanding where you are in the timeline helps calibrate risk. Sophomores should optimize for learning and exploration, while juniors should balance experimentation with the security of a return offer.

What Is Important to You

There is no perfect job. No matter what recruiting brochures say, it is work. It can be fulfilling and fun, and you will learn, but it is not a vacation. Write out a wish list of criteria and rank which ones matter most. A mentor once said there are three criteria for any project or job. Use the classic Benjamin Franklin pro and con approach for each side.

Evaluate which offer gives you more optionality. If you agree that a career is a series of S-curves, ask which job helps you learn more, be less complacent, grow as a human, increase your market value and augment your resume in the right way.3

Listen to Your Gut and Trusted Advisors

After satisfying the logic part of the decision, dig into the emotional side. What does your heart or gut tell you? Which way are you leaning and why? What are you afraid of with job A? Which job would you potentially regret not taking more? FOMO is real and can distort judgment.

Seek input from people you know and trust. They may see blind spots or point out pros and cons you missed. This is not just from anyone. You do not care about public opinion. You want input from a diverse group of trusted, informed people. Diverse means not just people from the firms recruiting you. Trusted means people who know you and want the best for you. Informed means people who understand the choices. Remember, this is feedback to help you decide. It is your decision, not theirs.

The quality of advice depends entirely on the quality of the advisor. A well-meaning friend who knows nothing about either industry offers emotional support but little analytical value. A senior professional who understands both sectors can illuminate trade-offs you never considered. Assemble a personal board of advisors with different perspectives, then synthesize their input rather than following any single voice.

Assess Fit and Decide

People matter and culture matters. From informational interviews and conversations so far, how would you describe the interactions? If you plan to exceed expectations, where will you be more comfortable working 50 to 70 hours a week? Do you know alumni or friends who work there? Have you spoken to people who left the firm? Why do you think they hired you?

Unemployment in the United States runs around 4 to 5%, but that figure only includes people actively looking. All jobs are not the same. You have two top-shelf offers and should be proud. Make a great decision and do not look back. FOMO and FOBO usually make you less happy, and that dissatisfaction translates into poor quality work. The goal is not the job itself. The goal is to develop rare and valuable skills. Be so good they cannot ignore you. As

Vince Lombardi said, there is no substitute for work.

- 1Fear of a Better Option by Patrick McGinnis
- 2Choosing Between Multiple Job Offers
- 3FOMO and FOBO as Signs of Anxiety

Summary

There is no perfect job. The goal is developing rare and valuable skills. Be grateful, decide and do not look back. Focus, hard work and persistence matter more than the specific path chosen.