

THE RETAIL RD



MONEY TALK

By Barbara Ruhs, MS, RDN

By knowing their value and doing their research, retail dietitians can make the case for better compensation.

Until recently, there have been limited data on compensation for retail dietitians. Salary information is important when considering a career move or when asking for a raise. Several factors, including years of experience, educational background, specialty certifications, geographic location, and area of dietetics practice, influence salaries in general. In addition, the level of responsibility for budgets and additional personnel can impact compensation.

To ensure you're getting paid what you want and deserve, Pat Katepoo, salary coach to dietitians at WorkOptions.com, says, "It's important to be well informed and learn actionable steps to increase your salary that ultimately can have a big impact on your overall job satisfaction." This article will review some of the common issues retail RDs face with regard to compensation.

State of the Salaries

According to Katepoo, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (the Academy) annual Compensation & Benefits Survey of the Dietetics Profession is one of the first places to look when assessing the market value for any dietetics job. The 2017 Academy survey of 9,000-plus RDs reports a salary range of \$61,500 (25th percentile) to \$86,700 (75th percentile) for a corporate dietitian, including those employed by a grocery retailer.¹ The most recent Retail

Dietitian Business Alliance (RDBA) Salary Survey Report (2016), compiled from a survey of 163 retail RDs, shows an average salary range of \$41,000 to \$70,000 for retail dietitians.² The discrepancy in the data for retail dietitians between the two surveys can be explained in several ways. The RDBA salary report is a much smaller data set, and the majority of RDs surveyed had less than five years of experience vs 10-plus years for RDs included in the Academy survey. However, the RDBA survey includes more specific data on retail dietitians and includes a broad range of corporate, regional, and store-based RDs. Among these different roles, responsibilities vary greatly, and the majority of RDs included in the RDBA survey were store-based retail dietitians (69%).

Based on the Academy's compensation survey, among all RDs in all positions, the median salary for a full-time RD across all practice areas is \$65,000 per year, whereas the majority (41%) of retail RDs in the RDBA survey reported making between \$51,000 and \$60,000 per year. Although it's difficult to draw sweeping conclusions by comparing and contrasting both of these surveys, the important thing to remember is that there's information available on dietitians' wages to help provide a starting point for salary negotiations.

Determining Your Value

In addition, Katepoo recommends using salary calculators and pay information for specific job categories or job titles, which can be found on Glassdoor.com, Salary.com, and PayScale.com. Researching salary information for the supermarket industry can help you better gauge expectations for compensation. In addition, she recommends asking recruiters for compensation information about retail or food industry jobs and says that many national associations, such as the Food Marketing Institute or the National Grocers Association, also may be resources to find useful data that can help build a stronger case for your desired salary.

Another way to get a ballpark of salary ranges for either a store-based or corporate supermarket position is to look for and compare the salaries, job responsibilities, and education and work experience requirements for other jobs in the supermarket industry, such as a director of public relations, communications or marketing director, buyer, or category manager. For store-based positions, look for department manager positions to compare salaries and research compensation of pharmacy staff or for onsite nursing staff who may host health screenings.

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Asking for a Raise

If you accept a job as a retail dietitian at a salary below market value, increasing your compensation dramatically in the future is unlikely. According to Kiplinger, a Washington, D.C.-based publisher of business forecasts, an annual increase for compensation on average was 3% based on performance.³ That's not to say obtaining a higher percentage increase is out of the question, but making a strong case to justify the increase is necessary.

One way to make the case for increased pay is to demonstrate the value of your position or programs and services that you offer. Unless your company has clearly defined

performance goals for salary increases or bonuses, providing data on how you're adding or creating value doesn't guarantee a raise. However, it can help boost your confidence in overcoming the fear of asking for more money and may improve your chances for success in the future.

As consumer interest in health and wellness continues to grow, dietitians who expand their skills and expertise to offer supermarkets a competitive edge will pave the way for future generations of dietitians to pursue rewarding careers in retail.

— Barbara Ruhs, MS, RDN, is a retail health expert to supermarkets and food companies and founder of the Oldways Supermarket Dietitian Symposium. Follow her @BarbRuhsRD.

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