

My Money 24, 13 May 2011

Nice work if you can get it

Knowing what people earn is part of my day job, but every now and then I see something that makes my jaw hit the ground at some speed.

Generally, I think there's a lot of hogwash spoken about how much people earn and a great deal of green-eyed envy. Footballers? Yes I'm a Norwich fan (silly grin still in place, thank you) and I have had numerous arguments with friends and family over how footballers supposedly get paid too much. It's all about the basic economic principle around supply and demand. Anyway, if a footballer is overpaid well so surely is an actor who is simply regurgitating someone else's words? Or even a top surgeon who skilfully saves someone's life? After all, we all die some day so shouldn't we let nature's survival of the fittest take precedence?

Anyway, if my boss said he was going to double or triple my salary I'm not going to say "no thanks, that's far too much money to pay someone" as we all have a duty to look after our own family before anyone or anything else.

I digress. This morning, amongst the usual pointless emails I receive, my attention was drawn to a freedom of information request by FT Adviser around the salaries earned by staff at the Financial Services Authority or FSA. In case you don't know, they are the people who regulate financial services in the UK - well at least they do until the new proposed regulatory structure comes into force. Apparently over 380 staff earned in excess of £100,000 last year. If that is the going rate then good luck to them but the figure of £100,000 isn't just salary. It includes bonuses.

The FSA has a tough job as the industry has many facets and differing types of financial companies from advisers to the banks. But how can it be right for the FSA to pay 84% of their staff a bonus while there have been the ongoing issues with Keydata, PPI and various other financial scandals?

I know what my answer to that question is but what's yours?