

been paid compensation at the time provided in paragraph (d) of § 1.421-6.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11696, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6527, 26 FR 411, Jan. 19, 1961; T.D. 7728, 45 FR 72650, Nov. 3, 1980]

**§ 1.421-6 Options to which section 421 does not apply.**

(a) *Scope of section.* (1) If an employer or other person grants to an employee or other person for any reason connected with the employment of such employee an option to purchase stock of the employer or other property, and if section 421 is not applicable, then this section shall apply. This section will apply, for example, when an option is not a qualified or restricted stock option at the time it is granted or an option granted under an employee stock purchase plan, or when an option is modified so that it no longer qualifies as such an option, or when there is a disqualifying disposition of stock acquired by the exercise of such an option so that section 421 does not apply. When an option is granted for any reason connected with the employment of an employee, this section applies, if section 421 does not apply, irrespective of whether the option is granted by the employer, by a parent or subsidiary of the employer, by a stockholder of any of such corporations, or by any other person, and irrespective of whether the option is granted to the employee, to a member of his family, or to any other person, and irrespective of whether the option is to purchase the stock of the employer, the stock of the parent or subsidiary of the employer, the stock of any other corporation, or to purchase any other property. In addition, § 1.61-15 makes the rules of this section applicable in determining the time when certain other options result in the realization of income and the amount of such income.

(2) This section is applicable to options granted on or after February 26, 1945, and before July 1, 1969 (and thereafter, to the extent that § 1.83-8(b) applies). For rules relating to options granted after June 30, 1969, see § 1.83-7. This section, however, is not applicable to—

(i) Property transferred pursuant to an option exercised before September 25, 1959, if the property is transferred

subject to a restriction which has a significant effect on its value, or

(ii) Property transferred pursuant to an option granted before September 25, 1959, and exercised on or after such date, if, under the terms of the contract granting such option, the property to be transferred upon the exercise of the option is to be subject to a restriction which has a significant effect on its value and if such property is actually transferred subject to such restriction. However, if an option granted before September 25, 1959, and on or after February 26, 1945, is sold or otherwise disposed of before exercise, the provisions of this section shall be fully applicable to such disposition.

(3) If an option to which this section applies has a readily ascertainable fair market value when granted, no amount is includible in gross income under this section as compensation by reason of the transfer or exercise of such option, irrespective of whether such value was included in income for the taxable year in which the option was granted, and any deduction which is allowable as a result of the granting of such option is allowable only for the taxable year in which the option is granted. Thus, if an option having a readily ascertainable fair market value to which this section applies was granted in a taxable year for which an assessment of deficiency was barred at the time of the adoption of paragraph (c) of this section as a Treasury decision, no amount is includible in gross income under this section as compensation by reason of the transfer or exercise of such option. However, if there is a determination to which the rules of sections 1311-1314 apply, there may be an adjustment for the taxable year in which the option was granted.

(b) *Meaning and use of certain terms.*

(1) For the purpose of this section, the term “option” includes the right or privilege of a person to purchase property from any person by virtue of an offer continuing for a stated period of time, whether or not irrevocable, to sell such property at a stated price, such person being under no obligation to purchase.

(2) As used in this section, the terms “employee”, “employment”, and “employer” have reference to the legal and

bona fide relationship of employer and employee. For rules applicable to the determination whether the employer-employee relationship exists, see section 3401(c) and the regulations thereunder.

(3) For purposes of applying the rules of this section to the options which are made subject to such rules by §1.61-15—

(i) The term “employee” includes the person who provided the consideration resulting in the grant of the option, the term “employer” includes the person to whom, or for whom, such consideration was provided, and the term “employment” includes the providing of such consideration;

(ii) Where a stock option is granted to an underwriter prior to a public offering and such grant is expressly or impliedly conditional upon the successful completion of the underwriting, the date on which the option shall be considered “granted” shall be the date of the successful completion of the underwriting.

(c) *Options with a readily ascertainable fair market value.* (1) If there is granted an option to which this section applies and which has a readily ascertainable fair market value (determined in accordance with subparagraphs (2) and (3) of this paragraph) at the time the option is granted, the employee in connection with whose employment such option is granted realizes compensation at such time in an amount equal to the excess, if any, of such fair market value over any amount paid for the option. If an option to which this section applies does not have a readily ascertainable fair market value at the time the option is granted, the time when the compensation is realized and the amount of such compensation shall be determined under paragraph (d) of this section.

(2) Although options may have a value at the time they are granted, that value is ordinarily not readily ascertainable unless the option is actively traded on an established market. If an option is actively traded on an established market, the fair market value of such option is readily ascertainable for purposes of this section by applying the rules of valuation set forth in §20.2031-2 of this chapter (the Estate Tax Regulations).

(3)(i) When an option is not actively traded on an established market, the fair market value of the option is not readily ascertainable unless the fair market value of the option can be measured with reasonable accuracy. For purposes of this section, if an option is not actively traded on an established market, the option does not have a readily ascertainable fair market value when granted unless the taxpayer can show that all of the following conditions exist:

(a) The option is freely transferable by the optionee;

(b) The option is exercisable immediately in full by the optionee;

(c) The option or the property subject to the option is not subject to any restriction or condition (other than a lien or other condition to secure the payment of the purchase price) which has a significant effect upon the fair market value of the option or such property; and

(d) The fair market value of the option privilege is readily ascertainable in accordance with subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph.

(ii) The option privilege in the case of an option to buy is the opportunity to benefit during the option's exercise period from any increase in the value of property subject to the option during such period, without risking any capital. Similarly, the option privilege in the case of an option to sell is the opportunity to benefit during the exercise period from a decrease in the value of the property subject to the option, for example, if at some time during the exercise period of an option to buy, the fair market value of the property subject to the option is greater than the option's exercise price, a profit may be realized by exercising the option and immediately selling the property so acquired for its higher fair market value. Irrespective of whether any such gain may be realized immediately at the time an option is granted, the fair market value of an option includes the value of the right to benefit from any future increase in the value of the property subject to the option (relative to the option exercise period), without risking any capital. Therefore, the fair market value of an option is not merely the difference that may exist at a

particular time between the option's exercise price and the value of the property subject to the option, but also includes the value of the option privilege for the remainder of the exercise period. Accordingly, for purposes of this section, in determining whether the fair market value of an option is readily ascertainable, it is necessary to consider whether the value of the entire option privilege can be measured with reasonable accuracy. In determining whether the value of the option privilege is readily ascertainable, and in determining the amount of such value when such value is readily ascertainable, it is necessary to consider—

(a) Whether the value of the property subject to the option can be ascertained; and

(b) The probability of any ascertainable value of such property increasing or decreasing; and (c) The length of the period during which the option can be exercised.

(d) *Options without a readily ascertainable fair market value.* If there is granted an option to which this section applies, and if the option does not have a readily ascertainable fair market value at the time it is granted, the employee in connection with whose employment the option is granted is considered to realize compensation includible in gross income under section 61 at the time and in the amount determined in accordance with the following rules of this paragraph:

(1) Except as provided in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, if the option is exercised by the person to whom it was granted, the employee realizes compensation at the time an unconditional right to receive the property subject to the option is acquired by such person, and the amount of such compensation is the difference between the amount payable for the property and the fair market value of the property at the time an unconditional right to receive the property is acquired. An individual has an unconditional right to receive the property subject to the option when his right to receive such property is not subject to any conditions, other than conditions that may be performed by him at any time. Thus, if an individual who has exercised an option has a right to make

payment for the property at any time and to receive the property immediately after making such payment, such individual realizes compensation at the time he exercises the option. However, if an individual who has exercised an option is prevented by the terms of the option contract from making payment immediately of from receiving an immediate transfer of the property after making payment, such individual does not realize compensation at the time he exercises the option. Such individual will not realize compensation until he does acquire the right to make payment immediately and to receive an immediate transfer of the property. For purposes of this paragraph, an unconditional right to receive the property subject to the option shall not be considered to have been acquired before the date on which the option is exercised.

(2)(i) If the option is exercised by the person to whom it was granted but, at the time an unconditional right to receive the property subject to the option is acquired by such person, such property is subject to a restriction which has a significant effect on its value, the employee realizes compensation at the time such restriction lapses or at the time the property is sold or exchanged, in an arm's length transaction, whichever occurs earlier, and the amount of such compensation is the lesser of—

(a) The difference between the amount paid for the property and the fair market value of the property (determined without regard to the restriction) at the time of its acquisition, or

(b) The difference between the amount paid for the property and either its fair market value at the time the restriction lapses or the consideration received upon the sale or exchange, whichever is applicable.

If the property is sold or exchanged in a transaction which is not an arm's length before the time the employee realizes compensation in accordance with this subdivision, any amount of gain which the employee realizes as a result of such sale or exchange is includible in gross income at the time of such sale or exchange, but the amount includible in gross income under this

subdivision at the time of the expiration of the restriction or the sale or exchange at arm's length shall be reduced by the amount of gain includible in gross income as a result of the sale or exchange not at arm's length.

(ii) The provisions of subdivision (i) of this subparagraph may be illustrated by the following examples:

*Example (1).* On November 1, 1959, X Corporation grants to E, an employee, an option to purchase 100 shares of X Corporation stock at \$10 per share. Under the terms of the option, E will be subject to a binding commitment to resell the stock to X Corporation at the price he paid for it in the event that his employment terminates within 2 years after he acquires the stock, for any reason except his death. Evidence of this commitment will be stamped on the face of E's stock certificate. E exercises the option and acquires the stock at a time when the stock, determined without regard to the restriction, has a fair market value of \$18 per share. Two years after he acquires the stock, at which time the stock has a fair market value of \$30 per share, E is still employed by X Corporation. E realizes compensation upon the expiration of the 2-year restriction and the amount of the compensation is \$800. The \$800 represents the difference between the amount paid for the stock (\$1,000) and the fair market value of the stock (determined without regard to the restriction) at the time of its acquisition (\$1,800), since such value is less than the fair market value of the stock at the time the restriction lapsed (\$3,000).

*Example (2).* Assume, in example (1), that E dies one year after he acquires the stock, at which time the stock has a fair market value of \$25 per share. Since the restriction lapses upon E's death, he realizes compensation of \$300 (\$1,800 less \$1,000) and this amount is includible in E's gross income for the taxable year closing with his death.

*Example (3).* Assume that, pursuant to the exercise of an option not having a readily ascertainable fair market value to which this section applies, an employee acquires stock subject to the sole condition that, if he desires to dispose of such stock during the period of his employment, he is obligated to offer to sell the stock to his employer at its fair market value at the time of such sale. Since this condition is not a restriction which has a significant effect on value, the employee realizes compensation upon acquisition of the stock.

*Example (4).* Assume, in example (3), that the employee is obligated to offer to sell the stock to his employer at its book value rather than at its fair market value. Since this condition amounts to a restriction which has a significant effect on value, the employee

does not realize compensation upon acquisition of the stock, but he does realize such compensation upon the lapse of the restriction, such as, for example, his death or the termination of his employment.

(3) If the option is not exercised by the person to whom it was granted, but is transferred in an arm's length transaction, the employee realizes compensation in the amount of the gain resulting from such transfer of the option, and such compensation is includible in his gross income in accordance with his method of accounting.

(4) If the option is not exercised by the person to whom it was granted, but is transferred in a transaction which is not at arm's length, the employee realizes compensation in the amount of the gain resulting from such transfer of the option, and such compensation is includible in his gross income in accordance with his method of accounting. Moreover, the employee realizes additional compensation at the time and in the amount determined under subparagraph (1), (2), or (3) of this paragraph, except that the amount of compensation determined under subparagraph (1), (2), or (3) of this paragraph shall be reduced by any amount previously includible in gross income as a result of such transfer of the option. For example, if in 1960 an employee is granted an option not having a readily ascertainable fair market value to buy a share of stock for \$50 at a time when the stock has a fair market value of \$100, and later in 1960 the employee transfers, in a transaction not at arm's length, the option to his wife for \$10, the employee realizes compensation of \$10 in 1960. If in 1961 the wife exercises the option at a time when the stock has a fair market value of \$120, the employee realizes additional compensation in 1961 in the amount of \$60 (the \$70 bargain spread less the \$10 taxed as compensation in 1960). For the purpose of this subparagraph if a person other than the employee dies holding an unexercised option at a time when the employee is still living, the transfer which results by reason of the death of such person is a transfer in a transaction which is not at arm's length.

(5) If there is granted an option to which this section applies, and the employee dies before realizing the compensation in accordance with the rules of this paragraph, income having the character of compensation is realized at the time and in the amount determined under this paragraph by the person who transfers or exercises the option, or the person who receives the property subject to a restriction which has a significant effect on its value. For example, this subparagraph is applicable:

(i) When an option not having a readily ascertainable fair market value is granted to an employee, and he dies before transferring or exercising the option,

(ii) When an option not having a readily ascertainable fair market value is granted to the employee, and he dies after the transfer of the option in a transaction which is not at arm's length, but before the option is exercised, or

(iii) When an option not having a readily ascertainable fair market value is granted to another person, and the employee dies before realizing all of the compensation which would result from any transfer or exercise of the option. If the option is one which was granted to the employee and he dies before transferring or exercising the option, the option shall be considered a right to receive income in respect of a decedent to which the rules of section 691 apply. In any such case, if the option is transferred, section 691 provides that the amount received for such transfer or the fair market value of the property transferred at the time of transfer, whichever is greater, is income realized at the time of such transfer. Moreover, if a transfer is subject to this rule, it will be treated as a transfer in an arm's length transaction for the purpose of this paragraph.

(6) If an option to which this section applies is exercised in part and transferred in part, the rules of this paragraph shall be applied as if there were two options—one exercised and one transferred.

(7) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this paragraph, if this section is applicable because of a disqualifying disposition of stock acquired by the ex-

ercise of a qualified or restricted stock option, or acquired by the exercise of an option granted under an employee stock purchase plan, the taxable year of the employee for which he is required to include in his gross income the compensation resulting from such option is determined under section 421(b) and paragraph (b) of § 1.421-8 (or, in the case of taxable years ending before January 1, 1964, under section 421(f) and paragraph (e) of § 1.421-5) and, in the case of a disqualifying disposition of a share of stock acquired by the exercise of a qualified stock option, the amount of such compensation shall be subject to the limitation provided by section 422(c)(4) and paragraph (b) of § 1.422-1.

(e) *Basis.* (1) If an option to which this section applies is exercised by the person to whom it was granted, such person's basis for the property so acquired shall be increased by any amount that is includible in the gross income of the employee under paragraph (d) of this section. If such person transfers such property to a person whose basis is the same as the transferor's basis, such transferee's basis shall also reflect the adjustment made by this paragraph. However, if such property is transferred by either of such persons at death so that its basis is determined under section 1014, the basis so determined shall not be increased by reason of this paragraph.

(2) If an option to which this section applies is transferred in a transaction which is not at arm's length, the transferee who exercises the option shall increase his basis for the property so acquired by any amount that is includible in the gross income of the employee at the time such transferee acquires the property.

(3) If an option to which this section applies is transferred in a transaction which is at arm's length, the basis of the property acquired by an exercise of the option shall not be increased by reason of any amount that is includible in this gross income of the employee under this section.

(4) If an option to which this section applies has a readily ascertainable fair market value at the time it is granted, the basis of such option includes any amount includible in gross income of

the employee under paragraph (c) of this section.

(f) *Deductions.* If the employer grants an option to which this section applies, the employer of the employee in connection with whose employment the option is granted is considered to have paid compensation to such employee at the same time and in the same amount as such employee is considered under paragraph (c) or (d) of this section to have realized compensation. The deductibility of the amount considered so paid is determined under section 162 or other provision of the Code which is applicable to such a payment. Whether such amount may be deducted in the taxable year considered so paid, or whether such amount is a capital expenditure which is not deductible or which may be amortized, depends upon the nature of the transaction involved and the facts and circumstances of each case. If this section is applicable because of a disqualifying disposition of stock acquired by the exercise of a qualified or restricted stock option, or acquired by the exercise of an option granted under an employee stock purchase plan, the employer's taxable year for which such compensation is deductible is determined under section 421(b) and paragraph (b) of § 1.421-8 (or, in the case of taxable years ending before January 1, 1964, under section 421(f) and paragraph (e) of § 1.421-5).

(Secs. 83 and 7805 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (83 Stat. 588; 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 83 and 7805))

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**§ 1.421-7 Meaning and use of certain terms.**

(a) *Option.* (1) For purposes of sections 421 through 425, the term "option" includes the right or privilege of an individual to purchase stock from a corporation by virtue of an offer of the corporation continuing for a stated period of time, whether or not irrevocable, to sell such stock at a price determined under paragraph (e) of this section, such individual being under no obligation to purchase. Such right or privilege, when granted, must be evidenced in writing. The individual who

has such right or privilege is referred to as the optionee and the corporation offering to sell stock under such an arrangement is referred to as the optionor. While no particular form of words is necessary, the written option should express, among other things, an offer to sell at the option price and the period of time during which the offer shall remain open.

(2) An option may be granted as part of or in conjunction with an employee stock purchase plan or subscription contract. See section 423.

(3) An arrangement between a corporation and an employee may involve more than one option. For example, if a corporation on June 1, 1964, grants to an employee the right to purchase 1,000 shares of its stock on or after June 1, 1965, another 1,000 shares on or after June 1, 1966, and a further 1,000 shares on or after June 1, 1967, all shares to be purchased before June 1, 1968, provided the employee at the time of exercise of any of the purchase rights is employed by the corporation, such an arrangement will be construed as the grant to the employee on June 1, 1964, of three options, each for the purchase of 1,000 shares. However, if a corporation grants to an employee on January 1, 1965, the right to purchase 1,000 shares of its stock at \$65 per share during 1965, or at \$75 per share during 1966, or at \$85 per share during 1967, such an arrangement will be construed as the grant to the employee on January 1, 1965, of but one option for the purchase of 1,000 shares, which ceases to be outstanding when fully exercised at the price in effect at the time of exercise.

(b) *Statutory options.* (1) The term "statutory option", used for purposes of convenience hereinafter in this section and in §§ 1.421-8 through 1.425-1, means a qualified stock option, as defined by section 422(b) and § 1.422-2; an option granted under an employee stock purchase plan, as defined by section 423(b) and § 1.423-2; and a restricted stock option, as defined in section 424(b) and § 1.424-2.

(2) An option may qualify as a statutory option only if the option is not transferable (other than by will or by the laws of descent and distribution) by the individual to whom it is granted, and is exercisable, during the lifetime