

The Right Way to Ask for a Raise

If your company's bottom line is growing, don't wait to request a salary bump. Our insider advice will help get you to yes.

BY KORIN MILLER

► Love your job but think your paycheck is total crap for all the work you put in? You're not the only one. "Annual pay increases are rare, thanks to the recession, leaving many people feeling stuck in a financial rut even as they continue to work harder than ever," says Lee E. Miller, coauthor of *A Woman's Guide to Successful Negotiating*. Instead of fuming in your cube and cruising Monster.com every night, start planning to make a play for more money, because no matter how good you are, few bosses are just going to hand you extra cash.

Time It Right

Congratulations! Your division's sales numbers have totally rebounded. Don't wait—make your move now. It helps to pop the question within a month after the company has had a big success, especially if you contributed to it, says Lois Frankel, PhD, author of *See Jane Lead*. Your head honcho will have every reason to believe that profits are looking up, so she'll be in a more giving mood.

PLEASE DONT GO

Nearly one-third of bosses worry that their star employees will leave for a better, higher-paying gig.

SOURCE: CAREERBUILDER.COM SURVEY

If the company is doing just okay, find out when your boss submits her annual budget for next year (ask that nice lady in accounting), and broach the topic several months beforehand. That way, she'll have a chance to work out where the additional money could come from.

Another good time: when you receive an outside job offer or right after a recruiter from another company calls to say they're interested in you. Miller recommends saying something like this to your boss: "I want you

to know that an appealing job opportunity has come up, but I love working here and would like to stay. Is there any way you can make my salary a little more competitive?" By taking this approach (instead of

giving an ultimatum), you're letting your boss know that you're in demand without coming across as cocky.

Pretty sure your company has zero funds to spare? Miller still recommends bringing up the subject three months before your annual review. That way, if some money becomes available before your yearly sit-down, you'll be one of the first people your boss thinks of.

Stress Your Strengths

What really compels your manager to boost your salary is the belief that it'll benefit the company—and make her job a hell of a lot easier—if she keeps you motivated and happy, says Phyllis Mindell, EdD, author of *How to Say It for Women*. In other words, she has to feel like it'd be a nightmare to lose you. So remind her of how much you do, says Miller. List the clients who



Looking like a million bucks never hurts.

You, Even Better

have raved about your work, describe the times you've come through in a pinch, and point out how you always take on new responsibilities.

Keep It Friendly

A recent Harvard study discovered that male *and* female bosses were less inclined to work with a woman who outright demanded a pay boost because it came off as overly aggressive, says study author Hannah Riley Bowles, an assistant professor at Harvard Kennedy School. While this wasn't true for men, she found that women who took the softer approach and explained *why* they wanted the raise didn't have the same problem. (Yes, we realize that's sexist.)

So start the conversation by summing up all the amazing things you do, says Miller, then finish with something along the lines of “Given my contributions, I’d like to discuss my prospects for getting a raise. What do you think?”

By asking her opinion, you're showing her respect. That said, avoid being *too* nice and saying "If it's not possible, I understand," which makes it obvious that you'll stick around either way.

Name Your Number

Since you made such a convincing case for why you should get more money, be prepared to hear this: "How much were you hoping for?" Resist the urge to say "Whatever you can manage" or you'll get low-balled. Instead, come prepared with a doable figure. Peruse sites like Salary.com and Glassdoor.com to get an idea of what other people on your level are making. The standard raise is 5 to 10 percent, but shoot for 10, says Frankel.

Want more? Totally possible, as long as you can prove that your job has grown significantly since you were hired. Just don't forget to send "the best boss ever" a thank-you note when you get the good news. ■

Your Backup Plan

Got shot down? Skip the self-pity party, and keep your eyes on the prize.

Request extras. Sometimes companies just don't have the money. In that case, ask your boss if she would be willing to give you a higher-status title or grant you an additional week of vacation every year.

Don't let it drop. Ask when you should follow up again, and throw out a time frame, like three months. Setting a date shows you're serious about getting a pay boost while giving her time to reevaluate your performance and/or her budget.

Get feedback. Even if the reason given was financial, it always helps to inquire what you can do to make sure

You're a candidate for a raise down the line. Ask how you can improve and if there are extra tasks you could tackle that would make you a more valuable team member.

Stay positive. Vent your frustration to your guy and friends, but keep a lid on it at work. The less negativity you radiate after getting a no, the more professional you'll appear.

Start looking. Pursuing other offers is definitely a good strategy, provided you're discreet. You could gain the leverage you need or find something better...and more profitable.

SOURCES: LOIS FRANKEL, PHD; LEE E. MILLER



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