

Asking for a Pay Rise

Asking for a pay rise can be an intimidating experience. But if you approach it in the right way, with confidence and assertiveness, asking for a raise will show your employers that you are serious about your job and your future with their company. The objective of this article is to provide some insights and practical guidance for people seeking a pay rise at work. We have explored the internet, reviewed articles and have spoken to leading HR practitioners on this subject.

This article presents observations of experienced HR practitioners who provide their insights into these issues from both an HR and management perspective. They also comment about how they have been impacted personally with respect to the issue. Key points on how to practically approach asking for a raise focus on:

- Preparation
- What not to do when asking for a pay rise
- How to prepare yourself for a negative response from your employer.

Preparation

The best thing that you can do when asking for a pay rise is to be thoroughly prepared. Preparation for this task includes a variety of considerations such as:

- Timing
- Being empathetic to, and understanding of, your employer's financial situation
- Knowing how much money you are going to ask for, and why
- Making a case based on your performance and achievements
- Setting up the meeting, and
- Being assertive at the meeting and taking a future focus.

As with most things in life, **timing** can be everything. When asking for a pay rise it is important to find out your company's policy on pay increases and their time schedule. Keep in mind when finding your organisation's policy on pay increases that there is a difference in how the public and private sectors go about them. The public sector takes a more regulated approach with the "merit principle" and more structured levels, the so called "career ladder". Bonus payments to individuals are rare except for performance pay at the most senior levels. Typically the way to approach your public sector employer for a pay rise is to ask how you can go about getting a promotion.

On the other hand the private sector focuses more on individual employee achievements when considering them for a pay rise. Organisation structure levels tend to be less well defined in the private sector; however even where they are defined (larger corporations generally have more structure to job roles and salary ranges) there is much more flexibility for individuals to put their case for a pay rise. Try timing your proposal for a pay rise around the time of the annual performance review (as long as you've performed well) or approach your boss after you have done well on a project or taken up new responsibilities.

It is also very important when preparing yourself to ask for a pay rise that you are able to empathise with your employer's situation. This will give you as an employee, a much greater insight into how to structure your request. Alan Anderson, a former HR Director and consultant, says it is important that the person applying for the pay rise is empathetic with the company's financial situation and aware of any pressures that the boss is under. It is also important to be realistic about your own contribution to the financial viability of the business, says Anderson. "This is an important step in understanding whether the proposal for a raise has any chance of success. Remember that you are unlikely to receive a pay rise for just doing your job and in a situation where the company is not overly profitable."

The next step is deciding **how much** you are going to ask for. It is important to try and find out how much you should be worth to your employer and to tell them exactly how much you think you should be getting paid. It is essential to try and find out how much other people in your field are getting paid and what your position is worth. Although Alan Anderson had some words of caution concerning this issue: "Many people will research salary surveys by large recruitment firms available over the internet. People should be aware that some of these surveys will not apply to them because of the industry in which they work." He said.

Further, the generic and general way in which the jobs are described may not be relevant. Often the surveys can be misleading because they will not enable you to compare "like with like" in relation to your role. Similarly, conversations with friends in similar roles in other organisations will often be misleading for the same reasons, because it is hard to make exact comparisons across industries and different businesses. Nevertheless, if you can find reliable industry salary survey data then it will help provide objective evidence of comparative pay rates which might show you are being under paid. So be careful when trying to find out how much money you should be asking for and use reliable and objective sources when doing so.

It is crucial that you go to your employer with a list of **accomplishments and achievements** when asking for a pay rise in order to prove that you should be earning more money. For example you should describe specifically how you saved the company money, boosted sales, decreased stress and hassle on a project and showed leadership under pressure. It is important to try and use as many facts and figures as possible and present them to your boss in an orderly and precise manner. It is also important to include things such as how your job description has changed or instances where you have taken on more responsibilities. It can also be helpful to provide "proof" in the form of copies of emails or memos from clients, colleagues or people in higher positions who have praised your performance.

The next step is to set up the **meeting** with your employer. It is important when asking for a pay rise that you take the time to organise a face to face meeting with your boss. Do not just email them or drop by their office. You need your boss to see that you are serious about asking for a pay rise and you want your boss to take your proposal seriously as well. When organising the meeting, explain that you want to talk about your remuneration so they can be prepared.

What not to do when asking for a pay rise

To make this experience as pleasant and successful as possible there are a few things you should avoid doing when asking for a pay rise. The fundamental thing to avoid is telling your boss how much you need the money or complain about your (dire) financial situation. Remember, your employer is only interested in whether you deserve a raise in terms of your accomplishments on behalf of the company. Another thing you should avoid is issuing ultimatums to your employer. You may judge it helpful to tell them if you have received other job offers (be very careful here) but do not give your boss an ultimatum, as even the most even tempered person in the world hates hearing "or else". It is also very important that you remain professional and don't become emotional or lose your temper when discussing a pay rise. Your boss will only want to discuss the issue on a rational, evidence-based approach, not an emotional one.

Think about next year and try to negotiate with your boss an agreed, transparent set of performance standards and goals that you need to meet in order to qualify for either a pay rise or a bonus. And finally, be flexible when asking for a rise. Your boss may not be able to provide you with a pay rise right now, but may be open to giving you a higher bonus or even opening up training opportunities which could help you achieve your goal later in the year.

How to prepare yourself if your boss says no

There may be a number of reasons why your boss will say “no” to your request. Some of these include the fact that they simply can’t afford to give you a pay rise, or your boss doesn’t think you have done enough to deserve a raise or there may even seem to be no reason at all. But the way you respond to your boss can still help you to get what you’re looking for in the long run. If the company simply hasn’t sufficient money available to give you a raise, try a different approach.

Propose an upgrade of your position; it would be easier for your employer to rationalise a higher salary if your job description involved higher level work. You could also (pleasantly) ask your boss what it would take for you to get a raise in how much time, and then follow through with a summary of what was agreed at the meeting. This would show your boss that you are truly interested in your value to the company and then you can re-open negotiations in a few months. If your boss seems to simply be turning you down flat, remain professional and simply say “I understand your position” and leave the room. Nothing good could come from becoming aggressive or disgruntled or making a scene. It is another thing to consider; however, if your boss is consistently turning down your pay rise requests despite what you consider is consistent high performance. This could indicate a time to move on and look for a company which is willing to pay you what you deserve.

Summary

So to maximise your chances of successfully obtaining a pay rise you need to:

- Prepare your case well
- Understand your company’s financial capacity to pay
- Be realistic about your performance levels and their potential worth to the business, and
- Be pragmatic (that is, be prepared to be patient and try again next year).

Good luck!

Research

<http://www.careerhunt.com.au/blog/ask-for-pay-raise-pay-raise-advice>

<http://www.aussienow.com.au/news/career-advice/how-to-ask-for-a-salary-raise>

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<http://www.builderau.com.au/strategy/career/soa/ls-mentioning-a-job-offer-in-a-raise-discussion-a-good-or-bad-idea-/0.2000063986.339296755.00.htm>

<http://www.admin-ezine.com/ask-for-a-raise.htm>

<http://www.myopenwallet.net/2006/02/how-to-ask-for-raise.html>