

How to Ask for a Raise

By Max Owens

Human resource managers agree that there's no single best approach to "getting a real raise." Discussions with employees and managers, including Bruce Goodwin, President of Stealth Staffing (stealthst@aol.com) in Brentwood, Tennessee, provide insight and a viable framework on obtaining a raise.

Different situations and different bosses dictate that an evaluation process must take place before approaching your boss.

The following things should be considered:

- The employer's personnel culture -- what is acceptable and what is not?
- Your relationship with your boss -- are you personal friends or do you rarely talk?
- Your boss's reaction to your request -- will he be defensive, open to discussion or will he avoid the subject?
- The normal compensation for your job -- are you underpaid, and if not how can you justify an increase? Can you be easily replaced?
- What others are making at your company or agency -- how do they compare to your compensation?
- The company's current status -- has your employer given others raises recently or are they in a cutback mode?
- Your skills -- have you made any significant contributions to your employer? How recent are your accomplishments? Did your boss and others recognize them?

Once you have completed the evaluation, devise an approach that you feel comfortable with pursuing. Take note of information that will help your case and use it in discussions.

Timing is important. If the time is right, set up an appointment, or if appropriate, go on in and meet with your boss informally. If things don't go well, or if you are not comfortable asking for a raise at this time, develop a long-term strategy. Asking for a raise should not be a one-time affair. It should be a concerted effort on your part to show your employer what you are capable of doing all the time.

Here are some things to do to develop and carry out a long-term strategy:

- Ask your boss what areas you need to improve. Use your annual evaluation if it is the most appropriate time.
- Ask what actions you should take to make improvements.
- Show your boss in day-to-day situations you are working to improve your weaknesses.
- Continue with informal follow-up conversations on your work when appropriate.
- Show you are a team player.
- Show through your actions and words you are loyal to the employer and your boss.
- Do the little things bosses look for from outstanding employees
 - Be to work and meetings on time.
 - Don't take unnecessary sick days.
 - Respond quickly and in a positive manner to employee and other departments' requests.
 - Leave personal problems at home.
 - Don't complain around the office.

There are things not to do in front of your boss when requesting a raise.

- Don't be overly aggressive.
- Don't give ultimatums.
- Never threaten to quit.
- Don't argue.

You may not always agree with your boss's performance evaluation, but always discuss it in a positive manner. Show him through actions and words you are working on making improvements. He may not be aware of what you are doing, so it is up to you to bring it to his attention.

Remember the key to success in the workplace is performance and a positive can-do attitude and image. Make sure your boss is always cognizant of your accomplishments and hard work. This is the best way to get a raise and maybe even a promotion.

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