

How to secure better pay

Introduction

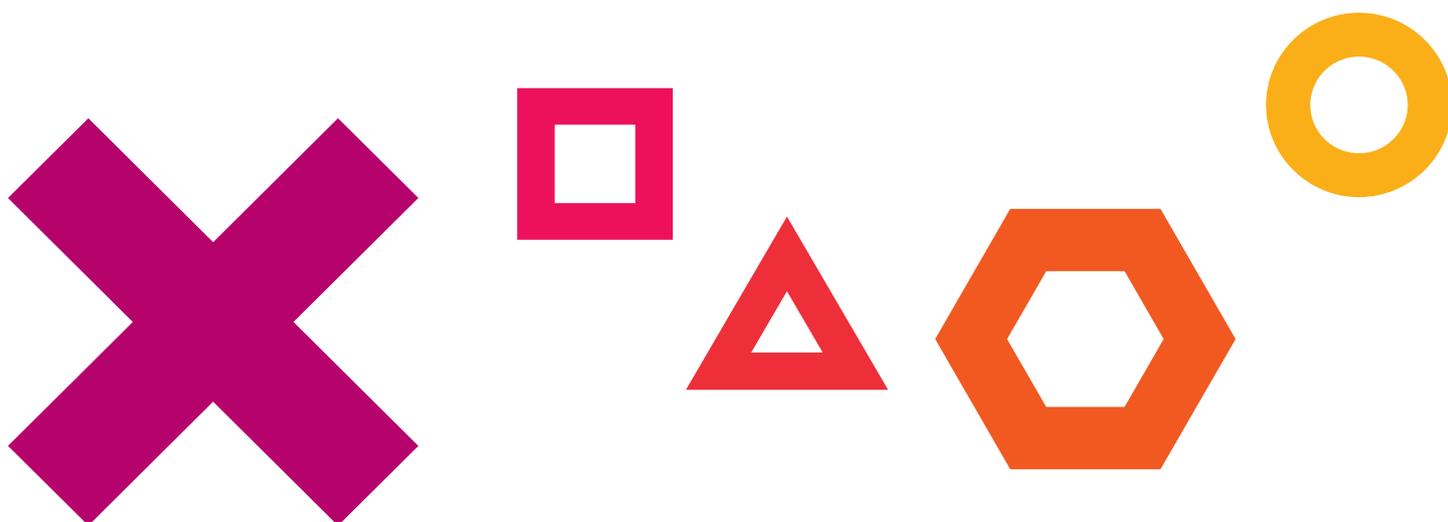
The days of a job being for life have been well and truly consigned to the history books. In fact, it has been found that the average worker will change jobs upwards or seven times during their career. But just because you might not remain with your current company for any more than a few years, that doesn't mean that you are not entitled to be paid what you believe you are worth.

We are currently in what we in Recruitment and Human Resources call a 'candidate driven' market. Unemployment is at its lowest since the 1970s and while the number of new vacancies being created continues to rise, the availability of candidates is falling.

This is great both for job seekers and employees alike – if you're good, then employers will go the extra distance to retain you and that could mean offering you a salary increase.

Of course, this is easier said than done. So, if you're at the stage in your career where you know you have proven your worth and believe you should be remunerated accordingly, how do you go about it?

Over the course of the next few pages, you will discover the most effective strategy for achieving a better package from your employer.



1. It's all about timing

When your boss' schedule is jam-packed with meetings and deadlines are fast approaching, it's only natural to shy away from the pay rise conversation. When their diary clears and things seem calmer, you might feel more confident popping the big question - yet, it still never feels like the right time to ask.

Soon, the very idea of requesting a raise makes you feel like Oliver Twist in the workhouse dining hall. Anxiously clutching your empty bowl, you wait for the right moment to make your move. Finally, the opportunity presents itself in the form of a one-to-one or appraisal. You want to ask, but your boss reveals the company has just lost a major contract.

Suddenly, your request seems completely inappropriate: you leave the meeting, slump in to your seat and get back to the grind. Will there ever be a good time to ask for a pay rise?

The short answer is yes. However, a little planning goes a long way.

Assess your own performance

If you're going to negotiate for a bump in your salary, be sure that you know it's warranted before making a request. For example, have you recently been outperforming your team, smashing your targets and going beyond your remit to help others? Are you consistent in your results? Perhaps you've committed extra-curricular time into projects or have recently produced high quality work that has driven client satisfaction through the roof.

Whatever your reasons, it's unlikely you'll get the pay rise you want if you have no empirical evidence to support your case.

Consider your current salary

When was the last time you asked for a pay rise? If the answer to this question is six months ago or less, give it some time. While you may have produced impeccable work during this time and proved yourself to be a star player, immediately following this up with a request for more money will give your boss the impression that compensation the sole driver in your professional life. Of course, that may well be the case - but it doesn't exactly paint you in a positive light.

Avoid notoriously busy times

Some believe the best day to ask for a raise is Wednesday. Others swear by Thursdays, specifically 3pm or as close as you can get. Truthfully, there is no "sweet spot" when it comes to the salary conversation and the right time will depend on the unique routines and processes in the business. However, there are certain times that are a big, fat no-no: the end of the financial year being a good example.

Gain insight on company performance

High performers are completely justified in asking for a pay rise, regardless of the financial circumstances of the business. However, requesting a raise when the business is in downturn will unlikely land you the salary boost you desire. If the organisation is truly in the red and redundancies are on the cards, demanding a wage bump may not reflect so well on you. Of course, if you can prove to your boss that you are vital to getting the company through tough times, that's a different story.

2. Know your worth, demonstrate your value

Let's face it, it is said you can really only ask for a raise if you feel you deserve it. If you don't believe in yourself then your manager certainly will not get a sense of your worth.

Sure, it should be your managers job to notice the fantastic work you do and offer you money on a silver platter, however it is quite important to consider that your manager may not be prioritising your career. They will primarily care about their own career and the business as a whole, which essentially is what they're paid to do so don't be disheartened

Pitch it like a pro

After that reality check, don't worry! It's not to say you can't get a raise, of course you can but you have to work for it. The main thing is, do your homework. Have you achieved the targets you were set at the beginning of the year? Have you exceeded them even? Have you gone above and beyond your duty to provide the best possible results?

If so, you 100% have every right to ask for more. You also have some great content to put into a presentation to tell your boss exactly why they should be giving you that raise. 23% of Brits admit their jobs pay badly and, whilst it might sound corny, you really should go that extra mile and give them reason to agree. Also, act fast before that 23% also jump on the bandwagon.

Saying that, you don't have to be employee of the month three years in a row to qualify for higher remuneration. Have you excelled at your job more than your predecessor? Are you the only person around who can achieve what you can (in your special little way)? Have you made your boss's job easier by doing 'this and that' for them? These are all reasons to big yourself up and prove that you're going that extra mile.

Overall, the key to asking that really awkward question is confidence, knowing your self-worth and also having the knowledge to back it up. Also, if you're more introverted or emotional, which is completely normal when approaching something as tricky as a pay rise, the key is to know how to deal with your emotions, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

3. Take the emotion out of the equation

Whether your rent has risen, a holiday is on the horizon or you're trying to get a foot on the property ladder, it can be easy to let emotion fuel your salary negotiation. Having been with the business for a considerable amount of time, you may have even spent the last few weeks kicking back under the assumption that your boss will give you a raise simply for your commitment alone.

In truth, the world owes no one a living. Your relationship with your manager and your personal plans or problems mean very little when it comes to business. If you're on the verge of requesting a raise, remember that emotion has no place in negotiation. If you are to secure the pay rise you're after, it's essential to keep a cool head.

Stick to facts, not feelings

Negotiating a pay rise is undoubtedly one of the most awkward conversations you can have in the workplace. However, when emotions get in the way, it only makes it harder. Try to steer clear of phrases that start with "I feel like..." or "I think," and instead concentrate on why a pay rise simply makes business sense. If you have figures to support your request, all the better: this data will make for a compelling case that your boss will have a hard time refuting.

When presenting your reasons, never under any circumstances should you bring other people's work and pay into the conversation. Your salary depends on your contribution, not the performance, age, loyalty or behaviour of other employees. Mentioning their salaries will only show your boss that your gaze is locked on others, rather than your own self-improvement.

Never act entitled

Regardless of how strong your performance has been and the difference you have made in the business, strutting into the meeting room and demanding a raise because you clearly deserve it will leave nothing but a bad taste.

Remember, workers in the UK are not legally entitled to a pay rise each year, even an incremental rise in line with inflation. Instead, employers determine whether or not their staff merit a salary increase depending on their input, output and dedication.

There's a difference between confidently asserting the results you have achieved and bragging about how indispensable you have become: let your boss be the judge of that from the evidence you have provided.

Stay calm

A sniveling employee pleading for a pay-rise is about as convincing as a weeping ex-boyfriend desperately shouting, "you're all I've got!" Your boss doesn't want to hear about your struggle to make ends meet or your monthly overdraft usage fee. Welling up will only put them in an uncomfortable position: those who give in are usually guilt-tripped into doing so and those who don't will usually remind you that it's a business, not a charity and they would be completely justified in doing so. Leave your financial woes at the door, and focus on your strengths.

Remember, no matter how your boss reacts to your request, stomping your foot and threatening to resign if you don't get your way will only result in unnecessary tension. If you don't get the answer you were hoping for, keep calm and plan your next move.

4. What happens if they say no (and if they say yes)

Now for the good news, asking for it is probably the hardest part. However how you react to the answer you get says more about you than possibly anything you will do at work. Read on to see how it's important to consider your reaction in both instances.

“I'm sorry we can't give you a pay rise right now”

'No' is a word you hate hearing since the day you learn to talk. However, this is a big topic and it's important, before you react, to consider why? Is it you? Is it the company, can they not afford to give you better pay? Is there someone else who is doing a better job and deserves it more? Whatever the answer, just know you don't have to accept it.

Most 'how to' guides will tell you to graciously exit the room, keep your head down for the rest of the day and get on with it. However, this is the 21st century, the level of unemployment has reached a 42-year low, at 4.2% (May 2018), and there has never been a better environment for choice.

Changing jobs is an option for you. It is clearly a major decision but, if you feel unappreciated and feel you can get better money and career satisfaction elsewhere, then why not change roles?

Okay, so you've been out of the job market for a few years and are a bit rusty. That's where someone like us comes in - our job is to find you a job...the right job!

“Yes of course, I was thinking of you just today for a raise...”

'Yes' is that glorious word that will inevitably lead to a positive shift in your disposable income. Whilst you should revel in the good news, as a strategic business man or woman, the next stage for you is more logistical planning.

You have been rewarded for your hard work and yet now is the time to set your next benchmark. On the one hand to reassure your employer they made a great decision, and on the other to ensure your next raise is in sight.

In terms of improvement it is always handy to have a list of objectives agreed on between you and your boss that you can tick off along the way, so that the next time you approach them for a raise you can sit down and analyse your accomplishments and objectives set mutually for you. The key is to ensure you live up to the expectations set, then realistically the only way is up.

5. It's not all about the money

So, you didn't get that pay rise despite proving logical and extensive reasoning to your superior. It may kick a little but believe us when we say, there is more to life than just money. If you are putting in the extra work and your boss is feeling the pinch, perhaps take a new approach, other than seeking better opportunity elsewhere.

Teach me something new

Education, training and development are a great incentive for progress. Not only are you benefitting from this in terms of skills, but your employer will directly reap the benefits of self-improvement in your work. This is one great incentive for employers particularly in your early stages.

79% of students believe that employers should train them in professional skills for management or leadership roles to help them progress effectively.

The good thing is, you don't have to be a newbie to receive training; suggest this to your employer and they may see the mutual benefits much clearer than a pay rise.

Liberate me with flexible working

Flexible working is gathering a lot of attention in the media at the moment. Millennials and Gen Zs are jumping onto the idea that non-traditional workdays are the key to motivation, and lo and behold, employers are starting to see the light.

Natalie Pancheri, HR Policy Adviser at the London School of Economics (LSE) agrees. "The benefits of flexible working are well established, from increased employee engagement to better performance."

There are said to be four million people in the UK who want the chance to work from home and your boss may be more lenient about this than you'd expect.

If your boss isn't quite so liberal, why not try asking to switch up your working hours? 9-5 isn't too different from 8-4 or 10-6 and maybe that extra hour in bed or hour of daylight in the evening will do you the world of good.

Invest in me

If you find your managers or company are not in the position to give a pay rise, have you thought of asking for a stake in the company? Of course, this applies to specific businesses and more so to long-term employees, but if it's an option it might be well worth the ask.

Not only will you benefit financially, if in a slighter way than a salary increase, but you will also prove your loyalty to the company. This is bound to appeal to the higher ups. You may also find you're putting a little more effort into your work, after all, a little bit of that company is now yours. Before long you'll be working up towards that pay rise you substituted without even realising!

Less is more or more is less

You were denied a pay rise on the grounds that 'you're not quite there yet. Well there is never a better time to prove yourself. This is the ideal point in your career to ask for more responsibility. Whilst this may not seem like a traditional 'reward' the increased workload will do wonders in proving your worth to the management. After all, nobody likes a worker who asks for a pay rise and sulks by slacking off.

On the other hand, if you really feel you are putting in the hours and proving your worth and you truly believe you're not getting paid enough for what you do, there is nothing shocking about asking for a break. Perhaps the work can be delegated more fairly. It is your manager's job to ensure you are working efficiently and they should more than understand if you have too much on your plate for your paygrade.

Conclusion

More than 70% of your waking week is spent performing a work-related task, whether it's time in the office itself or time spent commuting to and from it each day. So, it makes sense to not only ensure that this time is spent doing a job you love but that you feel justly rewarded for the investment that you put into it.

Negotiating a pay rise is actually rather easy – providing you do your homework, can demonstrate how you add value and time your approach. By following the tips highlighted above, you will soon realise your worth in monetary terms to the business and gain the confidence needed to achieve your desired outcome.

For the last 20 years, Allen Associates has supported thousands of jobs seekers in finding their next role. We have no interest in finding you just any job. Our focus is on finding you the right job with an Employer and working environment that is right for you and which can support your career ambitions, both in the short and long term.

If you are considering your next career move, get in touch with the team today. We'll take the time to find out what you are really looking for in your ideal role and will work hard to secure the perfect opportunity for you.

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