

How to ask for things in your career (and how to get them)

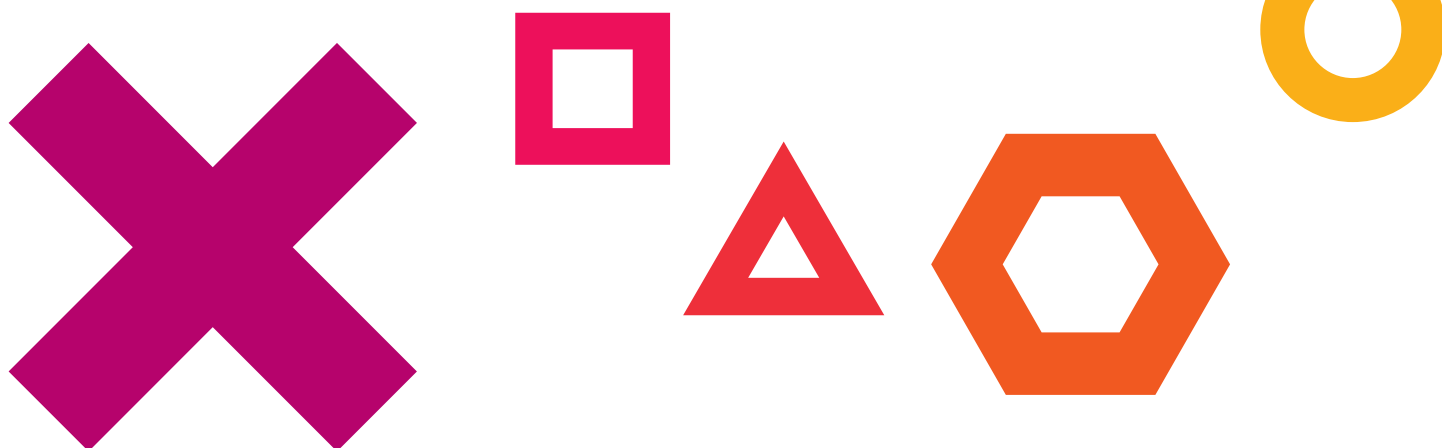
Introduction

Of all the conversations you can have with your manager at work, asking for something has got to be the trickiest.

Maybe it's because we are characteristically apologetic, maybe it's because we don't want to cause a fuss, it could even be because we don't feel we deserve what we're asking for.

However, you do deserve it. And whether it's a pay rise to bring you in line with the work you're doing, a promotion as part of a long-term career path, or training on a specific area you've been wanting to get into for ages, we can help you ask for it.

It's all about confidence, preparation and planning – all of which we discuss in this Guide. Over the next few pages, we will provide you with the tools you need to have those 'awkward' conversations and ace them so as to ensure you get what you want.



How to (and not to) ask for a pay rise

Hats off! You've hit your targets, completed your objectives and have proved yourself an invaluable member of the team. It sounds like you could be in line for a well-earned pay rise. By now, your boss is probably drawing up a delightful offer to submit to you by tomorrow morning... right? Ah, if only it were that easy.

No matter how confident you are of your contribution in the last few months, negotiating a pay rise will always be an awkward conversation. While no Employer expects their staff to stay on their starting salaries forever, managers will seldom give impromptu pay rises without request. Unfortunately, most Employees still falsely believe that popping the pay question will fast-track them to a P45 and a 'Good Luck' card from their colleagues. Despite it being a perfectly reasonable request, the thought of asking for a raise alone can prevent us from receiving fair remuneration packages. If you are to secure the salary bump you deserve, you must break the cycle and pluck up the courage to ask your boss. But remember, there's a right way and a wrong way to request a raise.

Do: Conduct prior research

Before you barge into your boss' office demanding a six figure salary, put some time aside to do some research. A good starting place would be to gain an understanding of the company's financial position. For example, if budgets are slim, belts are tight and redundancies are on the table, you can predict the outcome of your request without even having made it. If the ship is sailing smoothly in line with growth targets, it could be the perfect time to ask for a pay rise.

Don't: Do it through email

We all know how uncomfortable salary negotiations can be. However, sending your boss a list of reasons why you deserve more money via email won't exactly paint you in the best light. Instead, show your manager that you are prepared to overcome the anxiety to have a proper

conversation about your salary by requesting a face-to-face meeting. In most cases, it will earn you a great deal more respect.

Do: Demonstrate your value

This is your chance to convince your boss that you are worth a higher salary: it isn't an invitation to brag, but rather one to remind them of the contribution and impact you make to the team and business as a whole. Ensure to use clear examples of how your input has contributed to the success of the business and leave vague statements at the door. Prior to the meeting, prepare a few examples of instances in which you have taken initiative or gone above to help support the wider team.

These may be facts that you are familiar with, but your manager has a lot on their plate - they may value your input, but they may not know just how critical you have been to certain projects and the business as a whole.

Don't: Compare yourself to colleagues

You've set up a meeting to discuss your progression in the business and to prove to your boss that you're worth the investment. The last thing she or he wants to hear is about the salaries of other Employees. The minute you begin to compare yourself to your colleagues, you bring down the tone of the meeting and set yourself up to fail. Not only will your boss view you as jealous and/or bitter, they will gather that your focus is firmly on everyone else instead of your own work.

Do: Arm yourself with data

Business leaders are concerned with the empirical evidence of the return on their investments. They don't deal in feelings or suspicions; they want to hear the cold, hard facts on how your work has helped the business. It's a good idea to avoid gushing over how long you spent on a certain task and how dedicated you were and instead focus on the results it brought and the impact it had. Statements can be questioned, numbers don't lie.

Flexible working – how to ask for it

Traditionally, and you have to feel for Employers here, working from home was just not the 'done' thing. In days gone by, a person would have one job for 20 years plus. They would come into the office every day, along with the rest of the team, and go home at the end of their shift.

Employers never had to field questions about flexible working, or navigate the challenges that working from home can bring.

How those times have changed. With the rising cost of living in cities, the even faster rising costs of commuting and the added pressures on our time from social media, work and other aspects of life, we are looking for more balance, wherever we can get it.

With over two million freelancers in the UK, working from home has become a lifestyle, as those setting up on their own save on renting an office, and use their kitchen table instead.

This has inevitably spilled over into the more traditional workplace, as companies race to cut costs on office spending, adjust to new ways of working and accommodate the talent they want to retain.

Asking for this from your manager can be an awkward conversation. Often, asking for anything can be difficult, as Employees feel they are asking for too much, or taking liberties. The potential for the working from home system and trust to be abused is there too, which doesn't help.

All you have to do is make your case. Explain to your manager in a relaxed environment, the benefits to you, as well as to them. These could include increased productivity on your part, time to tackle difficult research projects, make multiple calls, and fulfil other parts of your job description that, working in a busy office, you just don't get the time to devote to.

An alternative, if you're in this position, is to negotiate time working from home before you actually start a new role, because if one day a week from home is what you're looking for, you have nothing to lose by asking at the initial call stage.

When preparing for a call with a potential Employer, you will undoubtedly have notes to make sure you stay on track, and convey those salient points and achievements about you. When it comes to talking about next steps, a good way to phrase what you're looking for is to say that you're looking for something in a certain salary band, with one day a week from home.

It's that simple. Not only does it put you in a good position for negotiation, but it also is very clear and easy for the Employer to consider. If they say no, it might not be the role for you. However, more and more Employers are understanding that it can be a good way to attract and retain top talent – and seeing the benefits of Employee productivity by not taking two hours minimum out of their day to commute.

How to make the case for training

Most Employers recognise the pivotal role that training plays in the professional development of their staff. However, while some companies set aside a budget for job-specific training, a great many still fail to prioritise corporate learning under the pretext that their Employees will naturally improve over time. Perhaps they see training as too costly, too complicated, too difficult to implement and subsequently measure. Whatever the reason, their minds are usually only changed by a strong business case that presents the clear bottom-line benefits of staff training.

It may sound daunting, but if anything, it should be less nerve-wracking than asking for a pay rise or a promotion. Nevertheless, failing to get to the heart of the issue or framing your case in the wrong way could damage your chances of getting the answer you want. With this in mind, it's time to plan your approach.

Homework always helps

In order to prepare and present your case, you must have all the facts to hand. It may seem excessive, but in fact it's essential to ensure you have an answer for every question your boss might throw at you: the cost, the expenses outside of the cost, the deadline for registration, the duration of the training and even the kind of people in attendance.

You could even go one step further and find recent reviews from the particular course or event to quote to your manager. If you're really savvy, you might get in touch with previous attendees of the event or participants in the course via LinkedIn to ask for evidence to support your case.

The business case for training

Ultimately, this is a chance for you to present the positive long-term impact of your participation in a training activity: you may not have metrics up front, but you should have evidence of your commitment to the company. Remember, whether it's an interactive e-learning course,

an all-day conference or a hands-on workshop with an industry expert, your boss wants a clear picture of the return on investment (ROI) they will receive from this training activity. They will also naturally be apprehensive about whether this training activity will enable you to apply for more senior roles at competitor firms. Your goal, therefore, is to shift the spotlight as far from yourself as possible and focus instead on how the knowledge and experience gained from the training will improve a certain area of the business. You may mention, for instance, how the training will allow you to pass on new skills to your team, to keep up with industry trends or to build brand recognition in the case of a networking event.

Comparing the costs

If you're dealing with a particularly cost-conscious manager, it's natural to feel anxious when raising the awkward topic of the price-tag. Unfortunately, it really shows. All too often, Employees rush through their pitch and leave the cost until last. Then, when their boss stares them straight in the eye and asks how much it will set them back, they blurt out a figure and wait for the response. This approach is unlikely to get you far in convincing your boss that the event or course will be of any value to the business.

Luckily, there are much cleverer ways to frame your request. Instead of letting the price of the activity hang in the air by itself, why not sandwich it within the costs of more expensive

alternatives? Say, for example, that you were eager to enhance your knowledge of data protection: positioning the price of an online GDPR training course against that of a week-long event should help to put the cost into context. Plus, everyone likes options: putting your preferred choice next to cost-heavy alternatives will naturally make your request seem completely reasonable by comparison.

How to secure a promotion

For most of us, the prospect of climbing another rung in the career ladder is symbolic of our success. Whether it's a significant step up or a new title with a new challenge, a promotion is the proof that our contribution and commitment has not gone unnoticed.

Yet, when the opportunity arises, it's not uncommon for us to shy away from the conversation and skulk away in the shadows, convincing ourselves we'll be better prepared when the next round comes along. If this sounds familiar, don't beat yourself up. It happens to the best of us: perhaps you're a recent hire seeking to increase responsibilities; maybe you're a high-performer with your sights set firmly on senior management. No matter where you are in your journey to the top, asking for a promotion ranks high on the list of life's most uncomfortable conversations.

However, if you are to move forward in your company or field, anxiety shouldn't hold you back. It's time to seize the moment and make the case for your promotion.

Forward planning

Truthfully, the best way to ask for a promotion - and get it - is by adhering to the particular criteria outlined by your boss. Don't worry, you don't have to be a mind reader - it just takes a little bit of forward planning. As soon as you have an inkling about taking the next level in your career, set up a meeting with your manager to ask what it would take for you to be promoted in a year's time. Try to secure some actionable points and have them put in writing: that way, you can use the list as a set of objectives to work towards.

Run through your checklist

Before you approach your boss to request a follow up meeting, set some time aside to run through your achievements in the last year. Having taken their advice in ways to improve your performance or complete certain objectives, your boss will be forced to recognise your progress and consider your case for a promotion. If it

helps, get your notebook out and make a list of your strengths and successes. As they are in line with what your manager had previously set out, you should already have the competitive advantage over your peers.

Make it about the company

You're committed, and your manager knows it. While asserting your value is critical to your promotion, try to shift the focus from your personal development to the improvement of the business. Just as you would if you were requesting a pay rise, it's a good idea to prepare in advance a few examples of how your input contributed to the larger organisation. After all, as much as your Employer cares about your journey to the top, they're naturally much more interested in how your promotion will benefit the company. Ultimately, this will be the deciding factor for whether or not you secure a promotion.

Finish strong

Having made the business case for your promotion, it's time to briefly summarise the points you've made and finish on a strong conclusion. It may be nerve-wracking to throw the ball back into the proverbial court of your Employer, but be calm: you've given them something to think about, so thank your manager for their time and support and await their response.

Conclusion

Over the last 20 years, we have grown as a business to become one of the leading independent Recruitment agencies in Oxfordshire, and in 2018 have opened our first London office, to service Clients in London.

We have been an Investor in People since 2001 and have recently been awarded Gold status by Investors in People for the second time. The investment we make in our work, we make in you, too.

Can we help you? Click [here](#) for more information or contact us on:

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