

"Please sir, can I have more...?"

When it comes to asking for a pay raise, 'don't ask, don't get' usually applies

Most employers expect their employees and potential hires to discuss more pay. And when it comes to asking for a raise, 'don't ask, don't get' applies. Unfortunately, the process of salary negotiation, whether you are a present or potential employee, is usually a sticky solution many would nervously avoid. More often than not, salary negotiations are badly handled, leading to frustration and resentment.

There are no standard procedures to ask for a raise or more starting salary, and people use several approaches - from dropping hints to the manager to test waters, asking their bosses politely, to threatening to resign or finding a new job altogether.

Think before you demand

With most endeavours, it is always advisable to be well prepared.

Before you barge into your manager's office with guns a-blazing, do an honest self-assessment of your abilities and contributions - do you deserve that raise? While salary levels are largely determined by market forces, your contribution as an employee to organisational performance is crucial as well.

There are also other factors which impact salary that should be considered:

- your current salary compared to market norms;
- the company's policies and practices with regards to staff turnover, retention, recruitment and headcount;
- the company's performance in the industry; and
- the available budget the company has for pay rises.

Negotiate well

The desired outcome of any negotiation is where both parties stand to benefit. And as an employee, it is important to understand the company's situation, and your own. This would put you in a better position to negotiate effectively.

Know the worth of your job. Every job has a market value - knowing relative market rates will help in the objective assessment of what you should be getting. You should also find out practices and processes that exist in your organisation that would influence salary increments.

Be tactful, diplomatic and objective. Asking for more money is always a sensitive issue, but keep emotions out of it. Avoid thinking and presenting your position in terms of 'I want' or 'I need' but an objective view that would offer a reasonable discussion.

Sell, not beg. When making your case, be persuasive but firm. Be succinct with details when highlighting your accomplishments and contributions. Your aim is to sway your manager into giving you that raise, or at least get him thinking about doing so. Threats of any kind should not be on your agenda.

Be persistent but know when to back off. If your manager is unable to agree to your request, at least get your manager to review your request further down the road.

No, you can't have more pay

If the company is unable to grant you a pay hike, find out why. There might be circumstances, which prevent the company from offering salary increase - performance or not. However, this should not prevent you from at least finding out if other benefits, such as extra leave days and flexible work arrangements are up for bargaining as well. Also, speak to your manager what you can do to secure a pay increment or job promotion in future - look to develop a role that commands a higher value, and therefore, salary.

However, if the organisation would not consider or agree in any way for you to achieve an increase in your salary despite your best efforts, it might seem that they do not value you as much as you value yourself. It might be the best time to look to other opportunities elsewhere.