



How to Successfully Negotiate a Salary Increase

Don't be intimidated! With some preparation, research, and practice, you can master negotiation strategies to get the salary you deserve.

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Blog

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When you have been with a company for a while and the timing seems right, asking for a raise makes sense. It is in managers' and companies' best interest to retain, develop, and promote employees who are engaged and interested in developing their career and their skills.

However, negotiating a salary increase can be a nerve-wracking and daunting conversation. Women especially have historically faced challenges related to their upbringing, as well as the attitudes and behaviors of the society and culture around them.

These factors contribute to many professional women finding it difficult to advocate for themselves. However, as women advance in the workplace and take on more leadership roles, recognizing and acknowledging their strengths and mastering salary negotiation strategies can help overcome those obstacles and achieve greater equity.

It is important to plan how to negotiate your salary before you approach your manager, to ensure you are properly compensated for what you bring to the company. This guide will offer some helpful tips to use to negotiate successfully, as well as some ideas on what to do if the negotiation doesn't go to plan.

Why Is Salary Negotiation Important?

Emily Epstein, an instructor of Negotiation Skills: Strategies for Increased Effectiveness and Women in Leadership: Online Program for Emerging Leaders at Harvard Division of Continuing Education Professional & Executive Development, shares her insight on the value of negotiation.

According to Epstein, negotiation starts at the point of hire, which can also affect your salary long-term.

"I have spoken to many recruiters and hiring managers who tell me that they start with a low offer and expect candidates to ask for more. Candidates who don't ask

for more risk leaving a great deal of value on the table,” she says. “Sometimes that value comes in the form of additional salary, which can be important in both the short and long term, since raises and promotions often take your starting salary into account.”

Asking for a raise isn’t just about the individual number, either.

The gender pay gap (the difference between the earnings of men and women) has barely closed in the United States in the past 20 years, according to the [Pew Research Center](#). In 2022, American women typically earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men, up only two cents since 2002. Racial wage gaps also remain profound. The median weekly earnings for Hispanic women were less than 60 percent of white non-Hispanic men and Black women’s earnings were about 64 percent of white non-Hispanic men.

The reasons for these gaps are complex and varied, but one of the steps toward closing them is clear: employees — especially women and people of color — must be prepared to advocate for higher wages.

How to Prepare for a Salary Negotiation

When you are deciding whether or not to ask for a raise, consider these key factors:

Has it been at least a year since your last review?

Has your workload noticeably increased over the past six months?

Do you have an upcoming evaluation?

Have you done a great job on something recently?

[The best time to initiate a salary negotiation](#) is after a positive performance review, so you can leverage the recent acknowledgement of your contributions and achievements.

Next, before you ask for a sit-down with your manager:

Do some research. Search online to find the average salary range for your job position, level of experience, and location. Consider asking your human resources department for the salary range for your position. Talk to colleagues for insight on how your company approaches salary increases.

Prepare your case. Be ready with a convincing narrative about why you deserve this raise. Reflect on your achievements that have helped the company reach its goals, such as times when you have taken the initiative, positive feedback you've received, and accomplishments you're proud of.

Decide on your target range. If your manager agrees to give you a raise, you can reference this target as you negotiate the precise number.

Practice your pitch with family or friends until you sound confident and self-assured.

Schedule a one-on-one meeting with your boss ahead of time so they have time to prepare as well. Don't corner them at 5 p.m. on Friday!

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Common Salary Negotiation Mistakes — and How to Avoid Them

Before going into a negotiation, think about your boss's perspective. They are likely responsible for balancing budgets, meeting business targets, and progressing in their own career.

How has the company been performing over the past few quarters? Did you just survive a round of layoffs? If so, now might not be the right time. A company experiencing decline or stagnation may not be able to offer raises, or may only be able to offer a smaller raise than you were hoping for.

Don't focus on your own personal needs when you are seeking a raise. You want to talk about the value you bring, not the fact that your car has broken down or your rent went up. Avoid using the passive voice and speak with confidence.

Don't threaten to quit if you don't get what you want. It's important to keep the conversation around salary increases positive — especially since you want to keep working at your organization. If you make threats, you can run the risk of your employer taking you up on it.

Effective Salary Negotiation Practices

Remember that you are not asking for a favor. You are a valued asset who wants to continue to grow within this company.

Best practices for successful negotiation include:

Documenting successes. Come prepared with data demonstrating how your work contributed to an increase in sales, engagement, or another signifying metric. Provide positive customer or colleague feedback, if possible.

Knowing your value. What do other employees in similar roles at similar-sized companies earn? According to researchers at Columbia Business School, you should ask for a specific number rather than a range to show that you have done your research.

Preparing a “brag sheet.” Bring a one-page summary that shows how valuable you are. Summarize what you have achieved this year. Highlight times you've gone above and beyond in your role. Share what you would like to accomplish going forward, such as digging deeper into an existing project or proposing a new idea you would like to lead.

How to Follow Up After a Salary Negotiation

If your boss agrees that a raise is in order — congratulations! All of your preparation and research paid off. Here's what to do next:

Get the agreement in writing.

Carry out any agreed upon actions.

Inform the people who need to know.

Send a courtesy thank you email to all of those involved to express your appreciation.

Maintain a positive relationship.

“If the negotiation was successful, share your appreciation and excitement, but don’t let them know if they offered you more than you expected,” Epstein adds. “Make it clear that you intend to make their investment worthwhile.”

If the negotiation did not go the way you hoped, you may still have the option to ask for alternate benefits in lieu of salary increase. Discuss any alternatives that might be possible, such as more paid time off, company stock options, or flexible scheduling.

It is crucial to maintain an amicable relationship, even if the negotiation doesn’t go to plan. Be professional, positive, and polite.

You can also take this opportunity to ask for constructive feedback, especially on clear and specific metrics for improvement, Epstein advises.

For example, if your boss says, “We’ll all get a raise if the company does well next year,” ask follow-up questions about what “doing well” looks like and how it will be measured. Similarly, if your boss says, “I need to see you perform at the next level,” ask what “next-level” work entails and how you can demonstrate when you are delivering it.

“There is always some chance that a company won’t keep its promise to give you a raise later, but it’s much more likely that they will if they made a clear commitment to you and you can clearly demonstrate that you have hit their targets,” says Epstein.

Debrief with a trusted mentor, peer, or colleague and reflect on how to prepare more thoroughly next time. Focus on moving forward; setbacks happen, and are part of the negotiation process. If you are truly dissatisfied with the outcome, you may also consider putting yourself back on the job market.

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Melissa Russell is an award-winning journalist and editor living in the Boston area. She has written for many news outlets as well as for websites, trade publications and other platforms.

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