

Negotiating your salary increase

Have you been stewing on the idea for months now that it is time to finally ask for that raise? It is quite common for people to put this idea into the too hard basket, after all, it is a bit of a high-risk idea; what if it backfires and you end up damaging important relationships or stalling your progression in the firm? It is usually easier to simply tell yourself you are lucky to have a job, maybe a good job, and that opportunities for an increase in income may somehow arise sometime in the future anyway.

Alternatively, you could consider that you have not thought the idea through enough and that your nervousness stems from not having determined a well-considered strategy or clear way forward. This article offers some ideas on how you can overcome this and go into this critical activity with appropriate levels of courage and commitment.

Foster good relationships

You can't ask for more money if you don't have a stable and reliable relationship with your manager. Do what you can to build trust, respect and even a sense of reciprocity between you. These essential qualities will allow for sensitive discussions later.

Do your research and determine your 'objective criteria.'

What is your job actually worth? If you can't answer that you will not be able to argue your case. There are several wage and salary surveys completed by various organisations which are freely available on the internet. You can also connect with your network and get an idea of what other firms are paying for similar roles. An essential outcome of this activity is that you can confidently cite comparable values and sources during your negotiation

You will also need to look internally and determine what income levels similar roles are getting in your firm. It is desirable to know your firm's general pay level, despite what the outside market shows. For all you know, you may already be getting well paid compared to others.

Set your BATNA and Aspiration Value

Before you start any negotiation, you need to determine what your best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) is. Put simply, be clear on what your situation will be if you don't get what you ask for. Will you get a better paying job somewhere else? Or perhaps apply for another role in the company. A good BATNA will give you that extra edge in your negotiation – particularly with regards to your confidence.

Also, set your Aspiration Value. What is the best possible outcome you could expect? Go in to achieve it, knowing that you will end up somewhere between your BATNA and your AV.

Prepare for the discussion

Now it's time to do some 'future pacing', imagining the conversation, what will be said by who, likely objections and barriers, and how you intend to respond to them. Any parts you feel uncomfortable with are the areas that may need some additional work. Do not let yourself shortcut this activity. This thinking may cause you to consider some uncomfortable possibilities, however, if you push through you'll find a comfortable ways of dealing with them and the process will further build your confidence.

Conduct the discussion

Be clear on your purpose, and confident that what you are seeking to achieve is fair and appropriate. You want to sustain, if not improve, this critical relationship through this process. Be friendly, yet also be 'provoke-able'. Start positive and friendly, but as soon as you pick up that you're being stonewalled or in any other way treated inappropriately, be ready to stand your ground and make your case. Do not allow yourself to fall into old patterns like being overly agreeable or friendly at your own expense. Show that you are fair, even forgiving, yet flex your strength when it is needed. It is times like this where a good BATNA becomes particularly important, as it will give you psychological strength and commitment to follow through on your goal.

In summary

If you de-personalise a negotiation and see it as a process, where proper preparation, presentation and professional conduct will win the day, you greatly improve your chances for success. In a way, your behaviour will be more a product of what you think about yourself and the value you offer, rather than your ability to argue and 'facedown' an opponent.