

Five Brainless But Brilliant Routes To A Raise

By MEGHAN CASSERLY

It should come as no surprise that we're not happy with women's wage statistics—the ones that show we make 75-85 cents to every dollar our male colleagues take home. It's wrong, wrong, wrong. But what's more upsetting is the notion that women are said over and over again to be so timid, good or well-behaved that we're not comfortable negotiating high salaries for ourselves. Why is this worse? Because with this reasoning, it becomes our fault that our salaries fall short.

And that—readers, sisters, friends—is not okay.

Earning a salary increase, even in trying financial times, is not only something you can do, but that you are doing—and speaking up is the first step at getting your work recognized and reflected in dollar signs. To that end we give you five proven strategies—none are rocket science but all have proved brilliant—to get the conversation started and your checkbook fatter in 2011.

1. Just Go For It

“Women are raised to believe that if they do a good job then people will recognize it,” says Lee E. Miller, a former HR executive who co-authored *A Woman's Guide to Successful Negotiating* with his daughter, Jessica Miller. Miller, who's made a career of helping women in career moves and salary negotiations, stresses that the good girl mentality and a fear of rejection often leave women feeling uncomfortable about raising the issue of salary with supervisors. “From my own experience, I almost never see men talking about salary without asking for something more, while women very often simply accepted the position or salary without negotiating or broaching the subject of more.”

The key, he says is to convince yourself that a raise is something you deserve—and have earned—which will put you at ease when approaching your higher-ups for a salary bump. It takes a pep talk. “They do it before football games, and it works,” he says. “We talk in our book of self talk and we recommend that women take a look at herself in the mirror and convince herself why she deserves the raise, to tell herself that it's fair and it's reasonable. You are your own toughest audience—if you can convince yourself that you deserve a raise you can convince anyone.”

2. Use Your Review

Miller says timing can be half of the battle when choosing a time to make a raise request, but Matt Wallaert, lead scientist at Get-Raised.com, a raise advisory site, says that the best bet for talking salary is your annual review. “Review time is a great entry point because you're already sitting down for a meeting,” he says. “There's no nerve-wracking separate request for a meeting, so you're not as nervous. But more importantly it's a time when you're already going to be discussing performance which is directly linked to compensation. The progression of the conversation is natural—what you're doing right what you're doing wrong,” he points out, “It's a perfect time to ask your supervisor how you can bring even more value to the company—which allows you to talk about your goals and expectation to be compensated.”

“Let [your supervisor] finish reviewing your performance and then talk about goals,” Wallaert advises on how the conversation can flow from review to raise with ease. “Let your goals lead into a compensation conversation: It's what you have been doing, what you're going to do and then how you are going to be compensated for it,” he says. The logical argument is sound and difficult for a supervisor to negate. “But always, always end the discussion with. ‘I like my job, I like this company and I want to continue to work here.’”

3. Know The Competition

You can't go in uninformed, says Wallaert, which is why GetRaised is a starting point for finding out what other professionals in your position and your city are earning, important information to have on-hand when making a raise request. But beware an emotional reaction if you find yourself to be on the low end of the earning spectrum. "People can react to finding out they're underpaid very emotionally and can easily project those feelings onto the employer or supervisor," he warns. "First, recognize that your boss has a boss—and that if you're underpaid, he or she might be as well."

To be prepared for a raise conversation, Wallaert advises arming yourself with the following information: Commensurate job salaries from a national database or online resource like GetRaised or Yahoo! and job listings for comparable positions available in your area with listed salaries. These help to paint a realistic picture of the job market for your supervisor.

4. Playing By Numbers

"Making sure that your superiors know what you've been up to is key," says Chuck Pappalardo, managing director of Trilogy Search, an executive search firm based in the SF Bay Area, "And it's most effective if your successes can be translated into numbers." For most mid- to top-level employees, these numbers show where costs were cut or revenues bolstered, but vary from field to field. "If you work in manufacturing and were tasked with streamlining a process, your successes will be reflected in output, but for a young attorney the number may be reflected in the number of cases she chose to take on, how she chose them—and what her success rate was," he says. These numbers are important in building the case for your raise as they help paint the picture of your value to the company in tangible terms.

Armed with the right quantitative data of your work, the case you're building should go something like this, says GetRaised's Wallaert: "The last time we talked about my raise was [BLANK]... and since then I've done [BLANK]." This then constructs a very logical argument to discuss salary, he says. "You paid me \$80,000 for X and I'm now doing X plus Y. So it stands to reason that Y should be reflected in my salary."

The last, and maybe the most important number to bring to the table is the dollar or percentage amount you're seeking in a raise. Is it 8%? 12%? 20% It goes without saying that your boss will ask, and GetRaised's research has shown that over-reaching is as detrimental to your success as requesting too little. The site's recommended request is 12%—a reach number for sure but not high enough to be laughable or prohibitive.

5. Negotiate, Negotiate

Begin by asking diagnostic questions," says Victoria Pynchon, a ForbesWoman contributor and co-author of the forthcoming title A is for Alice, the ABCs of Negotiation for Women. Questions like "how's business?" are open ended and provide an opportunity for your employer to give you the big picture of how the company is operating—and insight into how you can make yourself more valuable. "As a result of the diagnostic questions you've asked, you should have a list of the ways in which your employment contributes to the bottom line profit," says Pynchon, "you should monetize each one of those items of value." The monetized value, she says, is the value you bring to the company (not to be confused with your raise) and should be at least twice what you are prepared to ask for in terms of compensation.

But part of being a shrewd negotiator is having alternatives to bargain with. "Turn as many dollar items into other benefits as you can," advises Pynchon. "That makes the dollar sign request less daunting to your employer." Think flex time, vacation days, bonuses based on value delivered—or other added opportunities that will result in promotions and greater opportunity for client interaction or sales. For example, says Pynchon, "a young attorney might ask for greater case responsibility, more opportunity for direct client contact, more time to concentrate on her own outside projects, etc." While these forms of compensation may not seem a raise in the traditional sense, they can go a long way to your happiness quotient—and are a great bargaining chip.



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