

8 things to keep in mind when asking for a *pay rise*

How to approach that tricky but necessary subject with Michelle Gibbing, career expert and Founder of Change Meridian

Asking for a pay rise is something most people dread. However, when you shy away from negotiating, you are walking away from lots of potential upsides: increased pay, more flexible working hours and other employment benefits. Knowing how to ask for what you want is a critical skill, particularly when you consider the pay disparity between men and women. With a bit of planning and strategising, approaching your boss for a pay rise doesn't need to be hard. Here's eight tips to get you started.

- 1 **Don't ask – don't get:** Often in life we hold back asking for what we want or expressing our needs as we worry about what the other person's reaction will be. When you think about it, what's the worst thing that could happen if you ask for a pay rise? They say no. So, don't let fear hold you back.
- 2 **Pick your timing:** Most organisations have performance and pay review cycles, and it helps to know how that process works. Ideally, you want to ask before budgets for the new financial year are locked in. Secondly, pick a time when your boss is more likely to be receptive to the conversation; rather than tired, stressed or distracted. As well, pick a time that works for you. Negotiating is mentally taxing, and your mind will be pushed and pulled in many directions. Consequently, it's best to not go into the discussion when you are tired or stressed, as you will be less equipped to manage it.
- 3 **Build your case:** Be clear on the value you bring to your role and how you demonstrate it. This is important evidence and data you can use to explain why you deserve a pay rise. You also need to know the going rates in the industry, so you can understand whether your pay request is above or in line with the market.
- 4 **Know their needs:** Seek to understand the other people involved — their operating style, agenda, needs and what they care about. The more you understand those involved, the greater insights you'll have into what they are likely to support or reject. When you make the request, state your wants objectively and in way that

will resonate with your boss (or whoever you are negotiating with). You also need to explain how this will benefit the organisation.

- 5 **Know your trade-offs:** Be prepared to consider the options available. To do this, you need to know what matters the most to you, and what you may be willing to give up as part of the negotiation process. For example, you may be willing to trade time for money, or money for more holidays.
- 6 **Get on the front foot:** Research shows that we don't like people who initiate negotiations for higher pay — regardless of gender, but it's only women who suffer a penalty. People are less inclined to want to work with a female who asks for a pay rise — either as a co-worker, subordinate, or boss.
One way to address it is get on the front foot. Walk into the negotiation and say:

I just want to say up front that I'm going to negotiate for this pay rise, and the research shows that because I do this you're going to like me less when I do.

Let that sink in for a minute and then move into the negotiation.

- 7 **Think about the next steps:** Think about how the negotiation process may unfold, and the steps required to secure agreement. Consider each of these steps, in advance of the discussion, and be curious as to how they may play out. Running through possible scenarios and outcomes will enable you to better respond as issues or objections are raised during the discussion.
- 8 **Slow down:** If you find your mind racing during the negotiation, focus on breathing, and breathing deeply. This provides time for your nerves to relax and your heart rate to slow down, making it easier to reflect and respond calmly.

