

WORD-BY-WORD SCRIPT: HOW TO ASK FOR A BIG PAY RAISE WHEN YOU'VE CONTRIBUTED UNDENIABLE VALUE

If you've contributed undeniable value to your company, you'd expect your salary to grow in line with the level of your contribution, would you not?

Our clients often tell us their experience is otherwise.

At work, they use their unique blend of skills, talents and strengths to pull off the incredible. The results speak for themselves. And yet, when it comes to promotions and raises, the conversation ends up with more intangible carrots than tangible rewards.

As a matter of fact, unless you speak up and do something about it, employers will continue to push you to do more for less.

That said, you might be wondering, **"How do I negotiate and what can I say, so I can get a big pay raise and get paid what I'm worth?"**

Are you someone who contributes undeniable value? Are you undervalued for the value you bring and have the data and facts to prove it? If this is you, then you might benefit from the following word-by-word negotiation script.

You start by setting the tone of the conversation. Warm, collegial and appreciative but no extra fluff. Instead of puttering around the issue, you set the agenda clearly.

You: Hi Boss, thanks for taking the time to meet with me today. I know your time is valuable so I'll cut straight to the point.

You're getting straight to the point, because you're an expert at managing up and can empathize with your boss who's a busy person with important things to do. You also preemptively overcome the all too common "I'm too busy for this chat" objection.

You: I'd like to first quickly bring you up to speed on the progress I've made over the past year, then I'd love to have a conversation about my compensation. Would that work for you?

By "bringing [your boss] up to speed" you've created the perfect opportunity to claim value for yourself, which is key for negotiation success.

Don't worry about bragging, and don't expect bosses to have omniscience. They don't know everything, and may not know about the undeniable value you contribute, because they're busy people preoccupied with their own agendas.

With a simple, "Would that work for you?" you signal respect and collaboration, which engenders trust. Studies have found that once people trust you and have said yes to a small request, they're more likely to say yes again to a bigger request. So with this simple invitation, you've increased the odds that they'll say yes to your big ask.

Boss: Okay, well, that sounds good, but just so you know, I don't have a final say on compensation. But go ahead.

If you report to someone who reports to someone else or if you work for Big Bureaucracy, Inc., this sort of hedging is to be expected.

So plan ahead. Prepare to communicate your undeniable value or tell a compelling story that can easily be delivered up the rungs of ladder at your company.

You: So, in the past year, I brought in \$15MM and was responsible for 45% of the company's total revenues. The bulk of that came through our online stores and strategic partnership deals that I manage. All told, the total figure exceeded the annual target by about 15%.

Quantify the WHAT of your undeniable value. Crunch the numbers and tally the accomplishments before you sit down for this conversation. Facts and figures will stick in the mind of the listener, much better than a vague, "I worked really hard..." Everyone can say they worked hard. Only a few (two to be mathematically precise) can say they brought in 45% of total revenues.

You: I'm really proud of the fact that I was able to exceed the target while working through complex regulatory changes and managing the new website launch. I'm glad that I was able to lean on strong relationships that I have built over the years with our strategic partners as well as project management skills that allowed the team to complete projects on time and within budget.

What challenges did you overcome? How did you exceed expectations while drawing on your unique strengths, skills and strengths? What was the outcome that benefitted your team and company? Note this isn't bragging for the sake of bragging. This is expressing the value of you and your contributions as a benefit to the employer.

Also, the HOW is just as important as the WHAT. Prepare your talking points and practice ahead so you can express your value in a calmly confident and powerful way.

You: And here are some of the nice things our partners had to say about the experience of working with me and my team [hands over a list of praise].

Bam! External validation like praise from clients or an award from a professional association is icing on the cake. So don't be shy about owning and claiming your undeniable value. Bring it.

Boss: Awesome. You're doing great. Keep it up.

You: Thank you and you know, that's the plan. By which I mean, the plan is to continue building on last year's success. This year, I'm committed to doubling our sales with the revenue goal of \$30MM, which, based on projections, would mean I'd be responsible for more than half, or the lion's share of company's total revenues.

Also, the current deal I'm working on with partner Z is projected to help us break into new international markets so that we can meet key growth objectives that our investors are keen to hear about.

Speaking to growth objectives that company investors care about is part of telling a compelling story that can be delivered up the rungs of ladder. If not your boss, then your boss' boss or your boss' boss' boss worries about what company investors think.

When preparing, think beyond your worries. What does your boss and their boss worry about? What are their hopes, dreams and fears?

You: I'm excited by the growth opportunities ahead of us. And that said, I'd love to have a conversation with you about my compensation.

By now, you've established your undeniable value, credibility and commitment to contributing more value. You've set a straightforward and positive tone, adding to your likability.

The pivot to the topic of compensation doesn't have to be an awkward one. Compensation motivates employees to stay engaged and do good work, and you want to stay motivated.

Boss: Okay, well, what would you like?

You: I'd like my salary adjusted to be on par with the value I'm bringing.

Be concise and allow for silence to follow. You're setting the frame for your ask.

Boss: Could you be more specific?

You: Sure. In our recent conversation you agreed that my title should be adjusted to Director to reflect my level of role and responsibilities. Are we still in agreement there?

Boss: Yeah, we're just waiting for HR to approve it before making the announcement to the rest of the team.

Another yes! But let's not settle for just a promotion in title. You're going to ask for a big pay raise.

You: Great, I appreciate that. So based on what I've committed to -- which I'm excited about -- the new title of Director and the fact that I bring a unique blend of skills in analytics, project management and digital music sales expertise, I'd like to be at a base of \$150K.

You're anchoring, or telling them what you want. Don't give a range, because the bottom of the range will inevitably be what they can "afford." Do your research, find your target number and anchor at a number a step or two higher than your target. This way, you create wiggle room for yourself.

You: In doing some research, I found that \$150K is about what a Director of Digital Music earns at a medium-sized company with my level of experience. So what I'm asking here is that my compensation be in line with the going market rate, as my contributions help bring our company to be at the forefront of our market.

For added emphasis, you can hand over printouts of your market research from sites like Payscale.com, Glassdoor.com, GetRaised.com, Comparably.com, Paysa.com and etc.

Boss: Uhhh, well, I appreciate the thought and preparation you put into this. And while I can assure you that the company values your contributions, what you're asking for is a 50% increase in pay and I don't know if the company can afford such a big jump in salary. This is going to be tough sell to the higher-ups... You know, at best, we can probably do \$95K.

It would be small surprise if your boss tries to get you to concede at a lower number. If you've done your homework and framed for undeniable value, there's no need to react to this with shock, anger or defensiveness.

Instead, you'll get curious and stay calm and confident in your ask.

You: I'm curious. How are you getting to that number?

Boss: Well, first of all, that's nearly 20% increase in salary, nothing to sneeze at. And secondly, that's in line with the level of raises that we typically give to staff members as they move up in the company.

Boilerplate excuse and pushback. Anticipate them and prepare response scripts in advance.

You: I appreciate that, and I just want to put this into perspective. Last year, I brought in \$15MM, a year-over-year increase of nearly 50% and nearly half of total revenues. It just happens that \$150,000 is literally one percent of the value I brought to this company last year. Right now, I'm making less than one percent. So what I'm asking is for you to consider my compensation to be in line with my level of contribution.

And if other employees contributed as much value as I have, perhaps they should also be considered for a market rate adjustment. But I'm not asking to be compensated to be in line with what other employees get; I'm asking to be compensated according to the value I bring.

Boss: I hear you and like I said, no one here is denying the value you've contributed. It's just our budget is pretty tight given the margin squeeze from rising costs.

You: This year, I'm being held responsible to bring in \$30MM, double what I brought in last year. I understand costs are rising at about 25% year over year, so if I meet this year's targets, the growth in revenue will more than cover the rise in costs. Help me understand. How am I supposed to be motivated by 20% increase in salary, when I'm being asked to double my output?

With the open question, "How am I supposed to..?" you subtly have your boss imagining the situation from your shoes, or seeing it from your perspective.

Boss: Okay, okay, let me bring this up to the attention of the higher-ups and get back to you. Please be patient as this might take some time.

You: I really appreciate that. When would be a good time for me to follow up with you?

Boss: Uhh, how about you follow up with me in two weeks? By then, I'd have discussed this with the CFO and CEO and will have something to share with you.

You: That's excellent. Thank you so much for going to bat for me.

Of course not all negotiation conversations go easy like this. You may deal with difficult bosses, different kinds of pushback and complex situations that require more strategic planning.

If you want to negotiate, don't wait. The ball is in your court. The time is now to become bolder, braver and better paid.