

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

July 25, 2006

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Greetings!

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Time For a Raise?

Feeling underpaid? More than 60% of employees do. Do you think it's time to get paid more but you get weak in the knees or dry in the mouth when thinking about actually walking in to your boss's office to ask for more money? If so, you're not alone. Few things cause more anxiety at work than the prospect of asking for a raise.

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The issue of what we get paid for the work we do touches on many psychological hot spots such as internal feelings of self-worth, a sense of equity (or inequity) about how fairly you and your colleagues are compensated, or a lack of confidence or feedback about the quality of your work. Add to these concerns the occasional merger, acquisition or organizational downsizing and you have a virtual minefield to navigate before you ever enter your boss's door with the hope of securing the raise you desire.

In one short article we won't be able to address each of these concerns so we'll tackle them, one by one, in future issues. But for right now here are a few ideas and strategies for you to use to get started working toward the raise you feel you deserve.

Paths Forward

- **The Right Attitude.** You do not get paid for just showing up. You get paid for getting "stuff" accomplished. (Obviously there are notable exceptions but here we are talking about people who actually work for a living and who don't get to vote themselves raises.) Consider that you owned the organization that currently employs you. The only sane reason you would hire and pay someone is that he or she produces more in value than it costs in salary, benefits and overhead to have them around. Period. Having this unemotional, impersonal rationale firmly in mind is essential to getting the raise you want.
- **Hat in Hand Doesn't Work.** The meek may ultimately inherit the earth but between now and then they will usually be at the low end of the pay scale. If you have a retiring, unassuming, shy, timid or self-effacing personality, you are at a disadvantage. I am not suggesting that you have to change who you are to get paid fairly. I am saying, however, that you must do an honest assessment of your assertiveness skills and if you find them deficient then you must take steps to bolster them – if only to use them in very specific situations. There are many good workshops and seminars available that your human resources person can help you find (and possibly pay for). For on-going support in this area consider Dale Carnegie courses and (one of my favorites) Toastmaster Clubs.
- **Get the Stats.** You need to arm yourself with hard data about what people get paid to do jobs like yours. Thank goodness for the Internet. It used to take quite a bit of work

to find out who gets paid, for what kind of job, in what specific industry, in a specific geographic location. No longer. Sites such as Salary.Com , Salaryexpert.Com and industry leader Monster.Com's Salary Wizard abound and are essential, invaluable and easy to use career tools.

- **Distinguish Yourself.** Hard compensation data is just the starting point. Now you have to personalize and build on that information with the specifics of what you have accomplished. I have always advised that employees keep a personal performance file. In it are copies of thank you emails for jobs well done, notes from projects completed, lists of task forces and committees participated in, seminars delivered / participated in and a running tally of the objectives met and surpassed from the previous year's goals and objectives. It can be helpful to collapse these data down into a one-page list that you can work from and then leave with your boss after your salary discussion.

- **Ask the Question.** Any successful salesperson will tell you that you have to "ask the question". This means that after you have presented your data and have made your case that you directly ask for what you want. Something like - "Linda, I hope you agree that, as demonstrated by these excellent customer comments, feedback from colleagues and my accomplishment of the goals we set last year that I'm due for a major salary increase." And then you fall silent awaiting a response. You may have to work at coming up with a suitable question that you can deliver with conviction and you will probably have to practice delivering it a few times to get comfortable with it. But it's worth the effort.

- **Pick a Good Time to Ask.** First thing in the morning is best, right after lunch is second best. (These are times when others will be busy so interruptions will be at a minimum.) This isn't a social meeting so lunch, coffee or after-work drinks are out. On a larger scale, try to ask for a raise at least a couple of months before departmental budgets are due. This will give your boss time to plan. (Hint: most organizations do their budget planning in the Fall - which is why I'm publishing this in July!)

- **Use Negotiating Skills.** Don't be afraid to throw out the first number; your salary research will help guide you. Don't hesitate to throw out a number higher than you hope for; you can always negotiate down from where you start but it's next to impossible to negotiate up (unless a fallback position is a better-paying job). After you've made your case LISTEN

– silence is a powerful tool and frequently motivates the other person to fill in the space with additional information, a revised position or, even better, agreement. If needed, ask clarifying (what, why, when) questions to fully understand your boss’s position.

● **Be Flexible.** If you get a “no” hang in there. How about a bonus instead of a raise? How about revisiting the issue in six months? How about a car allowance? How about a working from home one day a week arrangement? How about some extra vacation days? If you strike out on every front then you might have to accept that your employer does not value your contribution as strongly as you do. Work on developing an explicit set of goals and objectives with your boss that will guarantee a future raise – and then start feeling out the job market.

● **Get a Quick Raise Anyway.** If cash flow is an immediate problem there may be an easy, intermediate step you can take. More than 67 million Americans get a tax refund every year. Are you one of them? The average refund is \$2,314. Couldn’t you use that money now instead of giving the government an interest free loan and then hoping to get it back later? Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine has an easy to use 3 step, on-line tool to help you figure out if you’re paying too much in withholding: <http://www.kiplinger.com/personalfinance/tools/withholding/index.php> . If you determine that this is the case you can file a new W-4 form raising the number of “allowances” (\$3,300. each) with your employer which will lower your withholding and raise your take home pay accordingly. A short-term fix perhaps but every little bit helps – which can add up to substantially increased savings and investment over the years.

LifeMap is about helping you build the career you want and as well as achieving the emotional and monetary rewards you deserve.

Resources

Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? To order your copy of “Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding a Job You Love” by Dr Paul Powers, click the link below.

Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it

yourself?

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<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksarticles.html>

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Sincerely,

Dr. Paul

Email: **drpaul@drpaulpowers.com**
Phone: 781-237-0550
Fax: 781-237-5721
Web: **<http://www.drpaulpowers.com>**

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