

Q&A Column
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Email Subject Line: **Asking for a Raise or Promotion**

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Summary:

How should I ask or negotiate for a promotion if my employer is basically ignoring me? The contribution I make is very important at this stage for the company. Are there ways to ask for recognition without coming across as being a 'complainer?'

Asad, Toronto, Ontario

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Headline: **Asking for a Raise or Promotion**

Dear Mark,

Question: How should I ask or negotiate for a promotion if my employer is basically ignoring me? I am doing great work and I consistently get compliments from co-workers. The contribution I make is very important at this stage for the company. And I know myself that I am working with all honesty, heart & soul for the company. Are there ways to ask for recognition without coming across as being a 'complainer?'

Asad, Toronto, Ontario

Dear Asad,

It can be really frustrating to give your all at work and feel like management doesn't notice. I once worked for a firm where my boss delayed my performance review for months after it was due – which meant I couldn't get the raise I'd earned – yet he found time to take one of our secretaries to Canada's Wonderland during a work day. Sheesh!

There is, as it turns out, something of an art to requesting a raise or promotion. It goes in three basic stages:

- 1) Preparing
- 2) Positioning, and
- 3) Proposing

1) Preparing. Generally you begin by determining your employer's policies regarding raises and promotions. Are there provisions for these steps in your employment contract (either verbal or written)? Can Human Resources inform you about standard procedures in these matters?

Once you know what's acceptable, you'll need to gather evidence of your achievements. Start by making a list of all your accomplishments at work over the last year or so. Be sure to quantify the results you've achieved wherever possible (e.g. dollars of revenue you've generated, savings you've produced by changing processes, etc.) The goal is to show that you are worthy of being promoted and/or given a raise. Gather examples of your work that clearly demonstrate how valuable you are as well.

2) Positioning. Now it's time to position yourself in your best light. Which of your achievements and projects will your boss think are most important? What can you say about yourself and why you are deserving of recognition using words that your boss will relate to best? Do you know of any techniques your colleagues have used successfully before you?

3) Proposing. Making a proposal to your boss regarding a raise or promotion is all about timing and tactfulness. Timing-wise, it's best to wait until a scheduled performance review if you have one; unless it's too far in the future. Otherwise you'll need to consider how your boss likes to be approached when it comes to being asked for something special. Is there a certain day of the week that might be better than others? A particular hour of the day when he or she might be more available to you?

In terms of tactfulness, it's up to you to set the tone of the meeting. Consider sending a brief advance e-mail message highlighting your key accomplishments. Then at the meeting itself, thank your boss for taking the time to meet with you. Share with them why you think you deserve a raise or promotion, referring to your achievements, awards and compliments you've received, and samples of your work. Then explain how being rewarded will enable you to be even *more* valuable to the company. Of course, if you're turned down, be prepared to either get back to working hard immediately, or else start assessing whether maybe you might be better off looking for employment where you're likely to be more appreciated.

By approaching things in a professional, carefully planned way, you greatly increase your chances of getting what you ask for. And if at first you don't succeed, make note of your learnings, then try again later. Best of luck with your efforts!



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