How to Ask for a Raise

By Katelyn Lopez

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Whether you are a tenured employee or in your first few years at a company, one workplace conversation is intimidating for most people: asking for a raise. If you've found yourself shying away from discussions about your compensation but feel it is time for a raise, there are a few actions you can take to support your request.

The article below explores how you can ask for a raise or promotion at work by leveraging market data and preparing to make your case.

Asking for a raise begins with research

You don't want to go into a compensation conversation cold. Before you even consider going into your boss's office, do your homework. Begin with your Human Resources (HR) team to get a solid understanding of your company's compensation philosophy, which includes the timing of raises, benchmarking data, and how salary ranges are determined.

3 key factors many HR teams use to evaluate salaries:

Go on a fact-finding mission to understand how your company thinks about compensation internally. That way, you can adapt your negotiation strategy accordingly.

Most employees may not realize:

1. Many companies have their own data sources that aren't publicly available.
2. They benchmark to a specific peer set (industry, company size, etc.).
3. They typically have a target percentile of the market.

Your company may even have pay ranges defined for each role, which can help you understand how you are being leveled and where you sit in the pay range.

Many companies are willing to share this information, but only if asked.

Check company policies

It's helpful to know how your raise can fit into the bigger picture. HR can provide valuable insight into how salaries are set and adjusted. Ask if they can share any internal data on compensation or salary ranges for your position.

Use market data

As part of your research, you'll want to gather market data to help you analyze your salary. For many employees, your total compensation also includes your benefits, variable pay, and equity, so remember to include those values in your tally. Websites like Comprehensive.io or Glassdoor can help you find average salaries for similar roles in your industry or location. You can also ask your HR team if they use outside data and if they can share the data with you.

A few other places can offer additional insight into your compensation data research. If you are a member of a professional association, see if they have an industry resource for members. Additionally, you can check to see if your city, state, or region publishes any salary information.

Assess yourself

The final step in your research is to perform an honest evaluation of your performance and current duties. Reflect on the skills, projects, and data your manager regularly asks about. Are you consistently meeting or exceeding expectations? Consider any outstanding tasks or goals, as these might be used as counterpoints during your raise discussion.

How to build your case to ask for a raise

Once you have done your research, you'll want to determine if you are asking for a promotion or a salary increase. Or both. If you are seeking a promotion, you will want to be able to justify why your impact, skills, and qualifications exceed your current level or role. If you want a raise, you'll want to demonstrate that the market pay for your existing role is higher than what the company is paying you.

Create a salary comparison report

A salary comparison report is a helpful tool for building your case to ask for a raise. You can find market benchmarks for your existing role or the promotion you seek, depending on your preference. If you can, gather data from multiple sources — you may have better chances if you are prepared to show a variety of benchmarks. Additionally, understand that you may get pushback if the data you use differs significantly from the sources your company uses (which is why it's helpful to ask HR if they can share the benchmarking data they use).

Show how you stack up

For your current salary comparison, show how your job responsibilities and skills match the benchmarks you are using. If you ask for a level jump, what job duties are you performing that fall under the next level? Are there adjustments that can help justify, i.e., do you have more experience or specific skills?

Pro Tip:

Your proposal should include the following:

- The amount you are asking for
- The new level/role if you are looking for a promotion
- Justification: Show how your job responsibilities and skills match the benchmarks you're using and are tied to company goals. If you're seeking a promotion, highlight the duties you're already performing that fall under the next level.

How to nail your pitch

You've gathered your data and built your case for a raise or promotion. Now, you must prepare your proposal.

Schedule the meeting

Once you understand your company policy and the compensation philosophy, it's time to schedule the conversation. Be strategic about when you schedule this meeting. Align it with performance reviews or, if possible, with a significant achievement.

Prepare your pitch

Practice makes perfect, as they say. Consider doing a test run in front of a mirror or with friends and family. On top of the delivery of your proposal, you'll want to prepare for responses to potential questions. Some likely examples include:

- Can you provide examples of your recent accomplishments?
- How do you see your role evolving in the future?
- Do you have any concerns with your current role or responsibilities?
- How does your performance compare against the expectations of the role? (Note: they may get specific and ask about items they've been asking you to work on)

You should also prepare for any objections, such as how to respond to open items your manager has asked you about. Another scenario is that your employer will be unable to fulfill your request at this time. It can be helpful to gather insight as to when a follow-up conversation can be expected. Additionally, the raise amount may fall below your expectations. It's recommended to have a floor you are willing to accept if your manager negotiates the amount.

It's delivery time

You've done your research, practiced, and waited patiently for the raise conversation with your boss. Now it's time to keep your cool and make the ask.

Here's how to handle this discussion in three steps:

1. Present salary comparisons — hopefully, you have multiple data sources, including what your company uses for benchmarks.
2. Discuss your achievements. Tie your accomplishments back to company goals and the benchmarks you've identified.
3. Clearly state the raise you're asking for, and be prepared to negotiate.

Use the right tone — and compliment sandwich

Asking for a raise is enough to make anyone's blood pressure rise, so think of this conversation as a sandwich.

- Start by thanking your boss or manager for their time and emphasizing your gratitude for the opportunity to contribute toward the company's objectives.
- Share the facts: market data, your contributions, and the role/raise you desire.
- Thank your manager for the consideration, and give them time to respond.

Try to remain calm and professional and balance confidence without appearing too aggressive or passive.

Handling outcomes and feedback

Regardless of whether or not you get the raise you were after, you should close the conversation by agreeing on the next steps. If your manager agrees to the raise, you will likely receive documentation confirming the amount and defining any additional expectations for your role. If you are not receiving a raise now, you may be able to schedule a follow-up conversation down the line.

Positive reactions for positive feedback

If you are receiving a raise, congratulations. All that hard work and research was worth it. Remember to express gratitude, continue building your skills, and work collaboratively with your manager.

How to manage a negative outcome

Sometimes, the raise conversation does not go how you'd like. Whether your manager evaluates you as underperforming or your company is simply unable to accommodate a raise at the current time, there can be many reasons why you don't get a salary increase.

Use this opportunity to reflect on feedback — are there things you could do to find more success in your role or align your efforts more closely to company goals? Get proactive and put together a plan of action to address and share with your manager. Ensure this aligns with your and your manager's discussion for re-visiting. Then, follow up and ask again after you have completed your plan of action.

If you feel your company and your market data differ, consider asking your manager and HR team to perform an audit. It is helpful to make sure the job responsibilities, skills, and level of experience match what you bring to the table.

Sometimes, an employee may outgrow their company. Even if you are recognized as a high performer, your employer may not have the funds or resources to advance your career — or your salary. If this is the case, it may be time to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Asking for a raise requires preparation, confidence, and a clear understanding of your value. By thoroughly researching market data, evaluating your performance, and building a solid case, you can confidently approach the compensation conversation with your manager. Remember, the key to success is not just asking for a raise but making a compelling, well-supported argument that aligns with your contributions and market standards.

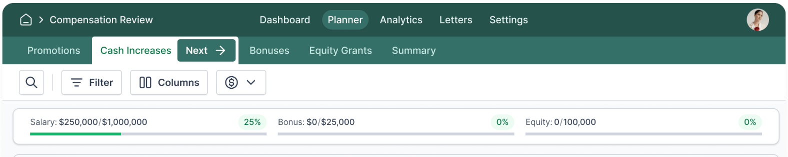
Are you an HR professional handling compensation?

Managing compensation is complex, with many factors to juggle in a short time.

That's where Comprehensive comes in. It's an all-in-one platform to simplify compensation reviews, communicate total rewards, benchmark, and manage pay ranges. It integrates seamlessly with your existing HR and performance management tools.

Comprehensive helps you get up and running with your compensation review cycle—no spreadsheets needed. Save time and energy, and build trust in your compensation process.

Ready to streamline your compensation reviews? Let's chat!



Salary: $250,000/$1,000,000 25%

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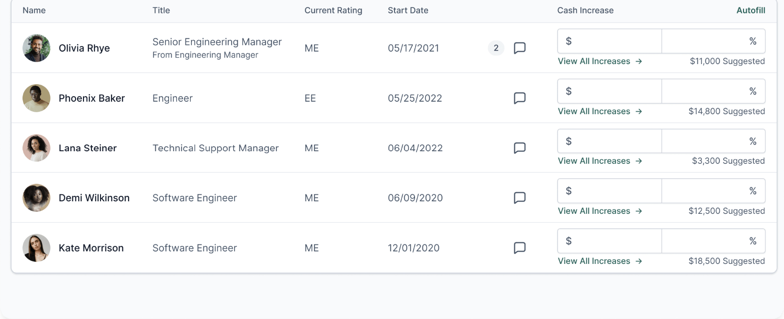

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