

Talk Your Way to a Better Raise

WHILE THE BUDGET IS STILL IN PLAY, USE THESE STRATEGIES TO WIN OVER YOUR BOSS. *by Daniel Bortz*

ANOTHER YEAR, another piddling pay raise? For some, sure. The average increase is expected to be just 3% in 2012, up a hair from last year's 2.9%, according to human resources consulting firm Mercer. Still, managers are concerned about retaining top talent, which explains why the best performers will see a brighter 4.6% (while the weakest links will get 0.4%). And if you're among the office MVPs, you've got a decent shot at convincing the boss to give you an even-better-than-average boost. Use these strategies:

TIME IT RIGHT

Most companies planned for 2012 salaries by the end of 2011, says Catherine Hartmann, a principal with Mercer. "But finalizing the budget seeps into January and February," she adds. So speak up now. By the time your performance review comes around—in February or March, for most workers—the cash could be committed to somebody else.

GET IN THE BOSS'S CORNER

Execs are under a lot of pressure these days, so starting the conversation with money can



doom your case. Engender a positive feeling by immediately emphasizing your commitment to the employer, advises Kate Wendleton, president of career coaching firm The Five O'Clock Club. "Say how much you love the job, that you're excited about the direction of the company, and speak to how you see yourself as a devoted contributor," she says.

PROVE YOUR WORTH

As you come up with your talking points, highlight responsibilities and accomplishments that align most with the firm's priorities. "If

you're the key contact for the biggest clients, you have leverage," says Caroline Ceniza-Levine of New York career coaching firm SixFigureStart.

Keep in mind that juggling multiple jobs also affords you power, says Wendleton: "If you left, they'd have to replace you with two or three people." She advises writing on the left side of a piece of paper the things you were hired to do, and on the right, what you're doing. Provide this as evidence of your growing role, being careful not to seem resentful.

NAME YOUR NUMBER

Conventional wisdom held that you should wait for the boss to throw out a dollar figure. "But on average, the first person to make an offer gets closer to what they want," says Northwestern management prof

Adam Galinsky. In addition, a recent study by University of Idaho psych professor Todd Thorsteinson found that those who requested implausibly high raises—teasingly asking for \$1 million—ended up with 9% to 10% more on average than those who didn't.

Still, in this economy, a really bold request could annoy your boss. So use [payscale.com](#) and [salary.com](#) to find the market value for your job. Then ask for an amount 7% to 10% higher, says Thorsteinson—a meaningful jump but not so big that your boss will think of you as a joke. **M**

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