



# Just Ask

Sometimes, just asking for a raise can get you a bigger salary cheque. Be proactive, and look after your financial interests. Do not wait on your employer to bring your compensation up to market value.

One of the most underrated, yet surprisingly effective approaches is to simply ask your boss for a raise. Here is a story of our friend who started programming in C at a networks company right out of college in Chico, California. His tenure lasted two years and a few months, and throughout that period, his salary remained the same. When he finally served his notice, his boss asked why he was leaving.



He replied that he felt under-compensated and that his next gig paid him a lot more than what he made at his current position. The boss was surprised and wondered why he had not simply asked for a raise. Most of the time, you will not get a raise unless you ask for it. Companies with formal processes and structure will defer these decisions to annual or half-yearly reviews.

Sometimes, it can be as easy as having a candid discussion with your manager and requesting a raise. For instance, you can have the following dialogue in your one-on-one with the manager:

I have researched the market and the numbers I've seen make me feel undercompensated in my current position. I was wondering if you can explain to me how compensation is determined at our company?

Note, you are not explicitly asking for a raise but putting a note of dissatisfaction followed by questioning the compensation mechanism, which would inevitably lead your manager to either justify your current compensation or acknowledge that it is subpar compared to the market. One thing you cannot do is barge into your manager's office and demand a raise, rather you have to tactfully and humbly put forth your concerns and requests. Another example dialogue is as follows:

Though I am enjoying my work and glad to be on such a great team, I had a concern regarding my current compensation. I am blind to how my compensation compares with folks across the organization working at the same level as me and I feel, maybe I am lagging behind my peers in that regard. I would appreciate it if you could talk to it a little bit and let me know how I am doing with respect to my peer group.

In the above dialogue, you are asking the manager to describe how you are compensated in comparison to folks within the same company and at the same level as you. In general, you should be able to articulate why it is that you feel you are not being paid at par with your peers or at the prevalent market rate for your profile. You can initiate the compensation conversation using the above or similar icebreakers, however, such conversations with your manager only carry weight if they are backed by sweat and toil of a high performer. Your manager must see you as an important and contributing member of the team. If, for some reason, the manager holds an

average or poor opinion of your work, then these conversations will more likely be meaningless. In fact, you may receive sugar-coated flak asking you to fill in the shoes for your current level before asking for a raise.

Also, be vigilant, your manager may throw the ball back in your court and ask what you think is fair compensation for you. You can avoid being put on the spot by responding “I don’t have enough data points to quote a number” or “I haven’t completed my research and will get back to you”. Thereafter you can follow up using the techniques discussed in this guide. For example, you can throw a very high number initially and then ask your manager to do the best he can. You can also step up your game by bringing outside offers and sharing them with your manager, especially if you do not intend to leave the company.

We would suggest keeping abreast of the compensation range for your role. Every six months or so spend a few hours to find the market compensation data for your role and company. **Netflix has an interesting philosophy in this regard.** The company encourages its existing employees to find what they can be paid at other companies, and if they receive an offer higher than what they are making at Netflix, their managers are free to revise their compensation.

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