

UNFAIRLY COMPENSATED! HOW DO I NEGOTIATE FOR A RAISE?



Dear Granted,

I'm a skilled web & graphic designer with 13 years of experience in graphic design, and 5 in web design. The company I worked for (\$22/hr) went on bankruptcy. I stayed unemployed for 7 months, until I finally got a job as a temporary-contract-based "graphic assistant", for \$15/hr, no web work at all, they said...at that time, it was better than nothing. I'm a hard worker, and for 5 months, I demonstrated I had more talents and skills, so they decided to hire me full time, with \$2,620/month. I took it. I had been applying for jobs with no results.

They then asked me to redesign their website, and I did. They asked me to create 2 more websites, and I did. And I maintain them all. And right now, I'm doing my boss' job, because he is "too busy" to take care of that. My boss said I would get a raise, but so far, the first year was a 5%, and this year a 4%. I believe I deserve at least \$40,000 for both jobs, according to the job market here, and I believe they've been taking advantage of me. I've been applying for everything related I can find, with again, no results. I want to stay here, but I want to find the way to get that money. All directors and heads of Departments agree that I'm a valuable asset, and nobody has a complaint about me or my work. What would you recommend?

Thanks,

Emily

Emily,

I have a couple of thoughts on your situation. First, it's possible you have misjudged your local market. If you have indeed been applying for jobs and not been selected, the market for your skills may not be what you think it is.

The next thing I'll tell you is that 15% raises for technical people is probably a thing of the past (for a while). The economy in the US is rising, but slowly, and there is still a glut of technical people on the market.

Now for some ideas on how to negotiate for a better package with your current employer.

The best leverage is an offer from another company, because that proves your worth on the open market, but it can also bring in suspicions about your loyalty to your employer. Those suspicions could limit your ability for promotion in the future if your employer feels they have been blackmailed into promoting you.

Instead, I would recommend you schedule a meeting with your boss to discuss the changes in your duties since you've been hired. Tell him that you love working there, but you feel the salary package you negotiated coming in was for a different set of duties and expectations. Remind him that you've been a strong and flexible team player, and now the duties you presently have are much more technical than before. Give him a list of things you've taken on since negotiating your entry package. Suggest (humbly and respectfully) that your job title and compensation grade should be reviewed since you're now doing a completely different job.

Next, give him some evidence that your present duties are worth more. The best way (outside of a competitive offer) is to show detailed compensation survey data. There are a number of easy to use online resources. They will give you a general salary report for free, but for fairly cheap you can get an incredibly detailed compensation survey for your skills in your geography.

Don't wave this research under your boss's nose and make demands. That will certainly turn him off and back him into an uncomfortable corner. **The key to success:** Give your boss the data he will need to go to bat for you with his superiors and let him draw his own conclusions about how long you will stay if your pay is not reasonably addressed.

Lastly, **be reasonable** about the kind of financial or budget limitations your present employer may have. Don't become a problem child, or they will replace you as soon as it is convenient. There are positive and mature ways to deal with this, and I trust you will make good choices.

Best of luck. I think you'll get the best results with this kind of approach. Please let me know how it turns out.