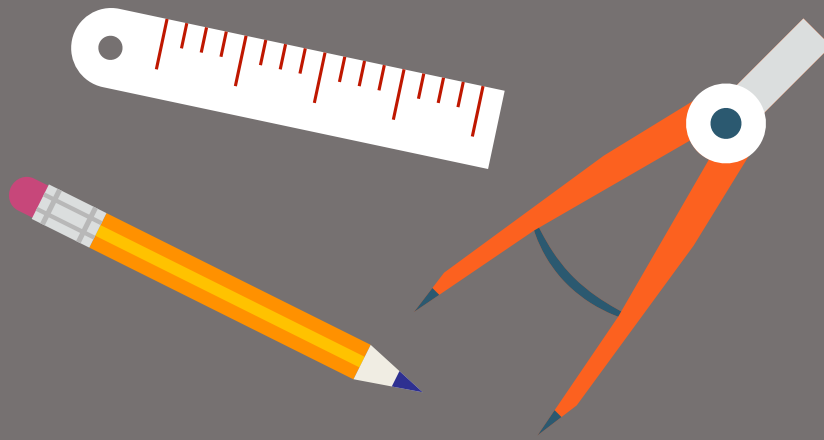


10 Things To Never Say During Salary Talks



PRACTICAL TOOLS

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To conduct successful salary talks with employees, managers and supervisors must not only know what to say in various difficult scenarios that may arise, but they should also know what NOT to say.

Some well-intentioned phrases can come across extremely negative to employees and thus could act as big de-motivators.

Obviously, you want to avoid using such phrases as much as possible – and know how to remedy the damage if one of them slips out inadvertently.

Here are the big 10 “no-nos” to avoid in salary talks:

1 “We have to talk about your range penetration and about the market ratio ...”

Don’t go crazy with consultant-speak and HR jargon. Break complicated theoretical concepts down to simple language for the employees.

Using big words and terms will just give them the idea that by obfuscating the issues behind pseudo-scientific talk, and that you’re trying to hide an ugly truth.

It’s simple enough to say: “Let’s talk about where you are with your compensation package, and how our company is doing in the industry.”

2. “I want to give you a 7% raise, but I’ll have to clear it first with the big boss ...”

Avoid promising an employee a specific raise if you don’t know you can get it approved.

Maybe you’re trying to make yourself out to be the good guy and paint the big boss as the ogre if he (or she) doesn’t approve, but that doesn’t help the employee at all.

The employee will only be sorely disappointed if the raise doesn’t come through. Never dangle a raise that is larger than what company guidelines dictate under the nose of an employee without clearing it with senior management first.

3. “You know this company is cheap, so that’s all I can get you ...”

Never set the employee against the company.

Trying to make yourself out to be good guy and the company the bad guy in communicating a raise that is smaller than expected or hoped-for doesn’t do anyone any good, least of all the employee you’re talking to.

It’s your job as a manager to communicate the company philosophy and policy on compensation, explain it and defend it.

4. “I knew you wanted that new Ferrari (haha), but ...”

Another big no-no: Making a joke of it and talking about raises and compensation sarcastically is bad form.

There is often significant economic consequences to the employee and it is no joking matter. The least they can expect from their managers is to treat salary talks with all due seriousness.

Stay away from jokes – they’ll almost always fall flat and blow up in your face.

5. "You're now only making a little less than_____..."

A manager might be tempted to say something like this to make the employee feel good. After all, if they know that they're making only a little less than an acknowledged star or than the senior employee in that position in the department, presumably that should make them feel good.

But all comparisons are odious. They might start to resent that senior employee.

You're there to talk about their compensation and what they deserve in context with what the company can offer.

Leave all others out of it. Don't talk about anyone else's salary or compensation. And if they bring it up, redirect the answer back to focus on them.

And by the way, it's just as big a mistake to say someone is now making more than another employee, no matter whether that was the person's stated goal or not. Once again, you're there only to talk about the compensation of that particular employee, not anyone else's.

6. "There's not much to talk about here ..."

Even if it seems to be a cut and dry situation, it's a mistake to cut employees off and make the meeting short.

You may not have much wiggle room in what kind of compensation you can offer the employee, but let them talk and let them express their hopes and aspirations for the future anyway. Employees can accept management decisions they do not entirely agree with.

But they will not accept not being listened to.

The least you can do is listen to them and make them feel that some of what they said will be reflected in any new compensation or bonus package being offered.

7. "You're lucky you still have a job ..."

Some managers are tempted to say something like this to an employee who's not getting a raise at all in a misguided attempt to sweeten that bitter pill.

But it's an awfully negative thing to say and it's hard to imagine how this employee would be motivated in the future to do a good job for you.

On the one hand, if you feel that negative about the employee, maybe you should start looking for a way to terminate the employee or obtain a negotiated resignation in an effort to replace the person with someone better.

On the other hand, if the company is not doing well and can't offer any raises but really needs everyone to stick it out, appeal to the employee's help instead of telling them they already have one foot out the door.

8. "I haven't had a raise myself for the last two years ..."

What are you trying to accomplish by telling an employee something like that? Are you trying to get sympathy?

At the time of their salary talk, they don't really care about what you're making. They care a lot about themselves. Don't try to focus the attention away from them to you. It should be all about them – not about you.

9. "I remember when they asked us to take a 10% pay cut ..."

Once again, trying to sweeten a bitter pill with some tale about how bad it once was won't do much good.

That is water under the bridge.

They're likely to not understand why you ever agreed to take such a pay hit in the first place.

Again, you're there to talk about them in the here and now.

10. "I have this much available for you ..."

This is a tricky one and some managers use phrases like this one in order to maintain control of the conversation in salary talks and cut off any long-winded discussions that won't lead anywhere anyway.

They believe that laying on the table the maximum amount of money they have available for the employee will cut short any unseemly haggling match.

However, while that may work to cut off the discussion, it can leave employees frustrated that they have no input in the decision at all.

They would like to feel that they can state their case.

The best managers can make salary talks a true dialogue between them and their employees, explain where the employee stands and how the company is doing in general. The employee becomes part of the conversation and may actually think that whatever raise he or she is getting was sort of their own idea.

That kind of a salary talk will further motivate employees to be part of the team in the future – and that's your goal as a manager.