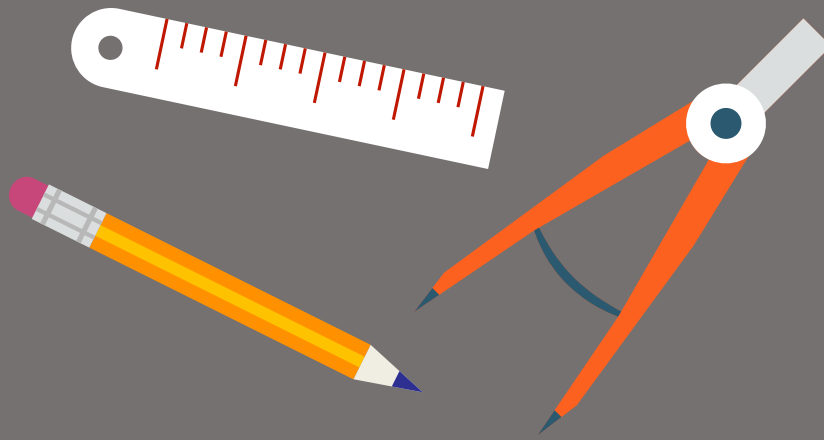


10 Traits Employers Look for When Giving Raises



PRACTICAL TOOLS

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You might think you have all your ducks in a row when you decide to ask for a raise. You're armed with the positive numbers and results from the projects you worked on and can show that you're worth just as much as others in your position on the market.

But you may be overlooking something. Studies show that just as employers look for those special "intangibles" when deciding on new hires, they also focus on them when considering salary rewards. After all, the main goal is to retain good employees, whether they're rookies or veterans.

So what are those little "extras" that employers look for when they decide to give a raise?

Here are that 10 that will really make you stand out.

1. Reliability

Managers love that employee who seems to know what you need him or her to do even before you ask. "Radar" employees like that are tough to find and even tougher to keep. There is nothing that makes an employer more giddy than knowing it can give an important task or assignment to an employee it knows will deliver. Do high-quality work consistently, meet deadlines regularly, and gain a reputation as someone who always delivers. Because if you can always be counted on, it's much more likely you'll count some extra bucks in your paycheck.

2. Being Organized and Thorough

Leaders also see the value in employees who are unfailingly organized and have a productive work ethic. Employees who show they aren't easily distracted and are mindful of time management tell their bosses they're worth the extra pay because they help, not hinder, getting things done. Standing out from the slackers gives you a leg up on the ladder when it comes to doling out choice assignments – and raises.

3. A 'Team Player' Attitude

The MVPs on any team not only elevate their own game, but also boost everyone else around them. And as any fan knows, this is the dynamic that wins championships. Recruiters and bosses know how hard it can be to find and retain these hidden gems. So if you can show how your actions and individual efforts contributed significantly to your team's success, your bosses will see the value you represent and be more likely to show you the (raise) money. Teamwork shows in other ways too: Being the employee who works well with other team members always gets you noticed. Or, if you played mentor or trainer to new employees on the team, mention that in your raise request. It shows you're invested in more than your own success.

4. A Willingness to Grow

Recognizing that you're only as good as what you don't know signals that you're open to learning and growing in your career, even if you stick to the same general title. Employers value versatility and an eagerness to learn. Have you asked to take on new job responsibilities? Have you attempted to find added projects or opportunities where you could be of help? Have you investigated training opportunities that would make you a more valuable employee? If you actively prepare for the future so you can help the company, you'll be much more likely to be rewarded with a raise.

5. An Upbeat Outlook

Results aren't the only thing that matters to career advancement. They count for a lot, of course – but a negative attitude can dull the results of good work. Even if your record is stellar, you don't want to be the employee the boss dreads seeing in his office. Since people by nature are more willing to give raises to people they like, being cooperative, friendly and upbeat goes a long way to help your cause. There's no need to kiss up; that's frowned upon too. Projecting positivity means that even when confronted with challenges, you're a voice of proactive solutions rather than a Negative Nancy.

6. Going the Extra Mile

Completing tasks and doing what you're told isn't stand-out behavior, it's just doing what was expected when you were hired. Basing a raise request on the simple concept that you know how to follow instructions essentially tells your boss "I am a just-good-enough employee, isn't that swell?" If you truly want to work toward a deserved raise, you've got to show you can go beyond what your day-to-day chores are. Showing initiative and putting in extra effort when you can are things your bosses want (and need) to see before deciding to further invest in you.

7. Showing Confidence

It might seem almost too easy, but many bosses reward raises to employees who simply have the guts to ask for one. When employees show some moxie in the face of higher-ups it shows they've got enough confidence to confront other obstacles, too. However, if you're showing confidence, you've also got to be prepared to back it up with solid action. Having your pitch well-prepared in advance lets you avoid getting thrown off your game, so you'll radiate true conviction about your value to the company.

8. Looking the Part

In today's, well, relaxed workplace it's easy to let comfort take over. But when it starts to reflect on your overall image, it may be time to step up your appearance. Employees who look like they just got out of school when they're really on their third job don't scream "leadership material" to bosses. If your manager can't visualize you as an up-and-comer, he might not consider giving you an up-and-coming salary. So make an effort prior to asking for a raise to look your best (think, what would I wear if I were meeting the company CEO?).

9. Being a "Smart" Risk-Taker

This is that elusive "put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is" trait that can be invaluable to companies. Employees who show they can step up and shoulder responsibility for projects or team efforts aren't afraid to put themselves and their reputation on the line. Managers know that when all their employees are a bunch of followers, no one takes the lead. That's why independent thinkers are so valued and are likely to be rewarded when salaries are considered.

10. Showing Inspiration and Vision

Companies also call this "value creation," because it shows an employee is as invested in the company as much as the company is in the employee. When companies decide to invest more money in an employee for the long haul, they're literally investing in the future. Bring some new ideas, projects or plans to your raise negotiation. That tells your employer you're working hard in the present with an eye on the future. It tells them you're a safe bet to invest in.