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Didn't get that pay rise? Here's what you should do next

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Michael Scott never let personal failures hold him back. Neither should you.

You've endured the annual review process, asked the boss for a pay rise and been told it's no go. Bad luck – but are you alone in your poor fortune?

Research commissioned by recruitment consultancy Robert Half suggests 2016 should have been a good year for Aussie professionals.

A survey of chief financial officers carried out in late 2015 found two thirds planned to reward their top performers with a salary increase this year and 78 per cent planned to distribute bonuses as an incentive for employees.



Overcoming disappointment is the first step

So how should you respond if your request for a raise hasn't resulted in an answer in the affirmative this time round?

Examine your expectations

Was the past year spent making a genuine contribution to your organisation or just marking time? If you've put in a big effort and blitzed your Key Performance Indicators then disappointment may be a reasonable response. Not so much, if you just showed up nine to five and plodded along, says Paul Findlay, managing director of professional development training firm PD Training.

"Be honest with yourself – did you deserve it?" Findlay says. "A lot of people are conditioned to think that because they've been somewhere for a year...they have an expectation of entitlement."



• Benefits can often translate as money saved.

Don't take it personally

Being told to soldier on at the same salary level may feel like a slight on your efforts or ability but it ain't necessarily so. Resolving not to take personal offence can help you move forward in a positive frame of mind, engineer and entrepreneur Jo Schneider says.

"A lot of the time these requests can't all be actioned immediately... there may be other situations or environmental factors you aren't even aware of impacting these decisions in the business," Schneider says.

"Being gracious in understanding your manager's position could stand you in good stead for the next opportunity. Managers learn a lot about people when the answer isn't what they want to hear."

Find out why

Providing you're satisfied you're not an unmitigated slacker, understanding the rationale behind the decision to keep the purse strings tied is the logical next step, Findlay agrees. Don't make assumptions, ask your boss, or their boss, to talk it through with you.

"There will be a valid reason somewhere," Findlay says. "Go and find out why before making life changing decisions."

Requesting another meeting, once you've had a chance to cool down and collect your thoughts, is the way to go, former employment lawyer and Employment Hero founder Ben Thompson adds.

Bring specific questions for your manager to address, be prepared to outline your expectations for your role and ensure your conversation is documented, he counsels.

"Follow up the meeting with a formal email to ensure that your discussion is on the record and not just a general chat," Thompson says.

Never mind the cash, show me the benefits

Extra cash may not be on offer but that doesn't mean it's the end of the conversation.

Many companies can offer benefits which may be worth as much, or more, than a few extra bucks in the bank each week. Besides the likes of health insurance, mobile phone plans and utility discounts, there may be unquantifiable benefits you can ask for, which will cost the company very little but which can provide genuine value to you.

Think flexibility to work from home or to choose your own hours, or additional training to update your skills.

"People would be surprised what could happen, what could be offered, if they just asked," Thompson says.

Improve yourself

It's hard to feel motivated if you believe you've been done down on the dough but making a plan to improve your skills and market value under your own steam can help you to keep powering on, according to careers coach Sally- Anne Blanshard.

"[Ask yourself] who do I know in the business, who's going to give me access to more work, how can I broaden what I'm doing now so I can be worth more money?" Blanshard says.

"Proactively think that out, rather than relying on others to do that for you...An employer owns your contract but you own your contribution."

Pack your bags

No one has a gun to your head, compelling you to stick around if you've concluded you're underpaid and under-appreciated. Accepting the possibility of leaving as a viable option can make it easier to determine the course of action that's right for you long term.

"The mere acceptance that it is a potential solution often gives you the sense of freedom you need to enjoy your current position more," Schneider says.

"You are completely in control of this decision so make sure you don't fall into the trap of blaming others for your position and feeling like you are 'trapped'. This is not conducive to a positively implemented plan that will move you forward. Opening yourself up to options outside your current workplace could be the best way to get you back in control of your career."

Have you been knocked back for a pay rise? How did you react? Share your experience in the comments section below.

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