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YOU, YOU, YOU

## Get What You Deserve At Work (*Tips From A Master Negotiator*)

Like negotiating or resolving conflicts as much as a trip to the dentist? Fear no more! *Cosmo* enlists the help of a master negotiator to guide you through four awkward work scenarios to ensure you'll always emerge the winner. BY DENISE LI – Singapore Edition

### *You Want To...*

#### **GET A RAISE OR A PROMOTION**

**Mistake to avoid:** Not asking, for starters.

Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever, authors of *Women Don't Ask: Negotiation And The Gender Divide*, uncovered some interesting statistics in the course of their research.

These include: "Two and a half times more women than men reported a great deal of apprehension about negotiating" and "Women are more pessimistic about how much is available when they do negotiate, so they typically get less when they do negotiate. On average, they get about 30 percent less than men".

**Peter says:** "In general, women tend to put a caveat when they communicate their intent to negotiate for a pay rise or a promotion.

They often say things like, 'I'd like to talk about the job opening that's available, if it's not too much trouble', or 'I'd like to discuss the possibility of a raise, *if it's not*

*inappropriate*'. Phrases like 'if it's not too much trouble and 'if it's not inappropriate'

only weaken your cause as it shows you're uncertain about what you're asking for. This, in turn, will make you seem less deserving of what you're demanding, which is often not the case.

A better way of negotiating would be to say, 'I am uncomfortable about raising the topic of a promotion/raise, yet I feel it's appropriate for me to talk about it'. Then, go on to build your case about why it would be in your company's best interest to grant you that promotion or raise, like highlighting a valuable skillset you might have. When you lay bare the negotiation process, it makes it far less threatening for yourself and the person you're negotiating with. To further strengthen your case, you might want to have some facts and figures on hand -- salary surveys or another form of industry benchmark will work well for your cause."

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## ***You Want To...***

### **CLOSE AN IMPORTANT DEAL**

**Mistake to avoid:** Not being assertive enough; it's a common problem most women face at the negotiating table.

**Peter says:** "One of the phrases I like to use is 'Be [respectful of] the people and hard on the substance'—'people' being your client, and 'substance', the deal you're trying to clinch. Most women are naturally good at building and strengthening relationships, and this is something that can work to their advantage in business dealings. Men, on the other hand, tend to be more focused on the end result, which is closing the deal.

***"Balance being respectful, kind and considerate towards people with being assertive in what you're asking for, that is, the deal you're trying to close."***

The problem a lot of people -- men and women -- make is to either be too easygoing or too aggressive on both the people and the substance. By being too easygoing with the subject matter at hand, it will give the impression you're not interested in closing the deal. But if you are aggressive towards the parties involved, you might get what you're after in the short run, but risk your relationship with your client -- and your reputation.

The best results can be had by taking the best of both the hard and soft approaches. Balance being respectful, kind and considerate towards people with being assertive in what you're asking for. Try

saying something like, 'I'm quite sure this deal will work in your favour. If you have any reservations, please feel free to state them; I'm sure we will be able to come to a conclusion that's favourable to all parties involved.'

## ***You Want To...***

### **HIGHLIGHT YOUR UNHAPPINESS ABOUT A MANAGEMENT DECISION**

**Mistake to avoid:** Not doing anything at all. Keeping mum about a bad management decision is something that's more likely to happen in a company in an Asian society or one with a particularly "Asian" corporate culture because subordinates tend to be more mindful of company hierarchy and are more fearful of offending a work superior. Letting a bad management decision slip by may result in inefficient work practices or a breach in the ethical code of conduct -- both of which don't bode well for your company's (and your) future.

**Peter says:** "I would approach the situation by speaking with my superior one-on-one. This allows your boss to 'save face' and maintain her dignity. I'd also be transparent from the start of the conversation. Broach the topic by saying, 'I believe the decision that's been proposed is not in the company's best interests', then state why you think so. Explain why the decision is at odds with your personal values to make your case stronger, if it's an ethical issue. If the thought of

speaking to your boss makes you quiver, seek the advice of a trusted colleague on how you should deal with the situation, or role-play the conversation with him or her beforehand.

Rallying like-minded colleagues can work in your favour; it would go a long way in making your case stronger. However, I'd caution against going to speak to your superior in a big group, as this could make him or her feel ganged up on. Remember: focus on the problem and never let the conversation slide into a personal attack on your boss."

### ***You Want To...***

## **PUT A SLACKING COLLEAGUE IN HER PLACE**

**Mistake to avoid:** Going straight to your boss without first speaking to your colleague. This will make you look like a tattletale to the colleague you have an issue with, as well as other co-workers.

**Peter says:** "Again, it's a good idea to speak to your colleague one-on-one. Remember to always give her the benefit of the doubt and avoid making the worst assumptions about her intentions, character and work ethic. What's bothering you is the person's behaviour; focus on that and never let it slide into a personal attack. Raise the subject to her by saying, 'I need to speak to you about something difficult, and this may be quite delicate'. That way, she knows it's not easy for you to say whatever you're

about to say to her. Follow up with the following statement: 'It feels to me you're not doing your share of the work. I believe you probably want to do a good job. I was wondering if there's a problem I don't know about -- either at work or in your personal life -- that's interfering with the situation'. Raise the issue with her more than once if you don't get the answers you first desire. Her first instinct is probably to get defensive or angry, but she may be more willing to open up to you if you attempt to speak to her again and are genuine in letting her know you care.

If all else fails, there's nothing wrong with letting your boss know you're putting in more than your fair share at work, but be subtle about it. Avoid being too blatant or shameless in your self-promotion as this can backfire. Instead of your boss thinking that you're doing a good job, she might wonder if you're actually trying to hide some incompetence on your part!"