



NINE TO FIVE

# I found out my co-worker is getting paid more than me. What should I say to my boss?

ANDREA YU

SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PUBLISHED APRIL 4, 2021

## THE QUESTION

I found out that my co-worker is getting paid more than me. We're both on salary and the difference is a couple of thousand dollars, but it still bothers me. We do the exact same job with the exact same responsibilities. He was hired a few months after me and I suspect that he just negotiated himself into a higher salary. But I think it's unfair and would like the same salary as him. How should I approach my employer about this?

## THE FIRST ANSWER

Kathryn Meisner, career and salary negotiation coach, Toronto

Start by determining if the potential benefits outweigh the potential risks. Unfortunately, the less power and privilege you have, the greater the possibility that your employer (either consciously or unconsciously) may penalize you for your assertiveness. However, asking for more can be worth it even if you don't get your increase: You'll get negotiation practice and it'll reveal your financial growth potential at your workplace.

Think strategically: What would make your employer say yes? Depending on your relationship with the colleague in question, you can ask him how he successfully negotiated. Initiate the conversation as a standalone meeting or within a one-on-one setting with your manager. You can begin by saying, "I'd like to discuss compensation." Then, make your ask.

Confidently communicate your contributions and results. And yes, even soft skills can have results. While prepping for this negotiation, if you realize that your contributions

are significant, aim for a more significant raise. Ask about the next steps necessary to make your salary increase happen. If your boss is hesitant, ask questions to get context about why your colleague is paid more and to understand the requirements for a salary increase. As much as possible, rebut their points.

Be ready to counteroffer at least once. Prep the non-financial compensation you want as consolation. If the employer says “no” — or even if they say “yes” but make the negotiation very difficult — you can start looking for another job. You’re more likely to get a bigger salary jump when negotiating a new job offer anyway.

## **THE SECOND ANSWER**

Rebecca Saturley, managing partner, Stewart McKelvey, Halifax

Before approaching your employer, determine what pay equity legislation applies in your jurisdiction. Pay equity prohibits employers from paying people differently based on gender. However, like most legal issues in Canada, there is a different system in each province. Fortunately, all Canadian jurisdictions have some form of legislation designed to address wage inequality between men and women, particularly when performing identical work.

Next, review your company policies. Is there any policy that addresses equality and respect that might support your position? Conversely, are there any policies about the confidentiality of salaries that you need to be mindful of?

Once you understand the policy and legal considerations, the next step is to plan your communication and frame the issue for your employer. Provide clear reasons as to why you think the distinction in salary is unfair and the message it sends. Avoid confrontational language which could be seen as insubordinate.

The reality is that some employers will not be open to this message — but raising this issue in a respectful manner is not cause for discipline. If your employer takes action against you for raising this, you may want to speak with an employment lawyer. And if they refuse to address the issue, it might be time to consider alternate employment.

Have a question for our experts? Send an email to [NineToFive@globeandmail.com](mailto:NineToFive@globeandmail.com) with ‘Nine to Five’ in the subject line. Emails without the correct subject line may not be answered.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/careers/career-advice/article-i-found-out-my-co-worker-is-getting-paid-more-than-me-what-should-i/>

**© Copyright 2021 The Globe and Mail Inc. All Rights Reserved.globeandmail.com and The Globe and Mail are divisions of The Globe and Mail Inc., The Globe and Mail Centre 351 King Street East, Suite 1600 Toronto, ON M5A 0N19 Phillip Crawley, Publisher**