

How to Negotiate Non-Salary Benefits

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CAREER



Think about it this way—do you lose anything by advocating and negotiating for the benefits you need and deserve? If the answer is no, then you'll be exactly where you are now except you will know a lot more about whether or not you should stay on or move on.

In being your own advocate, you will need to reframe your thinking. This is as much about the job as it is about you.

You are not going to be negotiating benefits for yourself that will detract from your productivity or results—quite the opposite, right? Then focus on the business value your employer will receive by providing you the benefits you seek.

Often times, non-salary benefits are easier to negotiate because of the way budgets are developed. Salary lines are fraught with rules and controls in many cases, but discretionary funds often are far more accessible.

The first thing to determine is what you want or need in non-salary benefits and why. Is it a title, recognition, time off, flex-time, flex-place, a parking space, education, a bigger office, childcare, family leave, more vacation time, more authority, etc.? You need to be explicit about the "what" and the "why," and perhaps even work out the "how."

Always, always, speak to results—behavioral and business. When you reframe for your requests this way, you can be far more objective, detached even, and then develop your conversation as if you were making the case for someone else—only this time the someone is you.

For example, The What: "I want to

get my MBA and I need my employer to pay for it." The Why: "To be more skilled in my current job and free up my boss so she can have more time to lead the division, and for me to be qualified for higher-paying jobs in my division that I can't apply for now." The How: "I will need flex time to go to classes or work shorter days, or ..."

Here are five tips to help you self-advocate without pain—because your story will be clear, clean, and compelling.

Know yourself.

Assuming you are an outstanding performer, you are as much or more in the driver's seat as your boss when you are negotiating. You are a resource your boss and organization wants to keep happy and to retain.

Don't come into this conversation with your hat in your hand, hoping for "permission" to be granted. You are a highly valued member of the team, so act that way—confident, but not arrogant.

Another part of knowing yourself is being clear about what you are and are not willing to do for the non-salary benefits you are seeking. Are the hours longer, is there travel, do you have to manage others?

All of these factors will impact your life. Make sure you have considered what your values are and what matters to you most, then go forward and negotiate for what you want and need.

Know your stuff.

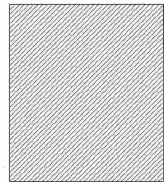
Make sure your work is adding value to your company/organization and be prepared to prove it with business and people results. You need data. Ask for feedback about what you are doing well and what you can do better from your boss, peers, customers, and, if you have them, direct reports.

Know the true cost of the non-salary benefit you are asking for, and as much

as possible, articulate the return on investment (ROI) for your employer—qualitative (e.g., a happier you who will stay) and quantitative (e.g., will be able to take on projects like XYZ, saving your boss eight hours per week).

Know your boss.

Make sure you know how your boss needs to hear things. Does she like just



the facts, conceptual framework, objectivity, right to the point, lots of ideas?

What's the best way to ask your boss about anything? If you don't know, find out. How you ask is as important as what you ask for.

Pay attention to timing. Don't have this conversation in the midst of a crisis, on Friday afternoon, or just before you or your boss go on vacation. Have it when you are prepared, she has a heads up (bosses don't like surprises) that you'd like to discuss changes/new expectations/results in your role with her/him.

Make it your only agenda item and keep the conversation clear, clean, and objective. Remember, it helps to imagine you are advocating for someone else—who deserves what you are negotiating for.

Know your system.

Make sure you know your organization's culture and to whom you need to go to negotiate your desired non-salary benefits. If useful, talk to your HR people to learn what is possible within your system.

I didn't say what's "normal," because you don't have to negotiate for normal things—just possible things. You may even break new ground. So don't let the "rules" and "we've never done that before" people hold you back when what you want makes sense.

Know your options.

Make sure you are aware of your

own and your job's value in the marketplace. Review websites such as Salary.com, Glassdoor.com, and Internet job sites. You now have more data—and it's objective. That may give you more negotiating opportunities for both salary and non-salary benefits.

When you follow these five suggestions, and when you are clear about the personal and professional returns on investment, you are far more likely to get what you want and need.

The act of negotiating for yourself also sends a powerful message all by itself. It tells others you are pro-active about your own development, the value you add to your employer, and that you have carefully thought out a win/win plan.

All of these are positive indicators of high-potential employees, those who don't hang around waiting for someone else to hand them an opportunity. And high-potential people know they need to negotiate their careers and advocate for the things they need to grow them. **BV**

Leadership authority Roxana (Roxi) Hewertson helps both emerging and expert managers, executives, and owners boost quantifiable job performance in various mission-critical facets of business. Through *AskRoxi.com*, Roxi—"the Dear Abby of Leadership"—imparts invaluable free advice to managers and leaders at all levels to help them solve problems, become more effective, and realize a higher measure of business and career success.