



MONEY TALKS

Do research and prepare important talking points before initiating a conversation about a raise.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

How to Ask for a Raise or Negotiate Pay

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Most people don't enjoy money conversations. Most of us also don't feel comfortable selling ourselves. Yet, we all want to be fairly compensated for the work we do. This requires working through that discomfort and initiating a conversation to advocate on your own behalf. Just as for any tough discussion, spend some time getting all your ducks in a row. Know the details and be ready to clearly communicate what you are asking for and why.

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CONVEY YOUR VALUE

Be ready to tell your story. Share a summary of your contributions to the hospital. Include specialized skills that you have. This can extend beyond technical skills to include nursing care, client communication, the ability to rally the team, and more.

Have you helped reorganize an area of the hospital? Implemented an idea that resulted in more efficient workflow? Are you always the first to volunteer to cover less desirable shifts? These types of contributions are extremely valuable.

We all grow and learn over time, but sometimes that growth is steeper than other times. Has there been a significant change in your role? Consider the following:

- New skills you've recently learned
- Increase in workload due to a new service the hospital has implemented
- More responsibility or extra projects—either assigned or voluntarily taken on

Your manager is hopefully already aware of what you do, but having a concise list will help you convey your value.

COMPARISON RESEARCH

Do your market research. Check job postings for nearby hospitals to see if you can determine their starting pay ranges. Is your pay rate low for your geographic area or for your position in the hospital?

Keep in mind that hourly pay rates do not tell the whole story. There are other factors that influence job satisfaction and total compensation. Total compensation includes not just your hourly pay but also bonuses, incentive pay, paid time off, healthcare benefits, employer contributions to a retirement plan,

paid continuing education, pet care discounts, and more. There are also often intangible benefits, such as work schedule, skill utilization, and growth opportunities. These are difficult to quantify but should definitely be considered.

PLAN YOUR APPROACH

Be sure you are approaching the right person. Skipping over your technician supervisor and the practice manager and going straight to the owner is not the best way to go. If you are unsure whom to approach with your request, ask. Start with your immediate supervisor. If they are not the right person, they will tell you.

Consider the best time of day to talk with your manager. The moment they walk in the door or at the very end of the day before they leave on vacation are probably not your best bets. If you are uncertain, let them know you would like some of their time for a conversation, and ask when would be best.

Anticipate questions your manager may ask, such as:

- “Specifically, what have you done that justifies a pay raise?” Be ready with some recent examples of your successes, things that you have been responsible for that have gone well, or compliments you've received from colleagues or clients.
- “When was your last performance review, and what were the results? If there were areas needing improvement, what strides have you made in that direction?”
- “When was your last pay increase, and how much was it?”

Your manager can look this information up, of course, but it demonstrates that you have given a lot of thought and consideration to the discussion, and have come prepared.

WHAT MATTERS TO YOU MAY BE IRRELEVANT TO YOUR MANAGER

While there may be other factors influencing your request, recognize them and decide if they are truly worth communicating to your manager. Your personal finances are a huge contributing factor in your mind, but this is not your manager's concern.

Your manager is going to look at what you bring to the team and hospital. The fact that your rent has gone up, or your car needs repairs, or gas prices have increased is



not necessarily justification for a raise. Remember that your manager is probably facing the same challenges, so as painful as these things can be, they are not unique.

Managers have a tough balance to maintain. They want to pay staff appropriately, and they also have to look out for the financial health of the hospital. Ultimately, the hospital must remain profitable in order for everyone to be successful. Striking this balance is tough. There are often other outside pressures on managers, and there may be decisions that are beyond your manager's control.

Practice managers and owners have factors to weigh that they cannot share with you. Acknowledging this in your conversation goes a long way. Simply saying that you know you do not see all the pieces of the puzzle and offering empathy for those who must make tough business decisions can give you a good connection.

PREP FOR THE CONVERSATION

It's OK to verbalize that this is a hard topic to discuss. Set the tone for the conversation by stating what you are asking for at the beginning. Be ready to discuss details and share your "why":

- Summary of your contributions and accomplishments
- New skills learned or increased responsibilities
- How your pay compares to a similar position in other hospitals
- Information on your last pay increase and results of last performance review

Above all, be respectful. Give them time to consider—don't expect an answer in the moment. Thank them for their time and for hearing out your request.

WHAT TO DO IF THE ANSWER IS NO

Accept the answer with grace. It takes courage to ask for a raise, and the way you handle rejection speaks volumes. Feeling disappointed is natural. Be sure to conduct yourself professionally and thank your manager for their consideration. Try not to feel too discouraged if you didn't get your desired answer. This initial attempt can open the door to future discussions, and you never know where they may lead.

Find out what you can do differently. Inquire as to other skills you need to learn, continuing education

you can take, or cross-training into other areas of the hospital. Ask if there are improvements you need to make. Be ready to listen to and accept the feedback willingly. Commit to learning, improvements, or anything else that you need to do differently. Hold yourself accountable for your own growth.

Learn the timeframe for reconsideration. Ask your manager how soon your request can be reconsidered. They will likely be more than willing to give you a timeframe, but if they do not, offer to check back 6 months down the line.

NEGOTIATING PAY FOR A NEW JOB

When you receive a job offer, ask for a couple of days to consider. If you are interviewing at multiple practices, this gives you a chance to review all offers and make the best choice. A hospital that is a good fit will wait for your decision for a reasonable amount of time. As mentioned above, it is important to do research and understand what the going rate is for your position at veterinary clinics in your area. This will help you understand if you are receiving a fair offer or if it might be better to continue your job search.

Your pay is compensation for what you do, but remember that it is not a measure of your self-worth. Don't be afraid to advocate for yourself. You are your own best champion. **TVN**



Carolyn Becker

Founder and president of Starpath Consulting LLC, Carolyn has an insider's perspective from more than 20 years in the veterinary profession as a CVT, practice manager, HR director, HR partner, and HR consultant. Carolyn's deep understanding of veterinary team dynamics is the foundation for Starpath Consulting LLC, which provides veterinary-focused HR support. Carolyn is a Colorado native, and is grateful for the blue skies, Rocky Mountain views, and sunshine. She lives in southwest Denver with her family and 3 dogs. Carolyn is passionate about veterinary practice culture and empowering hospital teams. She offers résumé review and individual coaching services; see details at starpathconsulting.com.