

One Hour To a Higher Salary?

By the end of the year, you have spent hundreds of hours working for your employer. But how many hours have you invested in improving your own career? Could you quickly delineate your top accomplishments for the year, as well as the impact they had for your company? If not, then you may not be prepared when it comes to salary negotiations.

In the long run, you are the only person who can look out for your own interests. By investing just one hour in reviewing your career each year, you may be able to improve your salary, your work, and even your job satisfaction. Here are some suggestions to make the most of your one-hour review:

- 1. List your projects for the year.** Too many people rely on their performance reviews to tell them what they worked on during the year. But performance review goals are internally focused and very specific. You may not remember what “Key player in CILSOPS project” means when you’re updating your resume three years from now.

Take a few minutes to define key projects as though you’re explaining them to someone OUTSIDE the company. Briefly outline what the project was and your role in making it a success. For example, “Project manager for CILSOPS project. Directed complete implementation of new \$750K security software. Led team of six staff.”

- 2. Define concrete results for each project.** After you define a key project, determine what impact that project had. Maybe you increased productivity, saved money, or improved a process. Each project should list a concrete result, something that was achieved as a result of your hard work.

Make a statement or two that show what your project achieved. For example, “Achieved new level of corporate security and accountability with CILSOPS project. Strictly limited access to corporate data through new approval system.”

- 3. Quantify those results.** To make the list of results even stronger, quantify them to show how you were a key player. You could define the amount of cost savings, the amount of revenue built, or the size of the budget you managed. For example, “Decreased unnecessary data accesses 94% with CILSOPS security project. Safeguarded business-critical corporate data.”

Even projects you may think of as non-quantifiable have elements where you can estimate the percentage of time saved, the number of projects managed concurrently, or the type of process improvements achieved. When your company compiles quarterly or year-end numbers, that’s a good opportunity to review how you impacted your department, division, or company.

- 4. Survey the competition.** Now that you have a list of projects, results, and quantifiable accomplishments, you have already improved your negotiating power for your next salary review or job offer. You can prove your worth to the company

in clear, concise statements. The final step is to determine what you would be worth on the open market.

Utilize salary surveys to evaluate your position. www.salary.com is one example where you can search by your job title, category, and even location. While these are not definitive tools, they are a good way to see where your salary stands in relation to others who hold the same job title.

If you find you are already at the top of the salary range for your position, you might want to consider your career path and what the next promotion or job for you might be. Or conversely, you may find that your salary is quite low, and it might be worth asking for more in your next salary negotiation. Whatever the result, it's always good to be informed.

Even if you're not updating your resume at the moment, attach a copy of your one-hour career review to your resume and file it away. Then when you're looking to win a promotion, find a new job, or even just feel better about the work that you are doing, the one-hour career review will be there to give you the boost you need. Prove your value to the bottom line, and you improve your corporate standing. And that is definitely worth an hour of your time.

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