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## **ARTICLE** **MANAGING YOURSELF**

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*by Kathryn Heath*

MANAGING YOURSELF

# Even When Women Ask for a Raise, They Don't Ask for Enough

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Margot, my client, was offered a “great” job as the CFO of a fledgling unit within her company. It was a nice little step up for her, and she was thrilled by the prospect. Margot had earned this promotion by spending the previous six months running her department while her boss was out on leave. She did an exemplary job leading a vast piece of the company and was rewarded with a modest promotion. My first thought? Big whoop, Margot.

In her [landmark study](#) published in 2003, [Linda Babcock](#) found that women don't get ahead at work because they don't step up and ask for money and promotions. Our research indicates that this finding still applies, but perhaps not in the way people think. In the process of coaching hundreds of top female executives over the past decade, we've routinely interviewed hiring managers and pored over 360-degree feedback reports in search of trends and commonalities. One of the things we've found consistently is that women do, in fact, step up and ask for more money and better jobs. But they don't ask for *enough*. They take what they get on their first try without lobbying for what they really deserve—more.

**Dial it up.** Many of the women we coach are worried about being perceived as pushy, when in reality they're not advocating for themselves as forcefully as they should. To help them calibrate their efforts we tell them to visualize a TV remote—and visualize dialing it up three clicks. That brings the volume up to just about where it needs to be. When it comes to increasing your ask, there is a vast gap between wishy-washy and assertive.

Here's what we mean: 1.) “I believe I deserve a raise.” That's wishy-washy. 2.) “Based on my work during the acquisition I deserve a [be specific] raise.” That's confident. 3.) “Based on my work

managing the team during the acquisition I deserve a [specific] raise and I would like to be put on the fast track for a [be specific] promotion.” This is truly assertive.

This is the range of comments we see everyday from women in 360-degree feedback conversations. The best way to “dial up” an ask, then, is to take credit for your accomplishments and ask for a specific reward that is commensurate—and don’t accept anything less.

**Raise your expectations.** If there are two job openings, why not ask for the dream role rather than the smaller promotion? Always ask for more than you think you deserve in terms of the job and salary level. We’ve found that women consistently undervalue themselves. They also underestimate where a given position falls in terms of salary range. This may be why a man, in most cases, is paid better than the woman sitting next to him doing the same job. They expect to be well-paid and they are not afraid to ask for more.

**Ask up the ladder.** [Research indicates](#) that men are more willing to exchange favors than women are, and we believe that puts them in a better position to line up promotions. [Women hesitate to trade on their relationships](#) because that feels crass and unseemly. We coach women to network in a much more purposeful way and establish a quid pro quo of career favors with colleagues. In addition, women shouldn’t be reticent to network with their boss’s boss. Yes, you need to proceed with caution in terms of protocol, but courageously hob-knobbing above your level can earn you respect and get you noticed.

Ultimately, this is how Margot got the job she deserved. She did the CFO role well for a few months. During that time she got to know the division president and told him a little about her experience managing the unit. He was impressed and eventually offered her a much bigger position in the company. It took a lot for someone like Margot (she’s modest) to lobby so far above her pay grade, but she did it well and it paid off in terms of career advancement. And no one thought she was aggressive or overbearing, as she had feared.

In the end, it is important to put things in the proper perspective. There is very little risk—and tremendous reward—in asking for the big job. You will never be considered for it if you don’t. And simply stepping up for it means that you are registered for a promotion. Letting people know you want a bigger job is the first step in securing it.

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