

## SCRIPTED REPLIES TO OBJECTIONS

**Instructions:** After completing the lesson and worksheet on handling objections, use this Bonus Resource as a springboard for crafting your custom replies to your manager's objections. We'll start with the number one objection women expect, according to my Pay Raise Survey.

**"We don't have the budget for (some or all of) your pay raise request." OR "Business is still slow and revenues remain weak, so it just doesn't look good for a raise right now."**

*What I hear you saying is that, you would grant a \_\_\_\_% pay increase if it weren't for the budget constraints. Is that correct?...Thank you. I appreciate your recognition of the value I'm bringing to the job.*

*Since we're not able to bring my salary **on par with what the market** is now paying, how close can we get? If not \_\_%, would \_\_% be a fair amount to put into place right away? ["We" suggests a collaborative, problem-solving effort.]*

*Since the organization is not able to bring my salary up to par with the market now, how much of an increase can we build into next year's budget to get me closer to a **competitive salary**?*

*Since we're not able to reward my job performance now, how much of a **Merit Raise** can we build into next year's budget? **OR** (less presumptive):*

*Since you're not able to reward my job performance now, what's your projection for including my **Merit Raise** into next year's budget?*

*Since my job accomplishments can't be rewarded now, can we agree to a \_\_\_\_% raise when business has improved?...How about we revisit the numbers in about three months?*

*Since I've met but not exceeded job performance expectations, I'd like to know what would it take for me to get a **merit pay increase** in \_\_\_\_ months?*

*Since we're not able to increase my salary to a **competitive level** in the near-term, I'd like to suggest an alternative way to bring my hourly pay closer to market value, but that won't add to the budget. [[Present your proposal for 10% fewer hours without a pay cut.](#)]*

*Since my **Merit Raise** can't be put into place in the near-term, I'd like to suggest a way that my performance could be rewarded now that won't add to payroll costs. Since time is money, I have an innovative way to acknowledge my performance with time instead of money. [As above: present your proposal for 10% fewer hours without a pay cut.]*

*Since my **Merit Raise** can't be put into place in the near-term, I'd like to suggest a way that my job performance could be rewarded now that won't add to payroll costs. May I? [Negotiate for **additional weeks of paid time off (PTO)**.]*

*I understand there's a lot of pressure to keep your fixed-costs budget reined in and how that can put a damper on deserved **Merit Raises**. I'd like to discuss ways that I could earn a bonus based on bottom-line achievements. [Present your **Variable Pay** arrangement proposal.]*

*Since there's no room in the payroll budget for my increase now, I wonder if we could look at other budget items that offer ways to reward my job performance. For example, I'd like to attend [conference or graduate course] to [specific job skill improvement]. What would it take to have that approved from the training and development budget? The total cost would be about \$\_\_\_\_\_. Would [employer name] be able to support my professional development in that way? ...Then how about \$\_\_\_\_\_ of the cost? That doesn't quite match the pay increase we've been discussing; I'd like to have the time off to attend [the conference] without taking from my paid time off bank of hours. [Propose this only if PTO hours are normally deducted.] Can we agree on that as a way to partially recognize my contribution to [employer name]?*

These examples of replies show how any one of your options to agreement (that you generated on Day 3) can be woven into your negotiation. Adapt your replies to include those options.

Even though the examples were written as a *first* reply to an objection, you want to be ready to transition from one option to the next as you keep the negotiation going:

*I see. If that doesn't seem to be a possibility, I'd like to suggest another way...*

*I'd like to explore another way to acknowledge [or reward] my job performance...*

*Would you be open to other ways to help compensate for a lack of pay increase?*

*What would you do if you were in my position?*

Be ready to creatively *add* or *combine* options to equate to the *total* value of the pay raise you seek. For example, a partial raise plus more paid time off. A partial raise and full support for professional conference attendance. A deferred or no raise but more time off now *without* a pay cut, plus conference sponsorship.

**More options to consider:** Besides conferences, what other forms of continuing education could your employer sponsor? How about asking for a car allowance or other commuting expenses, such as parking or public transportation subsidies; health club memberships; remote or home office tech equipment or services; an upgrade in your healthcare plan or retirement savings matching contribution plan. Most or all of these are on a different budget line item than payroll, so there's flexibility in granting them.

**"I'd like to grant you a raise, but it's not my decision [authority] to do so."**

This is a tough one. It might not be true; your manager could be using it as a smoke screen so you'll back off on your request. Now you know better than to do that!

But it often has some element of truth to it. Yet even if it *is* true, your manager usually has an influence on the pay raise decision; s/he likely submits a recommendation for an increase when the budgets are being developed. Or at the very least, s/he can be an advocate in getting the raise pushed through for a deserving employee.

As part of your pay raise preparation, find out who the real decision maker is far ahead of the time you plan to negotiate a raise. This is one of the key people, along with your manager, who should be at the receiving end of your year-round self-promotion communications. And it's the person with whom you want to negotiate directly, with your manager's agreement.

*Yes, I understand [higher authority] has to approve my raise. Otherwise, you would grant my request for a \_\_\_\_% increase if it were in your power to do so. Is that correct?...Thank you. I appreciate your recognition of the value I'm bringing to the job.*

*I'd like the opportunity to speak with [higher authority]. Maybe we can arrange for the three of us to meet next week.*

*I really like working here and want to continue contributing to the department's goals. Would you help me address this issue? What do you suggest? Would it be possible for you to meet with [higher authority] about this matter? What would you do if you were in my situation?*

Be gently persistent, yet pleasant, with your manager in getting to the decision-maker and getting a decision.

If you have primed the path ahead of time by demonstrating and communicating your value, your manager will be more likely to help you get in front of the decision maker, or at least to act on your behalf. If geographical distance is a factor, your meeting can be conducted remotely via phone, Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, or similar means.

Once there, you'll present the same case you made (or would) to your manager and employ the negotiation tactics, techniques and responses you've been preparing.

If your manager puts up a barrier to the real decision maker or that person is otherwise inaccessible, what can you do? Do your best presentation possible to your manager, outlining the various options so that s/he will be well-equipped (and even motivated) to present your request to the decision maker.

If you don't get the agreement you want, know and employ your [BATNA](#).

**"I can't give you a raise. You know this organization only gives COLA increases."**

While this excuse may in fact be organizational practice, it's also a smoke screen. Think of it as a handy escape hatch for any manager who doesn't want to challenge the status quo on behalf of an outstanding employee. And no doubt your manager is being pressured by a higher manager to keep costs down as much as possible; this will hamper any initiative to break with organizational norms.

On the other hand, your manager may be eager to advocate for your pay raise to keep you satisfied with your job, that is, as a retention move. Or at least be open to the options you present in lieu of a pay raise. S/he knows that exceptions are (quietly) made. (They're known as i-deals, that is, individual deals.)

If you've become so valuable that your manager would find it difficult to replace you, go ahead and press your case. Don't let this objection stop you. It's time for *you* to be that employee who possesses the negotiating know-how and leverage to secure a genuine pay increase.

**Here are some suggested scripts to adapt if you're asking for a Merit Pay raise when only COLAs are customary:**

*Yes, I understand that's the practice here. Other than that obstacle, do you otherwise agree that I have earned a merit pay increase?...Thank you. I appreciate your recognition of the value I'm bringing to the job.*

*Is it possible, given the measurable job accomplishments that I've just outlined, that we could work towards getting another job title or job classification that would bring me to a pay level which reflects my contributions? [Your manager's reply to an "Is it possible" question is an indicator of how hard s/he is willing to advocate for you.]*

*Is it possible, given the expanded job duties that have been added since my last performance review, that we could work towards getting another job title or job classification that would allow a different pay scale?*

*Given the restraints of [employer name]'s practices which don't allow for **Merit Raises**, I wonder if, in light of the measurable job accomplishments that I've just outlined, you could arrange a bonus of say, \$\_\_\_\_, as a way to recognize my contributions.*

*I really like working here and want to continue contributing to the department's goals. What would you do if you were in my place?*

*Since [employer name]'s compensation practices don't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I'd like to suggest a way that my job performance could be rewarded in a different way. [Negotiate for additional weeks of paid time off.]*

*Since [employer name]'s compensation practices don't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I'd like to suggest another way of rewarding my job performance. Since time is money, here's an innovative way for me to have more time instead of money. [[Present your proposal for 10% fewer hours without a pay cut](#); that's a day off every other week or a variation.]*

*Since [employer name]'s compensation practices don't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I'd like to discuss ways that I could earn a bonus based on bottom-line achievements. [Present your **Variable Pay** arrangement proposal.]*

*Since [employer name]'s compensation practices don't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I wonder if we could look at other ways to reward my job performance. For example, I'd like to attend [conference or graduate course] to [specific job skill improvement]. The total cost would be about \$\_\_\_\_. Would you be able to advocate for my professional development in that way?*

*... Then how about \$\_\_\_\_\_ of the cost? That doesn't quite match the pay increase that we agreed I've otherwise earned. I'd like to have the time off to attend [the conference] without taking from my paid time off bank of hours. [Propose this only if PTO hours are normally deducted.] Can we agree on that as a way to partially recognize my contribution to [employer name]?*

**For a Competitive Pay raise, (vs. a Merit Raise), your approach will be different.** No matter what the percentage of the pay disparity, label the increase you seek a “salary adjustment” instead of a “**competitive pay raise.**”

*Yes, COLA addresses **inflation**, which I recognize as valuable; what my research is addressing is the **pay disparity** of the position compared to market value, which requires a **salary adjustment** to remain competitive. How can we correct that disparity? OR Would you be willing to work with me to get Human Resources to get that disparity corrected? OR I really like working here; what advice do you have? What would you do if you were in my place?*

*Yes, I understand that's the usual practice here. Do you otherwise agree with the research I've presented which shows that my current pay lags behind the market value for my position? ... Then would you be open to other ways to compensate for the gap? ... I have several options for us to consider. [Start negotiating your options.]*

**“I can't give you a raise. You're already at the top of the pay scale.”**

By now, you're getting a better picture of the options which offer you value, even if they're not in the form of a traditional pay raise.

Yet even in a top-of-the-pay-scale scenario, there are possibilities for getting higher pay. (The common exceptions are government and union environments where there is a rigid pay structure.)

One woman I coached—let's call her Rebecca—was employed by a private for-profit organization in a specialized clinical setting and feeling stuck about her pay ceiling situation.

Rebecca's employer already offered very good benefits of real value such as generous amounts of paid time off, some matching of IRA contributions, flexible schedules, professional membership dues, and employer-paid continuing education. So there were attractive reasons for her to stay.

Yet Rebecca thought another pay increase would be “nice” (her word). More than nice, in my opinion; without a raise or COLA for three years, her real earnings were going backwards!

I encouraged Rebecca to broach the raise issue regardless of the pay cap, and to gently make the point that she was, in essence, being penalized for her loyalty to the employer.

As a result of her initiative, her employer ultimately adjusted the pay cap upwards by 4% and, along with a token COLA, Rebecca received a total pay raise of 6%. Not stellar, given the three years without an increase, but not stuck, either.

Another top-of-pay-scale professional told me that her private employer might prefer to replace her with a junior employee starting at the lower end of the pay scale.

Her path to a pay raise starts with transforming herself into an outstanding professional, one whom her manager would find difficult to replace. Then she’ll be in a better position to request an increase, or at least a pay scale inflationary adjustment, or an option of equal value. Another option: seek an employer who values her experience and contributions.

What about you? If you’re at the top of the pay scale where you work, that would indicate that you’ve been in the same position with the same employer for several years. That’s good, *if* your job satisfaction is high.

It’s *not* so good if you’re in a rut; staying at your job only guarantees that you’ll under-earn for years to come at a job that doesn’t gratify. It’s time to explore your options for employment elsewhere!

But if your job satisfaction is high and you’ve followed the Pay Raise Process, positioning yourself as an outstanding professional with measurable accomplishments who would be difficult to replace, and casually but effectively communicating that message all year long, it’s time to push past the pay scale cap in one way or another.

*What I hear you saying is that, you would grant my request for a \_\_\_\_% increase if it weren’t for the pay scale cap. Is that correct?...Thank you. I appreciate your recognition of the value I’m bringing to the job.*

*With all due respect, it seems that I’m actually being penalized for my loyalty. I understand employee retention is a priority among most employers because of recruiting, hiring and*



*training costs. I really like working here and want to continue to do so. I wonder if the pay scale cap could at least be adjusted for inflation every year or so.*

*With all due respect, it seems that I'm actually being penalized for my loyalty. I really like working here and want to continue to do so. What would you do if you were in my place?*

*With all due respect, it seems that I'm actually being penalized for my loyalty as my income earning power actually declines the longer I stay. But I really like working here and want to continue to do so. Is it possible to adjust the pay scale to reflect inflation for the last year?*

*Is it possible, given the measurable job accomplishments that I've just outlined, that we could work towards getting another job title or job classification that would bring me to a pay level which reflects my contributions? [Your manager's reply to an "Is it possible" question is an indicator of how hard s/he is willing to advocate for you.]*

*Since the pay scale cap restriction doesn't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I'd like to suggest a way that my job performance could be rewarded in a different way. [Negotiate for additional weeks of paid vacation leave.]*

*Since the pay scale cap restriction doesn't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I wonder if, in light of the measurable job accomplishments that I've just outlined, you could arrange a retention bonus of say, \$\_\_\_\_, as a way to recognize my contributions?*

*Since the pay scale cap restriction doesn't allow for a **salary adjustment** to reflect **Competitive Pay**, I wonder if, in light of the measurable job accomplishments that I've just outlined, you could arrange a retention bonus of say, \$\_\_\_\_, as a way to recognize my contributions?*

*Since the pay scale cap restriction doesn't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I'd like to discuss ways that I could earn a bonus based on bottom-line achievements. [Present your **Variable Pay** arrangement proposal.]*

*Since the pay scale cap restriction doesn't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I'd like to suggest another way of rewarding my job performance. Since time is money, here's an innovative way for me to have more time instead of money. [[Present your proposal for 10% fewer hours without a pay cut.](#)]*



*Since the pay scale cap restriction doesn't allow for the **Merit Raise** I've earned, I wonder if we could look at other ways to reward my job performance. For example, I'd like to attend [conference or graduate course] to [specific job skill improvement]. The total cost would be about \$\_\_\_\_. Would you be able to advocate for my professional development in that way? ... Then how about \$\_\_\_\_ of the cost? That doesn't quite match the pay increase we agreed I've otherwise earned. I'd like to have the time off to attend [the conference] without taking from my paid time off bank of hours. [Propose this only if PTO hours are normally deducted.] Can we agree on that as a way to partially recognize my contribution to [employer name]?*

Realistically speaking, in the absence of regular merit raises plus a COLA, modest incremental raises each year multiplied over several years makes it unlikely that your salary will keep up with the market value. Consider leveraging your experience into a new position where it's not uncommon for new hires to get salaries *at least* 10% higher than their current position.

NOTES