

TIMING TACTICS, FEATURING SEVEN DIETITIAN EXAMPLES

As you craft your pay raise strategy, consider *when* to best make your request. Here are four key timing tactics along with seven devised examples of how a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist might apply them.

1. TIME YOUR REQUEST TO MATCH EMPLOYER POLICIES

Know your employer's policies regarding performance reviews and pay increases, then time your Merit Raise request to conform to them. Essentially, your employer either does or doesn't have a formal system and standard cycle in place. Proceed accordingly.

Example: In Nicole's three years as a renal dietitian for a dialysis center chain, she's discerned no consistent pattern related to job evaluation intervals and pay increases. A review of the employee manual reveals a policy of annual performance evaluations close to the employee's date-of-hire anniversary.

Even though Nicole's last performance evaluation was 15 months ago, her off-site manager hasn't initiated the process for another one—or even mentioned it.

Nicole knows that being passive about pay will stagnate her income, so she initiates communication with her manager to schedule her overdue performance evaluation. Meanwhile, she plans and practices her pay raise negotiation strategy.

Example: Joy's supervisor is an organized, by-the-book clinical manager who can be counted on to follow through with Joy's performance evaluation, due in four months. Joy continues to systematically track her job performance progress.

She documents and regularly communicates her job accomplishments, and is preparing to provide a written summary to her supervisor and other key influencers by next month (~ three months before her scheduled job performance review). Meanwhile, she gathers supporting documents in preparation of her upcoming evaluation and raise request.

Exception: If your current salary is below the market value, that needs to be corrected now. Don't wait to ask; prepare and present your case ASAP using the Competitive Pay content found here in the course.

2. TIME YOUR REQUEST TO MATCH ADDED JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Added job responsibilities can be leveraged into a hefty raise if the changes are positioned by your boss to Human Resources as a **promotion**. And a promotion does not have to conform to the timing cycle factor addressed above.

Or perhaps you or your boss can advocate for a **new job title** or a **job classification change** without the promotion; that alone is sometimes enough to get a higher salary when it might otherwise be resisted by employer bureaucracy.

Example: Terry is a public health nutritionist in a private, non-profit community health clinic. In addition to keeping her regular duties, the executive director has asked her to coordinate a new outreach program—and he hasn't brought up a pay increase. Terry engages him in a discussion about the program's scope, successfully laying the foundation for her request of a salary boost to accompany her added duties.

Example: Morgan is a clinical dietitian at a mid-sized hospital. However, his employer is an international food and management service contracted by the hospital to run all clinical and dietary functions. He understands the constraints of such a large bureaucracy which uses standardized procedures and job classifications to determine salaries and raises. Morgan decides to defer his pitch for a promotion and raise until his next formal job review, meanwhile, documenting all his expanded duties and accomplishments.

3. TIME YOUR REQUEST TO MATCH AN EXTRAORDINARY ACCOMPLISHMENT

While your job in nutrition and dietetics has a positive impact on people's health and lives, from an employer's viewpoint, an extraordinary accomplishment is usually one that has a significant impact on its bottom line.

The reality is, most RDNs are in direct-service positions with little control over revenues, cost-savings and other bottom-line activities. That means there are fewer obvious opportunities to take advantage of this raise-timing strategy.

Even so, always be on the look-out for workplace problems to apply your creative, problem-solving skills. If one of your ideas or work projects makes or saves money for your organization, don't miss the chance to get recognized and rewarded.

Some dietitians are in management and sales where they are directly responsible for revenue-related activities and are expected to make a difference in the bottom line.

If you just landed a juicy contract after months of courting the client, or you identified a new product or supplier which will save your employer tens of thousands of dollars a year or more...

...don't miss the narrow window of opportunity to be acknowledged with a raise or a bonus.

Memories fade fast; make your remuneration request while the victory is fresh in everyone's minds.

Example: Megan is a food service manager in charge of all the public schools in a large county. After an exhaustive assessment of work flow and food service staffing needs at each school, she devised a restructuring of staff tasks and hours which is proving more efficient and flexible.

In three months, response from the staff has been favorable; absenteeism and turnover are down dramatically. Natural attrition will mean more savings as some over-staffing will eventually be eliminated.

She projects annual payroll savings to reach \$340,000. She has full documentation of what she did, how she did it and the spreadsheet that details the savings to date. With that in hand, she is ready to request a hefty salary increase.

Example: Lakindra is an account rep for a soy products maker. After 16 months of her diligent research, regular sales calls and lining up the procedures to meet exacting requirements for the supply and distribution chain, she landed a contract that got the full product line into a large chain of specialty food outlets.

Note what Lakindra did ahead of time: Lakindra and her sales manager recognized the importance of this account from the beginning. In a savvy move, she had pre-arranged the terms for a bonus for landing the contract (an example of Variable Pay) and she got it soon after the signing.

4. TIME YOUR REQUEST TO MATCH FISCAL REALITIES

Even when everything else lines up nicely, before you make the pay raise pitch, be sure your employer is in good financial health. And if it isn't, then it's time to get creative.

Example: Kelly loves her job as a nutrition communications manager at a small food trade organization. Her outstanding performance reflects her passion for her work. Yet she's discouraged by the fiscal forecast which foretells a measly raise at her next review.

Kelly isn't looking to leave so she devised a work-around to her situation. After securing the best percentage increase possible under current restraints, she'll aim for a written agreement of a "catch-up" increase once the organization's cash flow improves.

In the absence of more money in the near-term, she'll negotiate for more time by proposing a [four-day workweek every other week without a pay cut](#) (equivalent to a 10% raise). Her alternative bargaining option is for an additional two weeks' vacation (equivalent to a 3.8% raise).

What else? She's working with her career coach to brainstorm a pay-for-performance project (Variable Pay) that would warrant a bonus in the next six to nine months.

TO GET THE BEST RAISE RESULTS, CONSIDER YOUR TIMING

An effective pay raise strategy considers timing of the request. Consider these four factors as you plan *when* to ask for your next raise.