

On Careers

Can I Get a Promotion in a Down Economy?

By [LINDSAY OLSON](#)

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Times are tough. People are getting laid off left and right. Depending on your industry, you may even feel lucky to even have a job. But does that mean it's impossible to [get a promotion](#) in a down economy?

[See our list of the [50 Best Careers](#).]

The Answer is Maybe

Your company may or may not be in a position to give you a promotion. Either way, it's your job to showcase yourself in the best light to make yourself an asset your company doesn't want to lose. Even if your company can't afford to promote you now, the effort will pay off when it can.

If you are planning to ask for a promotion, you should prove your worth to the company as if you already had the promotion. Barry Maher of Barry Maher & Associates says you should "showcase the abilities you'll be bringing to the new position. If you can assign a dollar value, how much the accomplishments on that list have earned or saved the company, so much the better."

Long before you want to ask for a promotion, keep track of your achievements. Did you save the company \$10,000 with an innovative idea? Keep that and other accomplishments recorded so that when you're ready to go to your boss, you have some rock solid information to demonstrate your value to the company. As Maher says, try to quantify your accomplishments with dollar values when possible, or percents (as in you increased productivity by 15%).

Timing is Everything

Realize that now might not be the ideal time to ask for a promotion. If the company isn't doing well, asking for a promotion might be like poking a wound.

[See [Employers Will Check Your Social Media Profiles](#).]

"My suggestion to employees is to take a long, hard look at the company's economic health before asking for a raise. If you ask for a raise when the company is clearly struggling, not only will you not get the raise, but you will also raise doubts in the employer's mind about your professional savvy," says Cheryl E. Palmer of Call to Career.

Be sensitive to what's going on, and remember that it's not all about you. Your company may be in fact struggling to keep from laying people off, so asking for a promotion might set your boss' head on fire if the timing is off.

Coming Up with Alternatives

It's not always possible to get an increase in salary, so consider other ways you might be compensated.

"Would you be satisfied with just a title change?," asks Lori Dernavich, Employee Performance Advisor, "If the company doesn't have cash on hand, would you accept a title promotion now and an increase in pay in a few months (retroactive to the date of your promotion)? Come up with options because management may say no to some ideas, but yes to others. Having more than one option makes it more difficult to a manager to say no."

[See [How to Ask for a Raise](#).]

Make a list of a few options you would accept in lieu of a raise. It might be the perfect opportunity to get a few extra days of vacation time, especially if your boss knows you deserve a promotion and feels guilty that she can't give it to you.

Better Luck Next Year

If it's not in the cards to get a promotion this year due to financial constraints, keep smiling.

"A big part of this whole process is keeping that smile on your face, so your organization sees you as a team player and a positive light within the organization," says Lauren Herring, President and CEO of IMPACT Group.

You certainly don't want to be seen pouting because you didn't get a promotion. Stay positive, and when things are looking up, your positive attitude will be remembered come promotion time.



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