

Five Tough Career Advancement Questions Answered

With Expert Advice From Lisa Quast



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How do I get the salary I deserve? Pursue another position in my company? Get recommendations that will help land me a job? Questions like these can seem challenging. But finding the answers can make the difference between stagnating and achieving your career goals.

Here, [Lisa Quast](#), Seattle-based career coach, mentor, business consultant and former Fortune 500 executive, offers her expert advice on some of the toughest career advancement questions.

1. How do I get LinkedIn recommendations that will help get me noticed?

To avoid garnering general, one-size-fits-all LinkedIn recommendations, help your references help you. For the next job you pursue, Quast said, look at the job description and requirements, see how well you stack up and then identify key skills for that role. "Pick three skills," she suggested, "and go out to different people and ask them to write recommendations that focus on your ability related to those three skills." This way you're not writing the recommendations for them, but you are helping guide them in the direction you need them to go.

2. How do I negotiate a starting salary at a new job?

If you have a screening interview with the HR representative, that's the best time to start the salary conversation; find out about the pay range and see if your expected salary is in the right ballpark. "Don't wait until the final interview with the hiring manager only to find that what you want is way outside of their price range," Quast said. But be sure to do your research before you talk numbers.

To prepare for salary negotiations, Quast suggested using websites like [salary.com](#), [payscale.com](#), [indeed.com](#) and [glassdoor.com](#) to help you figure out a fair salary based on your job category, title and geography. Then, if you're offered the job, you'll have a grounded understanding of an appropriate salary you might negotiate toward.

3. How do I ask for a promotion or raise at my current company?

"Be proactive," Quast emphasized. "A mistake a lot of people make is that they don't take ownership of their career development." Create a career development plan with goals for the next year, two to three years and five-plus years, she advised. That way, you and your manager can track where you are, where you want to go in the near future and what your long-term ambitions are. If you're reviewing the plan with your manager regularly and meeting your goals, the path to promotion is being paved.

Quast also suggested gathering evidence that shows why you deserve a promotion or a raise. Look at your performance reviews and make sure you're meeting the minimum requirements, at least. "If your work is viewed as superior or excellent, you'll have a much better chance of getting the raise," she noted. Speak to your accomplishments and prove why you should earn more. And, like with negotiating a starting salary, research comparable salary ranges if you're preparing to ask for a raise.

One last piece of advice: "Never ask for a raise on a Monday. It's a bad day. Everybody is super busy. I would do it on a Friday, right after lunch," Quast said. As the weekend approaches, people are more likely to be in a good mood, and asking for a raise then just seems to work out better.

4. What's the best way to pursue a different job within my company?

Pursuing a job within your current company is a great career advancement strategy because companies often prefer to hire or promote from within. However, Quast noted, "Most hiring managers actually treat internal candidates tougher than external candidates because their expectations are higher. A candidate who's internal should know more about the company, the competition and the job." So be sure to take the process seriously.

Quast recommended getting the support of your manager. "So many people are hesitant. They don't want to talk to their manager about it," she said. "But, you should have already created a career development plan. Every year you should be working on improving yourself. And you should already be having discussions at least once or twice a year with your manager." If you have that career plan in place, it shouldn't come as a surprise to your manager when you bring up pursuing another position that will help you further your career.

She also suggested contacting the hiring manager before applying. "Let the hiring manager know you're interested," she said. "Ask them to coffee. Sit down and chat to make sure you fully understand the job expectations and requirements. And so they can learn more about you."



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5. What if I'm ready to move into a management role, but the position is already taken?

"There are two ways you can move," Quast shared, "you can move up or you can move out." In a lot of companies, you might not be able to move right into a supervisor or manager role, she explained, but you can move into a different department to learn another area of the company or grow in the role you currently have. Take initiative, show leadership and seek out professional development opportunities. Gaining more breadth of experience can help qualify you even more for moving into a management position.

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