

A FEW days ago, I had a conversation with a neighbour's daughter about salary. She was apparently unhappy about her pay and felt that she deserved more. I questioned her whether she had approached her superior to ask for an increment. She replied that she felt she shouldn't ask and that the superior "should know" about the situation. I was a little amused at her answer, but also realised that she was merely behaving appropriately from a cultural perspective as it is considered "rude" to ask for a salary increment.

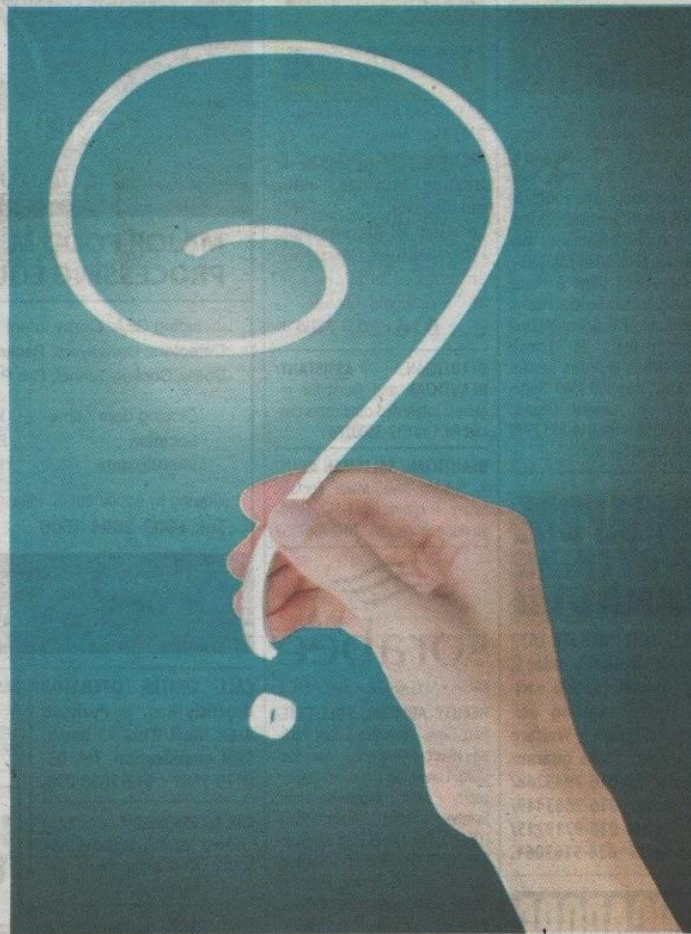
My advice to her were the following:

A The superior "should know" is a very weak kind of assumption. Firstly, he may genuinely be so busy in his work that he may have overlooked the salary situation and grant her an appropriate raise. Secondly, he may know about it, but since she has not asked, he may have made the assumption that the situation was not that critical.

B I advised her to ask her superior for a salary increment. She may not get it, but at least she will know that the superior is aware of the situation. However, she should be objective and give clear justifications in her inquiries.

C If she does not get the increment even after asking, then it is time to weigh up her options for the future. She should start looking for opportunities outside where her skills and talents would be much more appreciated.

The main point I am trying to make here is that if you don't ask, the answer will always be no! I am aware that in an Asian culture, it can sometimes be misconstrued that by asking, you are being "rude" or "imposing". I would rather



LEARN TO ASK

ask than suffer in silence. A superior cannot read your mind and has too many subordinates to manage than giving enough attention to your salary. And if he does not know, the chances are that you will not get what you want.

So a great principle to have in life is in one simple word: "ASK". By asking, it does not mean that you will get it, but you will definitely have increased your chances of getting it. Let's take another example. Assume that you are in an airport waiting for boarding time. You are a little bored as you have no reading material. As you turn to your right, you notice a gentleman with the latest 'Time' magazine at his side. Now if you are shy and don't ask to borrow the magazine, there will be a 100 per cent chance that you will not get to read the magazine. It will also be incredible if he "reads your mind" and turns to you and says, "Would you like to borrow my magazine?" However if you ask, then you will certainly have increased your chances of reading the magazine. And if he says "No", then your situation does not become any worse: it just remains the same.

For many of us, asking for what we want is usually intimidating as it forces us out of our comfort zone and subjects us to the possibility of rejection. As a result, there is a great tendency on our part to just "suffer in silence".

So from today onwards, do try to practise this habit of asking. Ask for a promotion, ask for a discount, ask for a better rate! I assure you that you will get more things that way rather than just keeping silent and hoping. Your life will surely become better!



HEERA SINGH is Principal Consultant of HEERA Training and Management Consultancy. He can be contacted at **012-6083708**.