

■ PATH TO STABILITY

Earning a Raise — Every Day at Work

I've worked for three years as an administrative secretary for a company that is doing very well. I think that I am a responsible, dedicated and capable worker, and my boss is definitely pleased with my work.

My starting salary at this job was very reasonable, but by now I think it should be higher. My boss has never offered me a raise, however, and I'm uncomfortable broaching the subject with her. Do you have any advice how I can get a raise?

After working three years for a company, you may very well be entitled to a raise. Generally, it is considered acceptable for employees to ask for a raise of 5%-7% once a year, although that certainly does not mean that you will get that every year.

There are several reasons why asking for a yearly raise is justified.

One, inflation pushes the cost of living up continually, and your salary should go up continually to reflect that.

Two, you become more and more valuable to your company the longer you work for them, and you should be paid more for the additional experience you

bring to the job each year.

Three, if your job description has broadened to include new responsibilities, if your skills have improved, or if your performance has exceeded expectations, then you are now worth more as an employee than you were when you were hired, and you should be compensated accordingly.

To get a raise, you need to do two things: earn the raise, and ask for it. Asking for a raise is not something you will do very often, but earning a raise is something you should be doing during every moment that you are at work.

As an employee, you actually have two jobs. One is, of course, your actual job. The other is to convince your employer that you are worth more to her than you are currently being paid. Your employer has to believe that your salary is money well spent, and you therefore have to prove to her that your value as an employee more than justifies the cost to the company.

To do that, you need to continually increase your value as an employee. How do you do this?

By taking the initiative to ac-

quire new skills. By showing willingness to assume additional responsibilities. By pinch-hitting for your colleagues and filling in gaps. By going the extra mile when necessary and making yourself available when you are needed. And by demonstrating, through action and attitude, that you care about the company.

If you learn new skills, you can command a higher salary because you bring added value to the company. It is therefore to your benefit and to your company's benefit for you to upgrade your abilities and become a better employee.

Before investing time and money in this, however, you might want to check with your boss if she is interested in your improving your skills in this way, because if so, the company might be willing to fund all or part of a training course.

Throughout the year, you have opportunities to accumulate the brownie points that will ultimately result in a "yes" when you ask your boss for a raise. Every time you go beyond the call of duty, every time the quality of your work goes up a notch, and every time you demonstrate your commitment to your work,

you effectively show your boss that you are worth more than you were before.

Earning raises is an integral part of being an employee. In fact, Mesila believes that all employees have an obligation to constantly work toward earning a higher salary.

Why? Because you owe it to yourself as a person to continually improve at anything you do, and because you owe it to your family to increase your earning power and achieve — or maintain — financial stability.

Once you have made yourself deserving of a raise, you need to construct a strategy to get that raise. Do not expect your boss to offer you a raise. If you want the raise, you are going to have to ask for it. No one likes to ask for a raise — especially women. But if you do not ask, the answer will almost always be no.

With the right timing and preparation, you will feel less fear and more confidence in making your request. And if you approach your boss the right way, you will earn more respect in her eyes, and you will not lose anything by asking.

The opposite is also true, however. Asking the boss for a raise

the wrong way can be very damaging. Bosses do not like to be asked for raises — it puts them on the spot, it forces them to consider whether they can afford it, and it makes them focus on your shortcomings and think of all the reasons why the raise is unjustified.

Since asking for a raise is bound to cause some friction between you and your boss, you need to do everything you can to minimize the damage and maximize your chances of success.

In our next column, we will discuss practical strategies for broaching the subject with your boss.

MESILA
Providing The Path to Financial Stability

Mesila is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families and businesses in Israel achieve financial stability and independence. With over 25 chapters across Israel, Mesila is rescuing hundreds of families and businesses from the cycle of poverty and debt through its three-pronged approach of education, counseling and financial assistance. Readers are invited to submit questions and feedback to hamodia@mesila.org. or by fax to (02) 500-0478.

BUSINESS & FINANCE

continued from page A22

Two weeks ago, U.S. Ambassador Richard H. Jones wrote a severe letter to Finance Minister Roni Bar-On, accusing Israel of buying Iranian pistachios under the guise of trade

with Turkey, despite American objection.

Jones' letter claimed that Israel is the largest per capita consumer of the pistachio.

"Israel is the world's largest per capita consumer of pistachio nuts and therefore an important market — estimated at \$20m. — for pistachio producers.

"Of the two largest producers of pistachios — the United States

and Iran — only the U.S. has duty-free access to the Israeli market under our Free Trade Agreement ... while Iran's product is banned by Israel's Trading with the Enemy Act.

"Evidence strongly suggests that most, if not all, of the pistachios entering Israel are actually of Iranian origin."

Despite the close ties between Israel and the United States, American producers hold only 5% of the market.

Israel, for its part, claims its pistachios are imported from Turkey. But the U.S. Department of Agriculture has looked into Turkey's pistachio production and exportation and concluded that most of it is consumed locally. The small remaining percentage is exported to the United States and the European Union.

The ambassador urged Bar-On to enforce the trade act — offering his help in a number of initiatives, including training Israeli customs officers on how to identify an Iranian pistachio.

Postponement Looms for IEC Reform

The National Infrastructures Ministry has decided to prepare for Knesset legislation to postpone reform at the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) and extend the company's license by at least one more year, *Globes* reported.

The Treasury and Public Utilities Authority (Electricity) officials attended this week's meeting on the matter.

The Infrastructures officials advised postponing the IEC reform by two years until the end of 2010, to enable the company to complete its emergency plan for the electricity market without shocks.

Next week, Treasury Budget Director Ram Belnikov and National Infrastructures Ministry Director General Hezi Kugler are due to hold the decisive meeting on the postponement of the IEC reform.

The IEC reform includes splitting the company into subsidiaries, 49% of whose shares will be floated on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE).

The program was originally due to take place in March 2007, but has since been twice postponed until an agreement is reached with the IEC workers.

Green Groups Warn Against Red-Dead Canal

Five environmental organizations in Israel and Jordan, as well as representatives of communities in the Dead Sea area, caution against ecological damage that may be caused by constructing a canal linking the Gulf of Eilat and the Dead Sea.

They argue that caution should be exercised with regard to the environmental impact of the plan to develop the Arava and of the construction of this canal.

President Shimon Peres and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who is expected to visit Israel next week, are scheduled to announce the launch of the project.

As part of the project, Israel and Jordan have been promoting, with the support of the World Bank, a plan for the construction of a canal that will relay 2 billion cubic meters of water a year from the Gulf of Eilat to the Dead Sea over Jordanian territory. The water will be desalinated and transferred mostly to Jordan.

After the desalination process,

the liquid salt concentration, containing water and salt, will be channeled into the Dead Sea to help rehabilitate it.

At the same time, millionaire Yitzchak Tshuva recently announced plans to promote a development plan for the Arava parallel to the construction of the canal.

According to Tshuva, the canal would provide 1 million jobs, 200,000 hotel rooms (more rooms than exist in all of Israel at the moment), and desalinated water for Israeli and Jordanian use, and would also replenish the Dead Sea, which is shrinking at a rate of over a meter a year.

The environmental groups formed the coalition in recent days to push for a more measured pace on action toward saving the Dead Sea. They are protesting the announcement of the project before feasibility studies have been completed.

The coalition also objects to the notion that a private member's bill would be passed in the Knesset in order to authorize the project, rather than the usual planning approvals required for large-scale building projects.

If subjected to the regular planning process, there are serious doubts the project would get approval, environmentalists charge.

Knesset Passes Whistleblower Law

The Knesset on Tuesday passed the Whistleblower Protection Law, which provides legal protection to anyone who uncovers and reports corruption in the workplace.

The bill was brought before

Airlines Aim to Save Fuel by Being Cleaner and Leaner

By Binyamin Chinkis

Fuel costs are skyrocketing, and as a result airlines are trying to "lighten up" in an effort to reduce their single biggest expense — fuel.

Airlines, El Al among them, are coming up with a variety of creative solutions that result in lower fuel consumption.

First, airliners are traveling a bit more slowly, and the average length of a flight has been extended by between one and eight minutes. Most passengers do not feel the difference, but that small change can save an airline gallons of fuel on each flight.

El Al and Lufthansa have begun hosing down their planes, especially the engines, at least once a month. Cleaning the plane and the engines helps it fly more efficiently and saves fuel.

But all this is secondary to shedding weight on the aircraft, which is where the fuel savings really count. Most air-

lines have not reduced the passengers' baggage allotment, but they have come up with other ways to reduce the weight.

For example, Delta has decided to change all the seats on its aircraft. Each new seat weighs two kilograms less than the original ones. This saves hundreds of kilograms in the fuselage.

American Airlines has purchased lighter-weight beverage carts. Northwest has replaced the heavy, glossy-paged magazines with lighter and thinner newspapers.

El Al has come up with yet another innovation: All the silverware and dishes will be replaced with lighter ones to reduce the weights.

These are all interesting solutions, but there is no doubt, flight experts say, that in addition to being cleaner and leaner, airlines will have to get a bit meaner, and share the fuel burden with passengers either through a special fuel tax or higher fares.