

The Full Bottle on Pay Reviews

By

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Former rugby league star Sonny Bill Williams recently demonstrated the lengths to which some people will go to get a pay rise.

For those unable to sneak out of the country to a generous French employer, the yearly performance review is often the time to stake a claim.

But the mere mention of performance reviews can make some employees a little nauseous, aware that the conversation is a minefield of do's and don'ts.

Organisational psychologist Christopher Shen said some people got so worked up before meeting their bosses that they would reach for the Scotch to reduce their anxiety.

“People have had some drinks before their meetings to try to stifle their nerves and, as you can expect that has been highly unhelpful – as well as leading to very erratic and socially inappropriate behaviours.”

Others, Mr Shen said, would stroll into a performance review a little too confidently.

“The newer generations, the Gen Ys and Gen Xs, are much more inclined than the baby boomers to speak very assuredly about their performance and their expectations

during these meetings in ways that baby boomer managers can find quite disconcerting and quite arrogant.”

Australian Human Resources Institute national president Peter Wilson said employees would do well to approach the discussion with respect.

“There are a number of horror stories, particularly amongst employers of younger workers who come in with outrageous expectations of a pay increase and [have] done absolutely no homework about themselves or what they’re worth.

“They just believe it’s an as-of-right expectation. And they’re the sort of discussions that very easily go pear-shaped.”

Even so, in a market suffering from a pronounced skills shortage, where employers were increasingly willing to sniff out a better deal elsewhere, bosses could be better off giving even marginal workers a pay rise than going through the process of trying to replace them, Christie Consulting principal Gilbert Christie said.

“If you’ve got somebody who’s not a superstar but a good, competent, slightly above-average performer... and that person ups and leaves because you don’t give them a salary increase, by the time you recruit a replacement and train a replacement, you probably end up paying twice as much.”

So how do you best prepare to ask for more money?

“Employees can prepare mentally and emotionally for these performance reviews,” Mr Shen said. “The night before, much like a professional athlete or a musician, they can undertake pre-meeting preparation.”

That involves recalling the good work and positive outcomes achieved during the year but also a little extra.

“They can watch motivational films a la Rocky and they can actually listen to their iPod on their way into the meeting – as long as they don’t come in and box their manager,” he said.

Failing that, there’s always France.

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Based in Melbourne, Australia, Christopher Shen Consulting brings organisational psychology solutions to workplaces, helping people become stronger leaders and teams become better performers.

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