How to Ask for More

Arm yourself with these expert tips when it's time for a bump in pay.

by Kelsey Allen

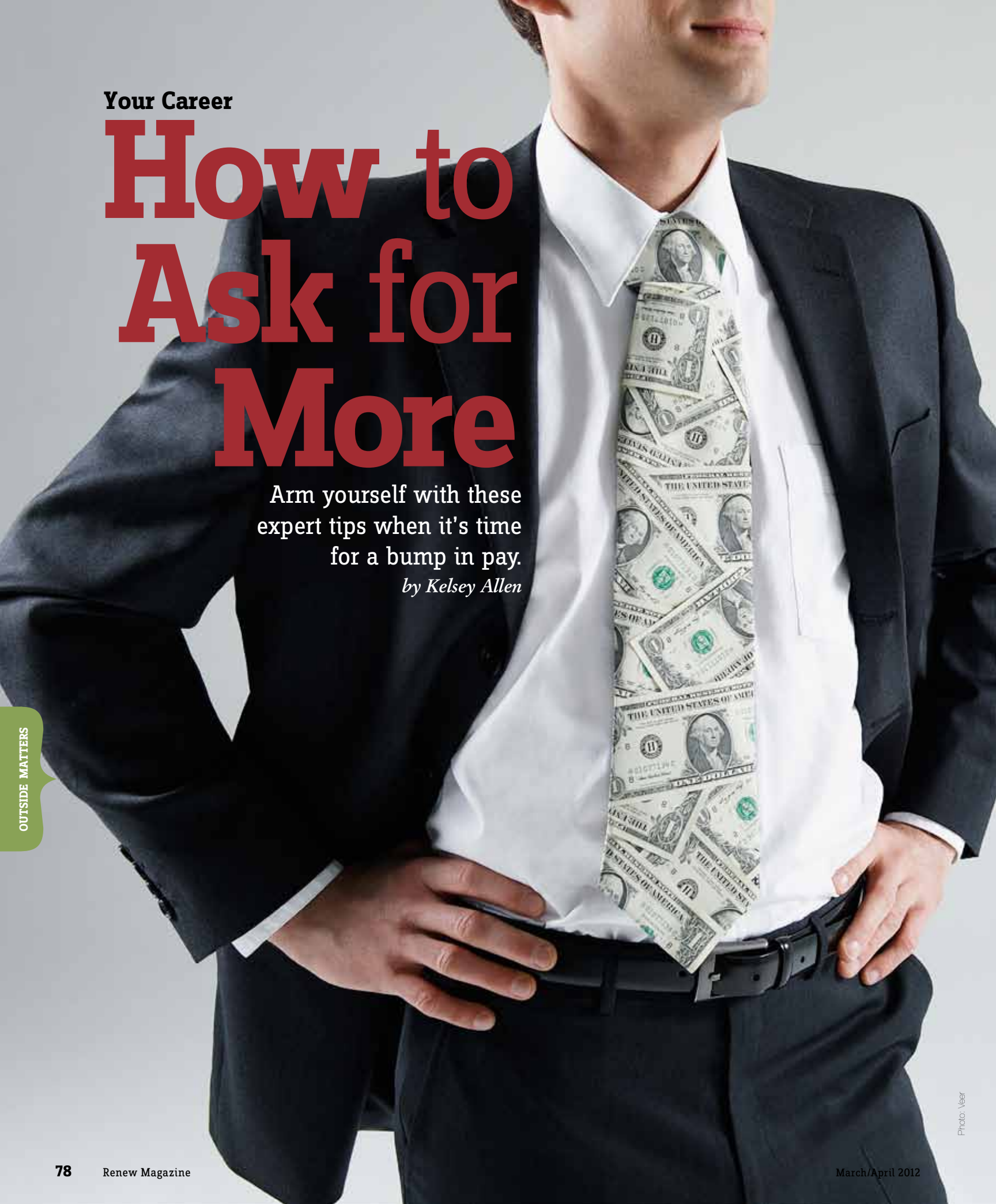


Photo: Veer

Has it been a while since you've seen a hike in your paycheck? Feel- ing a little underappreciated? Before you waltz into your boss's office and demand your fair shake, consider these tips from the experts.

Step 1: Perform a self-evaluation.

Michael McIntyre, author of *The Authentic Salesman* and president and CEO of Benefits America, suggests doing a 360-degree evaluation, no matter your position in the company—C-level, entry-level or mid-management. "Find people whom you trust, admire and respect, preferably your peers, and invite them to lunch," McIntyre says. "Simply ask them, 'How am I showing up? Am I making a difference?'" Don't tell them right away why you are asking; you want to make sure you are getting honest and critical feedback. Just listen, and take notes. Kim McGrigg, spokesperson for Money Management International, recommends getting answers to the following questions:

- *Do you meet and exceed the expectations of your job description?*
- *Are you known as a person who gets things done?*
- *Do you take on additional responsibility outside the realm of your job description?*
- *Do others look to you for advice and leadership?*
- *Are you constantly increasing your knowledge of your industry?*
- *Would at least one person at work describe you as indispensable to the company?*
- *Do you deliver consistent or exceptional results?*

"Someone who is a good candidate [for a raise] will answer all of those questions positively," McGrigg says. "Asking for a raise can be intimidating, so you want to be sure you know why you deserve the raise, and that will help you prepare."

Step 2: Evaluate the company's financial position.

You don't want to be the person who asks for more right after the president sends out a company-wide email detailing financial hardships and inevitable layoffs. McIntyre recommends getting your hands on the president's letter to the shareholders and the annual report. "That is invaluable," he says. "That is the mission for the year. That is the chairman telling his soldiers what the fight is going to be for the fiscal year. Now when you go in and talk with your superiors, you've got some intelligence behind you." McGrigg adds, "If you ask for a raise when you know the organization is struggling, it is not going to end in your favor."

Step 3: Figure out what you should be earning.

You don't want to go in blind when asking for more money at work. Instead, go in armed with statistics about what other people in your same position with the same level of experience are making. The best way to find that information is on salary.com. Salary.com offers a free salary wizard where you plug in your company, your job title, your location and your years of experience to see what other people are making. They also have a benefits wizard to see how your benefits stack up across the board. Aaron Gouveia, a content manager at salary.com, cautions against comparing yourself to others at work, though. "Focus on yourself and your strengths and accomplishments," Gouveia says. McGrigg agrees: "What are you worth? Quantify what you are asking for. What percentage did you increase sales? How many people have you helped? Give specific examples of why you are worth a raise."

Step 4: Rehearse.

"Find people who are in your life, and sit down with them and go through this," McIntyre suggests. "Sometimes it's a painful process, but they might ask you a different question that you didn't think of." When you are scripting your ask, make sure to consider what the company needs. "Think of it as a win-win situation," McGrigg says. "Present it in a way that is good for the company. Show there is a mutual benefit in mind."

Step 5: Go in for the ask.

Be upfront, but don't ambush, McIntyre says. "Email your boss, and let him know that you want to sit down sometime at his convenience to talk about your compensation package." When you go in for the kill, McIntyre offers these tips:

- *Paraphrase the annual report.*
- *Have your facts straight.*
- *Maintain eye contact.*
- *Answer any questions with clean and concise responses, "and then shut up and stay shut up," McIntyre says.*
- *Stay away from playing hardball and giving ultimatums–unless you really mean it.*
- *Bring a notepad to jot down feedback.*

And remember that money isn't the only thing you can ask for. McGrigg reminds that if you don't get a raise right away, you can ask for more vacation time or increased benefits.

Step 6: Handle rejection like a pro.

If despite all of your preparation the answer is still "no," don't flip your lid. Gouveia says (and McIntyre and McGrigg agree) to take emotion out of the equation. "In the end, it's a financial transaction," Gouveia says. Follow up a "no" with a probing question such as, "Can you share with me the reason why I will not be receiving a raise?" Generally, employers will be happy to share why. Sometimes the "no" can be a blessing in disguise. McIntyre suggests taking this as an opportunity to look in the mirror and see how you can better yourself. Schedule a time to sit down with your boss, and reevaluate in six months. In that time you might become a better candidate for a raise, or you might realize that it is time to look for a new position. ■