

Women's Health



How to Ask Your Boss for Feedback

It's hard to feel appreciated when you don't hear a peep from your boss. Use these tips to get the feedback you crave—and to get ahead.

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You get in early, stay late, and work your butt off every moment you're on the clock. But does anybody notice? As it happens, many women ask themselves the very same question: **Nearly half of working women feel underappreciated at work**, according to the American Psychological Association's new Work and Well-Being Survey.

In the online survey of 1,501 employed adults, 48 percent of women polled said they feel less valued than their male coworkers. Worse yet, less than half of the women feel they're paid enough for the work they do, and even fewer receive non-monetary recognition—like kudos from the boss—for their contributions.

Sure, it would be nice to score a raise or a promotion. But getting valuable feedback from your boss and knowing you're appreciated are also key to job satisfaction, says Caroline Ceniza-Levine, career expert with SixFigureStart. Case-in-point: It's tough to do your best work when you feel undervalued. Even negative feedback can be a good thing; it helps you recognize the areas in which you may need improvement and opens up channels of communication so you can ask for tips on how to address your weaknesses.

To feel like a VIP and boost your performance, use this approach to solicit constructive feedback from your boss:

Ask often

Whether you like it or not, people at work are constantly judging, observing, and evaluating you—particularly your boss. So don't wait until your job is on the line to find out his or her thoughts. Instead, request feedback regularly. A simple "What did you think?" after a big project or presentation should do the trick. Your boss's response can arm you with valuable insight that will help you step up your performance next time. Bonus: You won't be blindsided when you sit down for a more formal review.

Request regular face time

The more contact you have with your boss, the better: Face time—whether one-on-one or in a board room among others—fosters open dialog, which can help you understand your boss's expectations better than a memo ever could, says Joel Garfinkle, career coach, founder of Dream Job Consulting, and author of seven books including *Getting Ahead*. If you seldom see or hear from your boss, set up 15-minute one-on-one meetings, ideally once a week. The best approach: Try saying, "I want to improve my performance, and I really value your input. Can we schedule regular time to focus on critiquing my performance so I can continue to improve?" If he or she is pressed for time, bimonthly or quarterly meetings are better than nothing.

Still not getting the face time you crave? Look for opportunities to glean more information from the interactions you do have. For instance, did your boss approve the proposal you wrote without making any edits? Sometime silence is actually a vote of confidence.

Be specific

When you ask for general feedback, it forces your boss to do the work, Ceniza-Levine says. So bring a bulleted list of the projects you're working on and the results you've achieved. Then, identify a specific area—like your communication skills or a completed task—and ask "What am I doing well?" or "What could I have done better?"

Don't get defensive

Negative feedback can be a huge blow to your ego—especially if you already feel undervalued. "The key is to recognize that the feedback can help you improve," Garfinkle says. "And the more you improve, the more your boss will appreciate you." So when your boss criticizes your performance, follow this routine to keep your emotions at bay and extract the information you need to take action: First, ask for an example of the negative behavior. Then paraphrase the complaint and repeat it back to your boss to check you've understood it fully. Finally, thank him or her for her candor—and mentally remind yourself that your supervisor really is doing you a favor.

Take action

Feedback itself won't help you get ahead if you don't do anything with it. When your boss critiques your work, ask her how she would have handled the situation. Don't agree with her approach? Ask for some time to brainstorm solutions. Feel free to consult a coworker or a colleague outside your department who has handled a similar situation; they may have a helpful perspective. Then piece together a plan of action, make a timeline for implementing it, and report your progress the next time you meet one-on-one with your boss.

File positive feedback

When you receive a compliment from a coworker or a thank you note from a client, make sure it gets to the people who matter—like your boss, Garfinkle says. Ask your customer to relay her kind words to your manager, or print out the email and mention it the next time you meet with your boss.