

PSYCHOLOGIES

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I have worked for my firm as PA for approaching four years. There have been redundancies and I have taken on quite a bit more responsibility outside of my PA role as a consequence - including pensions administrator, which gives me access to salary information.

Another PA left in May of this year I was asked if I was interested in the position. I said no as it was pretty much a sideways move and presumed the pay was not substantially more - to which both the head of HR and my boss agreed. My boss said he was happy that I wanted to stay looking after him.

So we took on someone new and she is very nice, the only thing being the CEO had asked for someone with shorthand skills which she has not. She has been asked to learn it, which she was initially fine with until finding out how much time and effort was involved.

I caught sight of salaries recently and was shocked to see that she is on substantially more money than me - I would have to have a rise of 25% to meet it. This is a huge discrepancy and I was told that the role did not pay 'loads more money'.

I know it's a recession and we are lucky to have jobs - but why pay her so much when she doesn't even have the skillset I do? If I bring it up, will I be told I was happy to take my job at the salary offered and I shouldn't be using my pensions info to compare my salary? I think that you should negotiate salary on what you do - extra responsibility etc and not on the basis of other people. Any advice?

Have you ever heard the saying that ignorance is bliss! There is some truth in that at times, because you can't take the knowledge away, once you have it. However, the first thing you'll need to do is to try to separate the person from the role. It does sound as though you're managing that quite well at the moment and its important because if anything you say is perceived to be subjective and personal rather than objective it's less likely to get a fair hearing.

It sounds as though there are a couple of different issues here:

First, you feel a little misled by being told that the salary was not substantially more. It is of course quite possible that at the time they said this, that their intention was to pay a similar amount if promoting from within. However, it's also a sad fact that many of us have to move companies to bring about this change this large in our salary, and companies may then find that they have to pay much more to attract an external candidate to take the role.

You say the new role is PA to the CEO. It would also be quite usual to be paid more for a role which may be perceived to be handling more items of a sensitive and confidential nature

Second. Although you were happy to stay in your role, you sound as though you are feeling a little unappreciated. However, you are also making quite a lot of assumptions about how any mention of this will be received, but as you haven't raised the matter yet, it's hard to know exactly what the reaction will be.

I do agree that you should negotiate salary on what you do – rather than by comparison with other people. So, do a little home research and look around at other roles that appear to be similar to yours and get some idea of the salary range on offer there. That way you're comparing like for like rather than your role with a different role. You might also try asking for the PA job roles to be formally evaluated and graded, taking into account your new responsibilities for Pensions, which clearly gives you access to highly personal information. Even if your job have been graded before, if these new responsibilities are likely to be permanent then there might be a case for

regarding yours and therefore adjusting your salary? You're obviously sensitive to the current climate too, so you might also mention that whilst the company may not be in apposition to change your annual salary at present perhaps they might consider a one-off bonus payment for this year to acknowledge the extra work you've taken on, with a view to a salary increase in the next 12-18 months.

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