

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

GET MORE OF WHAT YOU WANT BY IMPROVING YOUR ASK

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

Contributor: Laura Fredricks, JD, CEO and Founder, THE ASK; adjunct faculty member, New York College; author of *The ASK: For Business, For Philanthropy, For Everyday Living*

THE GOAL:

Improve your chances for getting exactly what you want professionally and personally by making the right ASK.

NANOTOOL:

While the majority of workers want a pay raise, according to a survey by Payscale only 43 percent ask for one. Among those who didn't ask, one of the two most-cited reasons was that it made them uncomfortable.

What is the source of discomfort? Why do so many people fail to ask for what they want, whether it's a raise, help with a project, more time with family, or a donation to a favorite charity? The four most common explanations are fear of rejection, avoidance of confrontation, a bad relationship with money, and the belief that the desired result will magically happen without asking.

Even when people do ask for what they want, however, they don't always take the time to prepare. Approaching an ask without a plan means you're relying on chance and luck — potentially wasting an important opportunity.

To get more of what you want when you ask for something, learn and apply the structured five-step method detailed below. In the process, you will enhance your professional performance, nurture healthier relationships, and be a driving force behind your favorite organizations.

ACTION STEPS:

- 1. Know exactly what you want with numbers and dates.** Without numbers and dates, your ask is weak. You could get a salary increase, but it might not be as much as you believe you deserve. You could get a better hotel room, but it could come at an unreasonably higher cost. The more specific you are, the more likely you'll get what you want.
- 2. Prepare the conversation.** This is the step that most people skip, or if they do prepare, they do it only in their heads. Write down at least 15 responses you think you will receive to your ask as well as how you will respond. Common responses you should prepare for are: "I have to think about it," "That's a lot of money;" and "I need more information."
- 3. Deliver with confidence.** This may seem obvious, but even people who have done some advanced preparation often fall short. Some blurt out the ask to get it over with. Some look down, look away, or look past the other person, and the moment of engagement is lost. Instead, deliver with the confidence of someone who gets what he or she wants. Make strong and sincere eye contact, sit up straight, and smile.



4. **Clarify what you think you heard.** This is where the ask can really break down. A common response, such as “I’ll have to get back to you,” doesn’t tell you anything about what the other person is thinking, and until you know, it’s very difficult to close the deal. Potential issues could be that you asked for too much; they have to consult with their attorney, financial advisor, or family member; they already made their investment for the year; or they just don’t want to do it and don’t want to tell you. When you hear “I’ll get back to you,” respond by saying “Thank you for your consideration. To the extent you feel comfortable, can you share what your concerns are?”
5. **Plan Your Next Move at the Ask.** You made your ask, you were told you would have to wait for an answer, and then you left the room or hung up the telephone. Now what? Instead, before you leave, set up your next move. You might say, “Why don’t I call you at the office next Tuesday at 10 am?” That gets you on their calendar and can greatly reduce the time you spend waiting for an answer.

HOW ONE COMPANY USES IT:

The Bloomberg junior sales team was very successful working their large client base, but they had two specific goals they wanted to reach: lessen the time it took to close each deal and make the clients feel special so that it would be easier to retain and upgrade their client base. They put the 5-Step Method to the test.

Before meeting with a new or existing client, each team member wrote down their goal for the meeting. They included: “I would like this client to purchase this product by x date.” “My goal is to have this client buy 25 additional units by x date because she is expanding her business.” Then, they made a list of all of the responses they typically hear when they make a sales call. As they heard new responses, they added them to the list. The list provides the confidence needed to respond without getting caught off guard.

The team was also spending most of their client meetings on their computers, showing the product but not engaging face to face enough. Instead, they framed each meeting in three parts by telling the client “I have three things to cover with you today: 1. Hear from you what you know about the product and what you would like to know; 2. Show you exactly those features; and 3. Most importantly, listen to your thoughts so that we can work together.” This method insures that at least two-thirds of the meeting involves strong eye contact.

Finally, each meeting ended with the setting of a specific day and time to be back in touch. After using the ASK method, the sales team saw noticeable improvement in both the acquisition and retention of clients.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [*The ASK: For Business, For Philanthropy, For Everyday Living*](#), Laura Fredricks (Wiley, 2017). Provides a blueprint for asking for what you want, including how to prepare, what words to use (and what to avoid) and how to follow up.
- [*“If You Want Something, Ask For It”*](#) Insights by Stanford Business, July 2008. Reveals results of a study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology that found that people are much more likely to help others when asked than we assume. Participants in the study consistently overestimated by 50 percent the number of people they would have to ask to get a certain number to agree with a simple request.

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, director of Custom Programs at Wharton Executive Education. *Nano Tools for Leaders®* is a collaboration between joint sponsors Wharton Executive Education and Wharton’s Center for Leadership and Change Management. This collaboration is led by Professors Michael Useem and John Paul MacDuffie.