



THE POWER TO ASK

Using Curiosity, Data, and Relationships to Advocate for What You've Earned

A practical guide for leaders who want to stop guessing and start positioning.

Negotiation is not only about asking for more. It is about understanding how decisions are made, documenting the value you have created, and building the relationships that give your work visibility and context

A Better Way to Think About Advocacy

Many professionals hesitate to advocate for themselves because they believe the problem is confidence. Often, the deeper issue is clarity. They are unsure when to ask, what to ask for, how decisions are made, or whether they have enough evidence to support the conversation.

The result is predictable: people wait until review season, promotion announcements, or the end of a hiring process. By then, important decisions may already be underway or complete.

Core Principle

It is not that you do not ask. It is that you may not yet have enough clarity to ask well.

The CDR Leadership Framework offers a more strategic approach. Curiosity helps you understand the system. Data helps you build a credible case. Relationships help you gain context, advocacy, and access. Together, they turn self-advocacy from a high-pressure moment into an ongoing leadership practice.

Ask earlier. Track what matters. Build relationships before the moment arrives.

The CDR Framework

CURIOSITY	DATA	RELATIONSHIPS
Ask questions that reveal how decisions are made.	Translate effort into measurable outcomes.	Build trust, context, and advocates before you need them.
Understand timing, criteria, and process.	Document impact, scope, and responsibility.	Learn from HR partners, peers, mentors, and sponsors.



THE POWER TO ASK

Using Curiosity, Data, and Relationships to Advocate for What You've Earned

1. Curiosity: Stop Guessing. Start Asking.

Curiosity is the first step because you cannot negotiate effectively inside a process you do not understand. Before deciding what to request, learn how your organization makes decisions about compensation, promotions, bonuses, visibility, stretch opportunities, and expanded scope.

Curiosity is not permission seeking. It is responsible preparation.

What to Be Curious About

- Fiscal year timing: When are budgets built, reviewed, and finalized?
- Pay bands: What range applies to your role, level, geography, or function?
- Bonus timelines: When are recommendations made and what evidence matters?
- Promotion windows: When are talent reviews held and who participates?
- Decision criteria: What distinguishes strong performance from promotion readiness?
- Role expectations: What does growth look like in the next level or expanded role?

2. Data: Build the Case Others Can See

Your manager may appreciate your work, but appreciation is not the same as documentation. Leaders who advocate well do not rely on others to remember every contribution. They maintain a clear record of results, business impact, expanded responsibilities, and problems solved.

Replace “I have been working really hard” with “I led X, which resulted in Y.”

What to Track

- Results: Deliverables completed, targets achieved, milestones accelerated, or quality improved.
- Revenue and impact: Revenue generated, costs avoided, time saved, risk reduced, participation increased, or client outcomes improved.
- Expanded responsibilities: Work performed beyond your original scope, including leadership, strategy, or cross functional ownership.
- Problems solved: Issues you identified, decisions you influenced, barriers you removed, or processes you improved.
- Recognition: Positive feedback, awards, invitations, repeat requests, or visible trust from senior leaders.
- Growth: Skills, certifications, and capabilities that increased the value you can provide.



THE POWER TO ASK

Using Curiosity, Data, and Relationships to Advocate for What You've Earned

The Impact Statement Formula

I led [ACTION] for [SCOPE], which resulted in [MEASURABLE OUTCOME] and supported [BUSINESS PRIORITY].

Example: I redesigned the onboarding process for three teams, reducing time to productivity by two weeks and improving the new hire experience.

3. Relationships: You Do Not Navigate Alone

Strong advocacy is rarely a solo act. Relationships provide context that may not appear in formal policies or meetings. They also create people who understand your work well enough to reinforce your case when you are not in the room.

Build relationships before you need them. Ask questions early. Create trust over time.

When trust is strong, people are more likely to share useful context, including salary ranges, bonus expectations, internal benchmarks, decision timelines, and the informal expectations attached to advancement.

Build Your Advocacy Network

- HR and talent partners: Provide insight into process, timelines, pay structures, and talent practices.
- Trusted peers and allies: Share context, compare experiences, and help you understand how your work is perceived.
- Mentors: Offer guidance based on experience and help you think through timing and language.
- Sponsors: Use their credibility and access to advocate for your readiness and potential.
- Decision makers: Clarify priorities, expectations, and the outcomes that matter most.
- Cross functional partners: Validate the reach and value of your work beyond your immediate team.

Build Your Advocacy Case

A strong ask connects your goals to the organization's priorities. It is specific, evidence based and timed with an understanding of how decisions are made.

Step 1: Name the Ask

- Compensation adjustment
- Promotion or title change



THE POWER TO ASK

Using Curiosity, Data, and Relationships to Advocate for What You've Earned

- Expanded scope or formal authority
- Stretch assignment or visible opportunity
- Professional development investment
- Flexible work arrangement or additional resources

Step 2: Connect It to Value - What results, responsibilities, or business needs support this request?

Step 3: Understand the Process - What do I know about timing, criteria, decision makers, and available options?

Step 4: Identify Support - Who can provide context, feedback, advocacy, or sponsorship?

The Conversation Guide

You do not need a perfect speech. You need a clear opening, a credible case, a specific request, and room for dialogue.

A Simple Structure

- Open with purpose. State that you would like to discuss your growth, contribution, or compensation.
- Share the evidence. Highlight two or three relevant outcomes, not your entire work history.
- Make the ask. Be direct about the outcome you are seeking.
- Invite context. Ask what factors, timing, or additional evidence should be considered.
- Confirm next steps. Clarify who will do what and by when.

When the Answer Is "Not Yet"

A delayed or incomplete answer is not the end of the conversation. Ask for specificity so you leave with information rather than assumptions.

- What would need to be true for this request to be approved?
- What evidence or results would strengthen the case?
- Who else is involved in the decision?
- When would be the right time to revisit this?
- What alternatives are available if the original request is not possible?



THE POWER TO ASK

Using Curiosity, Data, and Relationships to Advocate for What You've Earned

Context Builds Confidence

Confidence does not always arrive before the conversation. Often, it is built through preparation. When you understand the process, can explain your impact, and have trusted people who can provide context, you are no longer relying on hope or guesswork.

The goal is not to become aggressive, rehearsed, or transactional. The goal is to become clear. Clear about what you have contributed. Clear about what you are seeking. Clear about how decisions are made. Clear about the relationships that can support your continued growth.

Leaders do not wait for the moment. They position themselves before the moment.

Remember, I am born to win and so are you!