companies or cash options, and are given to employees who achieve long-term performance goals. Annual incentives may include performance-based stock options or profit sharing. Recognition awards may or may not be monetary. Non-cash incentives include reserved parking spaces, club memberships, meals and similar perks.

Step structures are more rigid than the other two systems, and managers have little discretion in giving raises. In a step structure, workers advance through a series of steps, each with a specific salary range. For example, a staff accountant might advance from a $40,000 to a $45,000 step before reaching the next $50,000 step. These structures are often based on specific job functions or occupations. For example, non-exempt employees may advance through steps based on their experience and performance, while exempt employees may advance through steps based on their job level.

While the median household income varies by state, the middle class has shrunk in every state according to a recent study. The study, released by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, found that the middle class has shrunk in every state because the median household income has fallen in real terms. The median household income for each state is listed by state in the table below.

Before you contact your boss, check with your company’s human resources department to determine if there is a procedure for requesting salary increases. If you work for a company that doesn’t have a formal procedure, you may need to take the initiative to request a raise.

Before accepting an offer, take into consideration the full value of the compensation package. In many cases, the salary is not the most important factor. It’s important to understand the full value of the offer, including benefits like insurance, sick leave, retirement, vacation and other perks. Some companies may offer stock options, equity incentives or other benefits that can significantly enhance the value of the offer.

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