

Your Money

by Cheryl Hanson Simpson



Boost Your Income

I've done my budget and I as much as I try, I can't cut back on any expenses. I have one child that is not being supported by his father and I find it really hard to make ends meet on my salary. I would love to be able to earn more money, but I don't know how to start. Any advice? - Broke

Last week we looked at ways to find more money to save by creatively reducing expenses. However, if you aren't making enough money even for your basic needs, then the only option is to increase your income.

Once again, the first step is to assess your income and expenditure to find out how much your monthly deficit is. Write down all your monthly expenses, including a savings amount, on your budget planner and subtract the total from your earnings. If you're not making ends meet, then your budget should show a shortfall. This figure is the targeted amount which you need to increase your income each month.

It's easier to break down the monthly shortfall into a weekly or daily amount. Let's say your budget deficit is \$15,000. This means that you need to earn approximately \$3,750 extra per week, or just \$500 more every day. When you think about your extra earning needs, focus on the smaller amount which will seem easier to achieve.

There are two ways that you can try to improve the income side of your financial statement. You can either try to earn more within a 9-5 job, or you can try to earn more by taking on another stream of income. (You can also do them both!)

Looking at the first option, think about your current job and figure out a plan of action that can take you to the next higher level of income. Discuss this with your employer or your company's Human Resource Department. Do you need to upgrade your skills and qualifications to be able to get a better-paying position? Sometimes just by indicating to your employer that you are serious about making a bigger impact to the company might put you in good standing to get a promotion.

If you experience a brick wall in trying to get ahead within your workplace, perhaps you need to look outside. Take a critical look at your resume, and how your current job experience has helped you to grow. I usually encourage persons who are serious about moving ahead in their careers to get professional advice on resume-writing as well as job counseling. Your objective is to position yourself ahead of the pack to get the kind of job that you can really be satisfied with.

The reality is that many times we have to be creative and make extra income outside of the regular job. Ask yourself these two questions as you search for ways to earn additional money:

1. Do I have any skills that someone would pay me money for?
2. Is there any problem that exists in my surroundings at work, home, school or church that I can find the solution for?

The first question requires thinking hard about your unique strengths and abilities. Are you a good party organizer? Do you have a flair for design? Can you type well? Do your friends usually seek your advice? It is usually by examining the things that you love to do that you discover a fulfilling career possibility. A job counselor can help you to tap into your hidden talents. Your goal is to think of ways that you can package your strong points into a service that people will pay for.

Secondly, you can try to create solutions to fulfill a need that may be found in your environment. Most successful business ideas solve problems. Taxis abound where there are no regular bus routes. People get paid for shopping and running errands for elderly persons who can't get around. Informal school buses help parents with their children's transportation.

When you conceive of a practical business idea, you should seek assistance to structure your plan to help guarantee your success. Don't try to develop your business without getting technical support. Agencies like the Jamaica Business Development Centre and JAMPRO provide services in business planning, specialized training, product development and financing solutions.

Whichever route you take to increase your income, remember that your objective is not to increase your spending. Many times we fall into a trap of more money, more expenses. As much as possible, you should commit the extra income towards your savings and investment plans.

(Originally published in THE DAILY OBSERVER, Thursday, April 13, 2006)