

## Sharing Salary Secrets: Someone's not going to be happy

Written by Julie Desmond  
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Working forty plus hours with the same people week after week, co-workers commonly develop close friendships. And with long weeks comes some amount of down time, which leads to conversations which leads to deeper trust levels. All this is great for company morale. But that friendship can end abruptly if someone senses the boss is playing favorites, especially with salaries. The "I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours," conversation starter always has the same ending: someone is going to walk away mad.

Let's say you are earning far more than your co-worker for the same job. You did not mean to let your pay rate slip out. Maybe you overheard what someone else was making and you acted surprised; maybe you laughed out loud. Now your colleague is curious. He wants to know why you never complain about low wages. She wonders why you eat out every day, when everyone else brings a sandwich from home.

Maybe you even felt some pride about your superiority. That's what it is, right? If you earn more than your co-worker, you must be more significant in the eyes of the company where you work, right? Wrong. You are just the same person doing the same work, sacrificing the same amount of sweat as everyone else. Maybe you caught a break and were able to develop more experience than your friendly co-worker. Education plays a part in compensation calculations. So does potential.

If you are earning more, and your friendly cohorts find out, you will have more time to focus on your work because your friends are going to walk away angry, or puzzled and scratching their heads, wondering what you've ever done to deserve that kind of money.

The second possible outcome when salary chatter begins is that you will discover you are earning far less than your co-worker. What does that do for you? Do you feel compelled to file a formal complaint? Do you think it would put a few more dollars in your pocket? It won't. But it will put a rift in your friendship. This time the one walking away angry is you.

A third possibility is that when someone starts talking salaries you will discover everyone is earning the same amount of money for equivalent work. But don't count on it.

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