

What can I do about stagnant part-time work wages?

Q *I HAVE been working part-time as a graphic artist for a big company. The cost of living has gone up but my wages have not.*

My wages have remained the same since I joined the company three years ago. I am also not entitled to bonuses.

Isn't it exploitation for companies that can afford to pay more not to increase the daily rate for their part-time workers year after year?

What can I do about it?

I would rather not resign because my employer is one of the most stable in Singapore.

A YOU have raised concerns about the wages you are paid at your part-time job. To furnish you with a response, I have extracted some very basic information from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) website on part-time employment.

Basically, a part-time employee is one who is required under his or her contract of service with an employer to work less than 30 hours a week.

You have not mentioned how many hours you work in a week. Thus, I can only assume that your present job requires you to work less than 30 hours a week, that you have signed a yearly contract with the company and that the terms are stated clearly in your contract of service.

Please refer to the MOM website at www.mom.gov.sg for more details on part-time employment so that you can have a better understanding of your basic rights.

You mentioned that you have not been given any increment for the past three years. Based on my assumption that this is a yearly contract, I believe for that to happen, you would have to be given a new contract to sign every year and you would have to agree on the rates in that contract before you start work.

I would suggest that you be very open with your employer about a pay increment based on your past performance and contributions to the company.

As the company has kept you under its employment for the past three years, I believe you have put in a consistent and above-average performance. You can suggest that you be appraised on your performance annually as this can help you to negotiate for increments.

Your employer reserves the right not to give you a bonus as it is not covered in the Employment Act. You are, however, entitled to be paid on a pro-rated basis for public holidays, annual leave, rest days, overtime and so on. All these areas are clearly set out in the Employment Act.

I have come across employers who are generous enough to give out bonuses to part-time staff depending on the company's profitability.

I hope that your present employer is just as generous. However, you will still need to be forthright and share your concerns while reiterating your loyalty to the company.

If you like what you are doing and the company is stable, it would be good if you could resolve this issue by having a heart-to-heart talk with your employer. I wish you all the best.



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Advice provided in this column is not meant as a substitute for comprehensive professional advice. E-mail questions to lorna@sph.com.sg