



By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak  
COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I have a dilemma. I received funds to promote one person in my division but two people equally deserve to be promoted. No matter how I slice this tomato, I cannot find a single reason to promote one person over the other. I know I will hurt the morale of the one I don't promote. How can I handle this?

BOSS WITH DILEMMA



DEAR BOSS WITH DILEMMA:

You certainly do have a tough decision to make but that's why you get paid the big bucks, right?

The first thing you should do, though, is try to convince the powers to be to give you additional funding so you can promote both people. Be convincing and persuasive. Show them how the company or organization will benefit by letting you promote both deserving employees. Whether that benefit is higher profits, increased revenue, enhanced capabilities, better results, improved systems, more effective communications, higher rates of efficiency, or any other increase in the value of something, figure out what it is and be prepared to fully explain and/or show it.

If additional funds aren't available

## The scale can always be tipped

to accommodate two promotions, then evaluate programs, tasks, or services to see if there are any low-priority or ineffective activities or functions that can be cut. If there are, get them cut and obtain permission to divert the cost savings into your personnel or human resources budget. This could then pave the way for you to promote both people.

If neither of these two options are approved, maybe you can award two promotions with smaller pay raises than one promotion with a larger pay raise. Keep in mind, though, this is not a viable option for pay grade systems/scales.

If your best efforts don't result in both employees being promoted, you could always select the employee with higher tenure. No one would question this rationale; however, employees with higher tenure are not always better than those with lower tenure--you should always promote your best people regardless of tenure. Therefore, I recommend you conduct a fine-tooth assessment/comparison of both employees. Somewhere in that process you should be able to find a factor that can tip the scale one way or the other--even if it means you're considering each employee's future potential.

When you do your due diligence on decisions of this nature, you'll arrive at justified conclusions, reducing or

eliminating feelings of second guessing or guilt.

On the same day of the actual promotion you should try, if feasible, to have a closed-door conversation with the non-selectee to discuss the painstaking process you went through in making your decision. Let them know how close it was and how much you appreciate their hard work, encouraging them to stay the course. Perhaps you could reward them with a small perk (in lieu of a promotion) such as extra time off (with pay), an exciting assignment that, if performed well, will be held in high regard during future promotion considerations, or maybe even allowing them to go on a company business trip with a participative role. (DO NOT make any promises to promote them next year! Things can change and you never want to paint yourself into a corner.)

So explore these options and see if any of them can be a viable solution to your promotion dilemma. Please write back and let me know what decision you made and how it's going. Good luck!



*For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to [www.DearChiefAdvice.com](http://www.DearChiefAdvice.com) and submit your comments or email them to [Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com](mailto:Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com).*