

Promotional Interviews

Over the past ten years, those wishing to climb the corporate ladder looked primarily to the outside market place. Changing jobs was often the most direct path to securing a promotion and increasing take home pay and moving jobs every three years to facilitate continuous career development was not uncommon. In an economic downturn and a stagnant job market, these same people are now exploring promotional opportunities within their own company with a view to achieving the same results.

Whilst promotional interviews share many of the same features as traditional interviews, you need to be aware of their subtle differences to ensure you avoid any potential pitfalls and that you maximize your performance.

Insider Information

When competing with external candidates, you need to exploit your advantages to the maximum. As an existing employee, you have access to valuable company and departmental information that may be difficult for an outsider to acquire. Get yourself up to speed on recent corporate developments and future plans that are being considered. Speak to colleagues in the relevant department to find out why the role has become vacant, what challenges are facing the department and the preferred working style of your potential new boss. This may give you an idea as to whether the company is looking to recruit a direct replacement or is perhaps looking to appoint an individual who will bring dynamism and change to the department. Look at the company reports and financial statements for the last few years, analyse trends and revenue patterns and don't be afraid to show your knowledge and commercial acumen.

Track Record

When you are doing an internal interview, there is a strong chance that you will be interviewed by people with whom you have previously worked and this can lead to a certain complacency. It is a mistake to assume that a successful work record and good relationship with your boss will be sufficient to win you the promotion. Companies will follow due process and base their decisions on interview performance. It is important to prepare for the interview. Do not be afraid to sell yourself, have examples to demonstrate your key achievements and your contribution to the company to date.

It is worth remembering that being an internal candidate, also means that the interview panel may have some negative perceptions about you and you should use this opportunity to set the record straight.

Internal Competition

When you are applying for a promotion, you may well be competing against other colleagues for the same position. Let it be known that you have applied for the position and find out who else has submitted their name for the role. If you remain secretive about your application and are subsequently promoted, you risk losing the trust of your colleagues, many of whom you may now be managing.

Whilst it is fine to let people know your intentions - keep your gameplan to yourself!

Dress for Success

Your appearance can change people's perceptions of you. This is particularly important when you are going for a more senior position and you need the interview panel to see you in a new light - as an individual who is capable of taking on new responsibilities and the challenges involved

Pull out all the stops. By paying attention to your appearance, you will be giving the message that you are taking the process very seriously, and you will help the interview panel, visualize you in the new role.

Feedback

In the event that you are unsuccessful, remember that by even applying for a promotion, you have raised your profile in the company and are better positioned for the next opportunity. Use this as a learning experience, get feedback as to why you were not successful on this occasion and put in place an action plan to make sure you address any deficiencies raised.

Conclusion

While statistics show that you have a stronger chance of success in an internal interview, it is by no means a foregone conclusion. Interviews are an excellent opportunity for you to communicate your accomplishments and ambitions to your boss. Whatever the outcome, a strong performance will reap dividends - either through an immediate promotion or by ensuring you are on the radar for future opportunities that arise within the company

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of Interview Techniques, a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with Irish Jobs and the Sunday Business Post.

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