

## **Internal Interviews – Tips for Success**

In a stagnant market place, promotion may prove the best route to career advancement and an increase in take home pay. Yet surprisingly, while most people prepare for external interviews, they often become quite complacent when it is their own boss asking the questions. The internal interview is simply a variation of the traditional job interview. There are however some major differences - both to your advantage and to your disadvantage - which you need to consider and some actions you need to take to ensure a successful outcome.

### *Track record*

It is tempting to believe that all you need to secure a promotion is a strong track record and a good relationship with your boss. You should never assume that your boss knows everything that you have to offer. During the course of the interview you need to be able to clearly demonstrate your contribution to the company, backed up by specific examples. Why wait until an interview to raise your profile? On an ongoing basis you should work on increasing your visibility, making sure your boss knows what you are working on and is aware of your achievements and success.

Bear in mind, the interview panel will also be aware of your weaknesses and you will need to overcome any concerns they may have. They may have some incorrect perceptions about you and the interview is your chance to set the record straight.

### *Insider Information*

This is one of the key advantages that you have over any external candidates – use it. Speak to key people in the department you would be working in to find out what is going on and try to learn as much about the concerns, objectives and goals of management. Find out who will be interviewing you, the personalities involved and their interview styles.

### *Team player v leader*

Most internal career moves will involve increased levels of responsibility. During the course of the interview you will need to demonstrate how you will adjust to your new role in the company. You may have previously proven yourself to be a strong team member but have you demonstrated your ability to take a leadership role within the team? Will you make the transition from working alongside people to managing these same people? Have examples to hand to prove that you have the skill set required to quickly adjust to and master the new role.

### *Internal Competition*

You may well be competing for the position with people that are friends. It is worth remembering that work colleagues are not necessarily the same as friends out of work - they may well have different priorities. If you are going for a promotion you should let people know, and find out who else is going for it. Keep your ideas and strategy to yourself and prepare yourself for the fact that your colleague may

be the one that gets the job. Being secretive about your application may cause unnecessary problems further down the track.

### *Dress the part*

Take the interview process seriously. Pay attention to your image - dress smartly and do not appear in your regular work clothes. Don't forget that you are known in a certain role at a particular level – how you dress could help the interviewer to see you in a new light.

### 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 *Recruit Ireland* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

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