

Ace the Internal Job Interview

**Changing jobs within your organizations? Caught in a re-organization?
Get ready to successfully navigate this whitewater ride in your career.**

If your organization is re-structuring, being acquired or changing strategies, there are some things you can do before the “official word” is given. This is the time to create the impression that will help you land in the role you want.

- Pay attention to how you may be able to contribute to critical decisions by keeping up-to-date on all internal communication about organizational changes and strategies. Discuss them with others, being aware that what you say may be repeated. Can you supply research or background information? This demonstrates your willingness to help make the new processes and structures work. Most people narrowly focus on how the changes will impact themselves. Your job will probably change either in its tasks and responsibilities, or how you interact with other positions in the company. You can anticipate these changes by keeping up-to-date on the latest thinking.
- Be curious and ask questions about the new strategies and direction. Can you offer a perspective that has not been considered? Offer suggestions in the form of potential realistic solutions. Think about how things *can* work, rather than how they might not work.
- Ask your boss what you can do to help with any additional responsibilities that have landed on his/her plate.
- Keep doing your current job at peak performance. During times of change, keeping up with “business as usual” is critical not only for your customers, but also to demonstrate your professionalism.

7 Tips:

1. When new job announcements are made be sure you understand why the position is open. Is it a vacancy due to promotion? Retirement? Poor performance? If it is a new position, why was it created? These are good clues as to the unspoken expectations you may encounter from the hiring manager as well as future colleagues.
2. Read the job description carefully. Highlight those things that would be new to you and underline the aspects that you are fully familiar with.
3. Prepare a professional resume. It should include examples of what you have contributed, not just tasks and activities. Think about the variety of projects and teams you’ve worked on and your role in the outcome. Include the ones that pertain to this new role and leave out the ones that don’t apply.
4. Dress to impress. It’s better to take a little kidding from your friends about dressing up for the interview than for the interviewers to think that you didn’t care enough to do so.

5. Prepare your responses to questions about your experience and ability to contribute to the organization's new direction.
6. Ask questions about the priorities and expectations, as well as reporting relationships. The interview should be a two-way conversation. Ask questions that will help you decide if this position will be a good fit for you.
7. Remember that your reputation precedes you. Be ready to address what you have learned from any stumbles you may have taken.

Pitfalls to Avoid:

1. **Don't** assume that since you have been doing the job that you will continue to do the job. Often the job now requires additional responsibilities, different skills or knowledge requirements.
2. **Don't** think that no one else can do the job. Tame your ego and be ready to demonstrate through concrete examples that you are the best person for the job.
3. **Don't** assume that you cannot do the job. The internal interview is a good time to let others know what skills and experiences you have developed and how you want to use them. If not selected for this position, you may be considered for others.
4. **Don't** be too casual, because you know the interviewer(s). A warm smile along with the handshake is enough. This is not the time to kid around. It's fine to acknowledge the awkwardness, if present, and then move on to business. This is the time to demonstrate the contribution you can make in the new position.
5. **Don't** get defensive if a past mistake is brought up. Acknowledge it, talk about what you learned from the situation and how you will use that knowledge (or avoid repeating the mistake) in the future.
6. **Don't** ask about the salary or other compensation. Save this discussion for when you have the job offer. You'll be in a better position to negotiate at that time.

AFTER the Interview:

No matter what the outcome or your initial feelings after the interview you still need to make a good impression. Within 24 hours be sure to follow-up with any additional information or references that the interviewer requested. Remember the often overlooked 'thank you.' Depending on your organization an e-mail may be fine. In others, the handwritten note may be best. However you choose, thank them for the opportunity to interview. Offer another example or succinctly remind them of your qualifications for the role, the unique perspective or contributions you bring to the position.

Even though you already work for the organization, you still need to approach this interview fully prepared. It helps to think about what an external candidate or another colleague may bring to the position and how your qualifications are unique.

Remember - you are in charge of creating your professional reputation!