

How to Get a Promotion

Seeking a promotion or advancement within your organization can be a stressful time during your career – especially if you approach it as a one-time event or conversation. Use the tips below to incorporate your plans for advancement into your everyday work routine so that when promotions become available you are the natural choice for the job!

Gain the support of your direct manager

One of the most critical steps to take is talking with your direct manager about your desire to be promoted and to gain their support. Often your direct manager will serve as a gatekeeper for your promotion opportunities, whether it's by waving you onward and upward or by creating barriers and obstacles. Take every opportunity to give your direct manager a reason to be your biggest advocate.

- State your interest in promotion opportunities clearly. Many promotions are never advertised, and if they are, often times a top candidate is discussed and vetted long before the opportunity becomes public. If your manager is in the room when an opportunity is being discussed, they cannot support your qualifications if they do not know your interests and ambitions. Make sure they know what your goals are.
- Get honest feedback about your perceived professional strengths and weaknesses while ensuring your manager is aware of the accomplishments, contributions and growth you've achieved along the way. You want your direct manager to be your biggest advocate, highlighting your skills and strengths to other leaders when you are not around.
- Managers can be vital in helping you understand how you are perceived by others within the organization, particularly with other leaders and managers who may be making hiring decisions. Your direct manager can even help influence or adjust those perceptions if needed.
- Chances are that once you apply for a promotion and are being considered, your direct manager will be contacted to either make a recommendation or provide approval. So they are going to find out your plans one way or another. It is better for you if they are prepared to positively discuss your qualifications than to be caught off guard. Sit down with your managers and share with them in what ways you are prepared to grow professionally in the organization and solicit their support in your journey.

Determine your career goal

Be sure that you are clear on what your target is for advancement. Consider what type of position, which title or role, and even major responsibilities you will be aiming for. Once you have determined your ultimate goal, the next step is to identify what skills, experience, and education are required for being considered. Do research beyond just the job description by seeking insights into the department goals, its challenges as well opportunities.

Understand the skills, experience and education needed for advancement or a promotion.

Before seeking out that promotion, you'll need to understand the requirements and ensure that you meet them.

Create a list of ultimate qualities needed in your pursuit of advancement. Is your future career one where you will be managing a team of professionals? Add Leadership/Management to your list. Will you have oversight of a substantial budget? Be sure to add "Budget Management" to your list of necessary skills.

Review your new list and evaluate where your skills are for each area you've identified. If you don't currently have the needed requirements for the position, seek opportunities to further develop your skills through available training, professional development, or education benefits your employer offers to work towards them. If you currently meet the requirements but there are no openings available, take some time to expand your knowledge and skills sets in areas that are critical to your organization, even if they are not a requirement for the job. The wider your scope of knowledge of the entire organization, the better positioned you will be overall when an opportunity becomes available.

Gather feedback from a variety of sources.

Feedback can come from many sources, each with their own unique view of your developmental strengths and opportunities. You've taken the time to evaluate yourself, now seek out insight from those who have had the opportunity to work with you, supervise you or observe you professionally. Solicit feedback from as many of these sources as you can to gain a well-rounded view of where you can grow professionally. Here are some practical ways to gather this feedback:

- Review your annual performance review: In what areas did you excel in the last year? In what areas was there room for improvement? What have you done (planned) to continue to grow and improve professionally?
- Consider using a 360-degree feedback tool: 360-degree feedback is a tool in which you are assessed by your manager, your peers, your direct reports as well as a self-evaluation on professional competencies. It allows you to get honest feedback about your strengths and areas that could be improved to make you an even more effective leader.

Maintain exceptional professionalism

Organizations want to promote individuals that can best represent them and embody their ideals within every department.

When you interviewed for your current position you were intentional about your dress, your verbal as well as non-verbal communication and other behaviors in order to display the most

professional version of yourself possible. That same intentionality should be continued in order to be considered for your next internal promotion. The impressions of you throughout the organization are a part of building your Professional Brand and whether or not your brand is a match for the organization's objectives will play a role in your ability to promote. Showcase workplace professionalism by:

- Honoring commitments, being dependable, value time and effort of others
- Being an accountable and cooperative team player
- Dress and behave like the job you want, not the job you have – even on business casual days

Contribute

Another key aspect of your strategy is to be noticed for your valuable contributions. Let your voice be heard – volunteer on committees, lead projects, take ownership, show initiative – all are top qualities organizations recognize in promotional decisions. In addition to providing opportunities to develop additional skills, your participation on additional projects or committees will allow you the ability to work alongside others who may be influential allies on your career path. Here are a few practical ideas for being a top contributor:

- Always participate, speak up, get involved and ask “How can I help?”
- Be a problem solver – don't just state an issue, come up with at least one possible solution.

Avoid office drama, gossip and politics

It may seem harmless to participate in office gossip or take a side in a drama between colleagues, but these may prove to make a bigger impact on your professional image than meets the eye. Being associated with negativity can cast a shadow on your reputation at the organization. In addition, individuals on either side of a conflict may hold the power to assist or prevent you from moving to your next level. It's wiser to maintain a level of professional neutrality regarding office drama and avoid being a part of the gossip mill in order to “stay above the fray.”

Determine if internal promotion is your best career route

As you gain new skills and knowledge, take some time to look around at your current organization and determine whether or not your next step is there. Don't resign yourself to seeking an internal promotion if there are no opportunities due to the size of the organization, financial strength or growth of the organization, or other reasons. Depending on the industry or the specific organization, there may simply not be any opportunities. If this is the case, or if you continue to be passed over for promotions, then it might be time to consider leaving and seeking employment and promotional opportunities elsewhere. You won't be the first person to leave an organization for a better position, and you won't be the last, just make sure you do it with professionalism and grace so not to burn any bridges behind you.