

## Job Seekers: 7 Tips On Applying For A Job Within Your Company

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Are you looking for a new job within your current company? Don't assume just because you already work there, that you'll have an advantage in obtaining the job. In fact, most hiring managers are even tougher on internal candidates than external ones. That's because they know internal candidates have access to more company personnel and a lot more information about the position than an external candidate. So if you don't do your homework, be prepared for poor results.

Sally (name changed) is an example of what can go wrong when you skip the important job interview preparation steps. Sally was an internal candidate who had applied for one of the open positions within the marketing team I managed. Since she already worked at the company and had access to the employees in my department, my assumption was that she would be well prepared for her job interview. I was wrong.

When I asked her questions about our newly released product, she was unable to answer. When I asked how she thought the product introduction from our number one competitor would impact sales of our newly released product, she didn't have an opinion. When I asked her what she thought it would take to be successful in the position, she pulled out the job posting and pointed to the list of job requirements. The interview spiraled downward at a rapid pace due to her lack of preparation.

Several weeks after the interview, Sally asked me to have coffee. As we sat and talked, she apologized for the interview. She explained that for many years, new roles had sort of fallen into her lap without any effort on her part. She said she hadn't taken the interview process seriously enough and she had wrongly assumed that since I'd seen her at various meetings and knew who she was, that I would automatically hire her, due to her success in her current job.

But here's the thing, I wasn't her manager so I didn't know anything more about her than what I'd read on her resume. Yes, I'd seen her around the office and during various meetings, and she had usually been well prepared for discussions. That's what made her lack of preparation for the job interview all the more perplexing. During the interview, she hadn't been able to convince me why I should hire her for the position or that she understood what it would take to be successful as a marketing manager.

After the job interview, I could tell that Sally was embarrassed to see me during meetings and sensed an awkward tension when we would pass each other in the hallways. So I was glad when we had the opportunity to sit down for a chat. It was a tough lesson for her to learn, but the good news is that she did learn from her mistake.

About a year later she told me that she had taken our discussion to heart and used what she'd learned to prepare for an interview in another division of the company. She obtained the job because she was a good fit and because she had spent time preparing: she learned everything she could about the position and the department, spoke with several employees currently in the same roles, researched the skills and experience necessary to be successful in the position, and prepared answers to potential interview questions.

What I hope you'll learn from this story is that it takes just as much work to obtain a new job at your current place of work – and sometimes more – because the expectation is that you'll be more prepared than an external candidate. So don't take anything for granted, and follow these tips to help you be successful:

*Tip #1: Take the interview process seriously.* Prepare for your internal job interview just like you would for an external interview. Especially important are customizing your resume to the job, writing a customized cover letter, creating a portfolio of work examples, preparing for the interview, and obtaining internal references/sponsors who will vouch for your background, skills, and work performance.

*Tip #2: Speak to employees who are already in the job you want.* Find out: what they think about the job, the good aspects and the challenges faced in the position, what they believe it takes to be successful in the job, any advice they may have for you for the interview process.

*Tip #3: Meet with the HR representative (often called an "HR business partner") responsible for the department you want to work in.* Let the person know which position you want, and discuss the job's responsibilities and requirements, your background (knowledge, experience, skills, and education), and your "fit" for the position. Tell the HR person that you'd like to apply for the position and ask for his or her feedback and thoughts on whether they believe you could be a successful candidate.

*Tip #4: Let your manager know if you decide to apply for the open position.* Many companies require that current managers be notified whenever an employee applies for another position within the company. Even if this rule doesn't exist, it's always best to be honest with your current boss and let him or her know that you're applying for another job and the reasons why. For example, your reasons might be to gain additional or different work experience, take on higher level or more challenging work, move into a position where you manage others, etc.

*Tip #5: Gain the support of your current manager.* The best possible sponsor/reference you could have is your current boss, so solicit their support to obtain the job you want. And don't forget to let him or her know how much you've appreciated working for them.

*Tip #6: Introduce yourself to the hiring manager.* Take a hard copy of your resume to the hiring manager and introduce yourself in person after you've submitted it online. Let them know you've just applied online for the open position (state the job title) and that you also wanted to drop off your resume in person so they would be able to put a face with the name on the resume. Then hand the hiring manager your resume and let them know you're looking forward to speaking with them during the interview process.

*Tip #7: Make yourself stand out, after the job interview is over.* Write a customized thank you note to the hiring manager after your interview. If you get the job, be sure to thank everyone who helped, especially your current boss.

If you don't get the job, the best thing you can do is move on gracefully and use it as a learning experience. Ask the HR representative and the hiring manager if they are willing to provide feedback. Let them know that you'd like to understand, from their perspective, things you did well and areas (skills/experience) you could work on as part of your career development.

How you handle yourself when you don't get a job can often affect whether you obtain the next job working for that hiring manager, so always act professionally. Use every interview experience (even if it was bad) as a learning opportunity so you'll be better prepared the next time you apply for a job.

~ Lisa Quast, author of award-winning book, [YOUR CAREER, YOUR WAY!](#) Join me on Twitter @careerwomaninc

