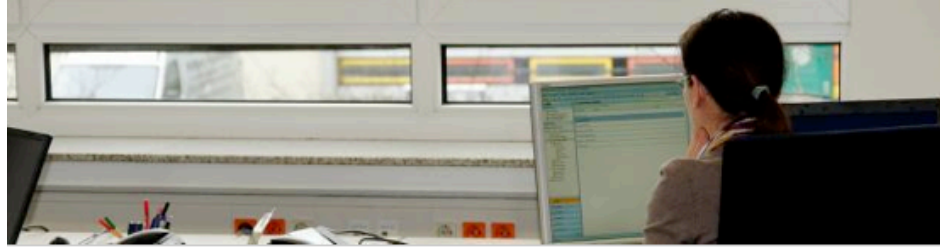




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ARTICLE

How to Apply for a Job within Your Company

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Maybe you know you are ready for a career change, so you navigate to your organization's career website to see what is available internally. Or maybe you already know that your organization is hiring for the role of your dreams, and all you need to is to get your hat in the ring.

There are a lot of advantages to growing your career within your current organization. You already have a sense of what "success" and "failure" look like. You already have a background in the industry and, ideally, connections within your organization to vouch for you. Your current supervisor and your next supervisor will even have the chance to negotiate between themselves regarding your start date and project availability. Seems great, right?

While I would love to stay in the land of optimism, it is important to point out the risks of applying for an internal transfer as well. Friends and colleagues of mine have reported all of the following when they have attempted to change jobs within a company:

- Your current supervisor might start planning for your exodus before you are offered or accept the alternate role—and, once a hire is made, tell you there is no going back to your old position.
- Your current supervisor might believe you are a flight risk and may remove you for consideration for advancement within your team.
- Your current supervisor might attempt to stand in the way of your transition (especially if you are a strong asset to his team).

Fortunately, the rewards often outweigh the risks. A close friend of mine is in the process of transitioning jobs within his current organization, and he has found that, at every stage, his current and future supervisors have been respectful of and responsive to his personal and career ambitions. From what I can tell, he was already passionate about the organization's success, and seeing firsthand how supportive all parties have been has only further committed him to grow *with* that organization.

So, if you are ready to apply for another job within your organization, where should you begin?

Read the Employee Handbook (AKA Find the Policy)

Most organizations have some kind of formal process or policy regarding internal transfers or promotions. For example, some organizations require that you stay in a role for a certain amount of time before applying for a transfer. While in exceptional circumstances you may be able to pursue a new position before you've put in your time, it is important to know whether any official policies exist so that you do not waste time applying for a position for which you will not be considered.

Ideally, the handbook or policy will also explain to you the "best practice" process for announcing your intention to apply. This can be very sticky territory because, for a successful bid, you will need your current manager and your potential future manager to work together to help you earn that new position.

Absent any other policy—and assuming a moderately positive rapport—it is generally a good idea to inform your manager before formally applying for a job. You want to maintain control over the "story," so you do not want your manager to discover that you are seeking greener pastures unless you are the one to tell her.



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Finally, if you are not able to find a written policy, but you are friendly with your organization's recruiters, they might be able to point you in an appropriate direction. Please note, of course, that once you start telling people within your organization, you will want to make sure that your manager is among the first to know.

Apply as though You Don't Work for the Company

Lisa Quast's article for Forbes, "[Job Seekers: 7 Tips On Applying For A Job Within Your Company](#)," introduces a number of quick tips to assist with an internal application. As part of the article, Quast discusses interviewing an internal candidate for a job, and the following quote really stuck with me:

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.

As Quast's story illustrates, you need to be just as prepared (perhaps more so!) for an internal application and interview process as for an external one.

- **Do research** – Prove what you know about your potential new team and role by showing how you can bring value.
- **Get references** – Make sure that people within the organization—including your current manager—will speak well of you if they are asked.
- **Dress up** - At some companies, you can get a new job even if you show up in ripped jeans and a T-shirt. Never assume that you work for that company! It is always safer to dress in "interview attire"—it sends a clear signal that you take this job opportunity seriously.
- **Bring good questions** – If you already work for an organization, you should be able to ask much better questions of your interviewer than an external candidate would. Prepare questions that will actually help you decide if you want the job—and that will show the interviewer that you care about your future with the team.
- **Write a thank you note** – Always a best practice!

Keep the Gossip to a Minimum

While you can't control the actions of others, you can control your own. Don't encourage gossip by badmouthing your current supervisor, department, or role. If it comes to light that you are applying for other jobs internally, focus on the idea of career growth and politely redirect the conversation. You don't want to burn any bridges with your old or potential new boss!



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