

Internal Interviews Have Their Own Challenges

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Believe it or not, internal interviews can be more difficult than interviewing with a company you've never worked for. You should never assume that because you've worked for the company for 10 years, you will get the job. Instead, carefully prepare for the interview.

Let's say Margaret has been a supervisor in her current position for six years. A [management job](#) has become available, and she would like to apply but is not sure how to sell herself within the organization. She applied for a similar job two years ago but didn't get it. There have been a lot of changes since then, and she feels she is ready to try again.

Margaret's boss, Ron, has been with the company just longer than a year. He thinks highly of Margaret's work and has been encouraging about career development within the company. She makes an appointment to discuss her plan with Ron. He suggests she treat this interview like an interview outside the organization. Ron is very supportive and says he will put in a good word based on her excellent performance.

She takes Ron's advice to heart and begins doing internal research on the department. She has a friend, Marianne, who works directly with the department's director and meets with her to get insider information about the personalities involved. She learns they are a friendly group, and they take their work seriously, staying late when necessary. Marianne gives her ideas for researching projects this department was responsible for.

Next, Margaret calls Mike, who was on the interviewing panel the last time she interviewed internally. Mike gives her some feedback, which is hard to swallow but necessary. He says she came across as overly confident -- almost like she knew the job was hers for the asking. She thanks him for his honest [feedback](#). It will help her in the way she presents herself this time. He says he will recommend her based on their work together.

Margaret spends a great deal of time on the internal Web site, looking through reports and budgets. She finds some surprises and new information in the archives. Margaret is excited about the opportunity to become a member of this department and formulates [questions](#) to ask them.

She does a mock interview with her friend Marianne, and gets some pointers on her answers. She plans her interview [outfit](#) as though she were interviewing externally -- she wants to look professional.

This time the internal interview feels completely different. She is mentally ready and feels confident but knows she is one of several who will be interviewed. She asks good

questions and learns how the department works as a team and what her role would be. The interview goes well.

After the interview, she sends a [follow-up letter](#) outlining the challenges and opportunities she picked up from the interview. She also offers some reasons why she is a good fit for the department and the position.

Margaret is satisfied that she has put forth her best effort. She has followed the advice given to her:

- Use the same preparation techniques you would for an external job: research, practice and follow through.
- Know as much as possible about the department and players involved before you interview.
- Don't assume the job is yours because you have worked for the company for many years. In most cases, you are an applicant to be considered like any other, internal or external.
- Ask questions to make sure this job is for you. Find out about department morale and how the department fits into the bigger company picture. What are the challenges and issues this department faces?
- Send a follow-up letter, just as you would if you were an external applicant. Let the interviewer know what added value you can bring to the department or job.

Margaret is thrilled when offered the position. Her research, planning and solicitation of advice have really paid off.