

HOW TO GET A PROMOTION

Imagine your boss, your boss's boss, and other key executives in your company sitting around a table discussing YOU. They're talking about your character, your leadership qualities, the projects you manage, the people you oversee, the results you achieve and your overall performance for the past year. This panel will be making a very important decision – do we promote you or not?

Perhaps your organization doesn't have such a formal process, but this ritual happens in some fashion at virtually every company, large or small. In a nutshell here's what happens: Each manager tries to sell their candidate as the most deserving person for the promotion. Other members of the group will want to know why that person deserves a promotion.

So having a manager who can do a persuasive job selling you will be key to how to get a promotion. Along with your manager, some of the other managers and executives who have worked directly with you will share their opinions. So it's also important to have them represent you in a positive, influential way. With each manager fighting for his her own people, the competition can be pretty fierce.

This discussion can be brutally honest and harsh in its portrayal of the candidates. If someone doesn't like you, it will be mentioned. It can get especially nasty when someone REALLY wants their candidate to get promoted and they will do and say anything to undercut someone else.

Your odds at getting promoted are good if you:

- Received high performance reviews.
- Accomplished everything that was asked.
- Followed-through on all the objectives that were set out.
- Met the team's objectives.
- Identified ways the company could save money
- Took on additional higher profile projects.
- Expanded your network of relationships.
- Worked hard, long hours and gave your all.

But you may not get promoted if:

- Not everyone on the panel knows you, your work and your accomplishments.
- Not enough people stood up for you during the discussion.
- You can't stand the office politics (and ass-kissing) in the company so you don't "play the game."
- You did only what you were asked and nothing beyond your job.
- You haven't influenced these key decision makers and thus fewer people are positively speaking up on your behalf.

Three strategies to improve your odds on how to get a promotion:

Now that you know how “the game” is played, here are three strategies on how to get the promotion you deserve.

1. **Prepare your boss.** Make sure your supervisor (or the person representing you at the meeting) is well briefed and has thorough documentation about your accomplishments.
2. **Make it easy for your boss to plead your case.** Prepare a list of “talking points” that summarize why you deserve the promotion. Support your argument with bottom-line facts and figures that are tied to your company’s objectives. Include letters or testimonials from customers or key clients.
3. **Anticipate the reactions of others in the room.** Take advantage of your advocates and try to mitigate the damage that can be caused by detractors. Provide ammunition to your supervisor about how you’ve helped others in the room meet their goals. And if there are potential “landmines,” make sure he or she is aware of them. Discuss in advance ways your supervisor can “defuse” these problems.

But what if you don’t get the promotion?

Don’t get defensive or impulsively mail out resumes. Learn from the experience and improve your chances the next time around. Here’s how to get a promotion:

- **Ask your boss for honest feedback.** Try to glean as much information as you can about the meeting. Your boss may be limited because of confidentiality concerns, but he or she can provide valuable insights without “naming names.”
- **Develop a plan to address your weaknesses (whether real or perceived).** Don’t get defensive. Working with your boss, use this feedback intelligently to develop specific strategies to address these issues or concerns. For example, if the group felt that you weren’t very strong on financial issues, consider additional training.
- **Don’t wait for the next promotion meeting to communicate your accomplishments.** Never assume “my work speaks for itself.” Your goal should be that everyone at that promotion meeting knows about your accomplishments before they walk into that room. Take an active role in shaping the opinions and attitudes of key decision-makers by letting them know about your accomplishments and value to the organization.

Joel Garfinkle will be presenting at the 27th Annual PBWC Conference. He is the author nine books, including [Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level](#). He is recognized as one of the top 50 executive coaches in the U.S., having worked with many of the world’s leading companies, including Oracle, Google, Amazon, Deloitte, The Ritz-Carlton, Gap and Starbucks. His website www.GarfinkleExecutiveCoaching.com has over 300 FREE articles on leadership, work issues and career advancement.