

Getting Promoted

Last Modified on 09/17/2024 1:44 pm PDT

There are different ways to get promoted (i.e. vacancy, organizational growth). A promotion is an investment in you, so your organization will want to be sure there's a high chance of it paying off before they invest their time and money. In this article, we'll present some things to keep in mind as you plan to advance in your current organization. We recommend that you start thinking about mastering meetings, mastering feedback, showing your potential, and asking for a promotion.

Master Meetings

Meetings are an opportunity for you to strategically demonstrate that you are good at your job, a good fit for your organization's culture, and committed to the success of your organization. The longer you've been in a position, the more you will be expected to show up in leader mode (knowing what's going on, contribution to the discussion) versus learner mode (not knowing much, asking lots of questions). The bottom line is: the way you show up in meetings has a big impact on your potential to get promoted.

Before the meeting:

- Make sure you know the purpose of the meeting and who will be there. Most meetings are either update meetings or discussion meetings.
- Make sure you know your role in the meeting. Are you expected to listen, participate, or present? Should you offer to take notes?
- Think about what questions you might be asked. What are you currently working on? What is the status of your project?
- Prepare one thoughtful comment and one thoughtful question to contribute to the meeting.

During the meeting:

- If you have something to add, speak up at the right time. If you're having trouble speaking up on a video call, type in the chat.
- Think about the best way to deliver your point. Make sure your statements are delivered as questions. Enter the conversation with something like "Building on Jeff's point..."

After the meeting:

- Make sure you know what you are responsible for getting done and do it!

Master Feedback

The purpose of feedback is to help you grow as a professional. If you want to get promoted, you need to receive feedback and use it to improve in your position. First, you need to understand how your manager tends to give feedback.

Types of feedback:

1. **Indirect verbal** feedback might sound like a subtle hint, lukewarm approval, general suggestion, or anxious question. For example, "How's progress on the project?" could sound polite but mean they're worried about the pace of your work.
2. **Direct verbal** feedback can come off as rude, but try to separate your feelings from the content of what is being communicated. See if you can understand where they're coming from.

3. **Indirect nonverbal** feedback might look like changes in behavior. For example, setting up more frequent meetings or not giving specific tasks or projects.
4. **Direct nonverbal** feedback might look like blunt actions. For example, giving your work to someone else.

How to ask for feedback:

- The best case scenario is that you're comfortable enough with your manager to ask for feedback and they tell you directly what you can do to improve. Most of the time, it's not that easy. You can say, "Do you have a few minutes to chat this week? I'd love to hear how I'm doing and if there is anything I can do to improve my work!"
- Set the stage by thanking your manager for their time, mentioning how you value their opinion, and framing the discussion in terms of you wanting to improve. You can say, "Things are going X. I'm grateful for Y and have enjoyed working on Z. That said, I'm trying to improve Z and could use your support."

How to respond to feedback:

- If you receive critical feedback that's **not specific enough**, you can say, "Interesting. Can you share specific moments when I XYZ?"
- If you receive feedback you **disagree with** and want to explain yourself, you can say, "Thanks for that. I could definitely improve on X. I'm just thinking back to that moment and wonder if what went through my head was Y."
- If you aren't sure **how to apply certain feedback**, you can say, "Good point. Any suggestions on how I can apply this feedback going forward?"
- If you want help **achieving a certain goal**, you could say, "I'd love to do X and would appreciate advice. How would you suggest I go about navigating Y?"
- After any piece of feedback you can say:
 - "I appreciate you bringing that up."
 - "That's helpful."
 - "Thanks for that."
- If you have an **emotional reaction** to feedback, try to avoid signaling frustration or anxiety unintentionally. Take a deep breath then try asking for clarification.

How to implement feedback:

- Try to apply it as soon as possible. You don't want to forget or have things change before you get around to it.
- Report progress back to your manager to show you're taking their advice seriously. If you're struggling to apply their feedback, ask them for more support.

Show Your Potential

You're evaluated based on your performance (how well you're doing at your job) and your potential (how well you're expected to do in your next role). If you want to get promoted, you have to show both. Start by doing a self-assessment of where you're at using the table below.

	Low Performance	Medium Performance	High Performance
--	-----------------	--------------------	------------------

High Potential	What's going on? Are you in the wrong job?	Wow! Let's develop you. Clearly you have what it takes.	Future leader! Let's give you more important responsibilities.
Medium Potential	Let's see if we can coach you so you can get better.	You're a solid teammate. Let's continue to see how well you do.	You're awesome! Let's keep challenging you.
Low Potential	You can't do your current job and likely can't do your next job. We might have to let you go.	Let's keep giving you do-as-I-say tasks.	Let's keep you in your current job and maybe have you train others.

Green Boxes = Promotable

One approach to getting promoted is to find an unoccupied swim lane that matters to your team and claim it. You can ask yourself:

- **What can I do that hasn't been done before?**
 - If you've ever used your team's usual methods of getting work done and thought "this is so outdated" or "why aren't we doing xyz?", consider writing down your idea and bringing it up.
- **What can I fix that hasn't been fixed?**
 - If there's a pain point that people complain about, consider proposing a solution. Talk to people closest to the problem to make sure you understand it well.
- **What can I bridge that hasn't been bridged?**
 - Sometimes all that's missing is a bridge between people or topics, and you can be a translator or a facilitator. Sometimes connecting the dots can help to create something new or an innovative solution.
- **What can I know that others don't know?**
 - You don't have to be a true expert, you can just know slightly more than others on your team/in your organization about a tool or topic. When you learn something new, think about how it could be useful to others at your organization.
- **What can I share that hasn't been shared?**
 - What you see in your everyday work and personal life could be valuable. Two common types are templates (anything you've created that others can reuse and/or adapt) and information (news, data, observations).

Ask for a Promotion

If you want it, ask for it. Sometimes your performance and your potential won't be recognized naturally and you'll need to ask for what you want and deserve. This is especially true if your roles and responsibilities have grown, but your title and salary have stayed the same. The worst that can happen is that they say no. Here are some things you can do to prepare:

- Use [Glassdoor](#) to find salary comparisons.
- Consider reaching out to people you know in similar roles and say, "Please excuse the personal question, but would you mind sharing your salary with me? I'm thinking of renegotiating my salary and I'm looking for some comparison data points. In exchange, I'll share my findings with you."
- Create a table that compares salaries, education levels, years of experience, and other relevant metrics. Here's how you might present that information to your manager:

“Thanks for taking the time to chat. I really appreciate it. I’ve loved working with you and this team and I’m very excited about XYZ. I wanted to chat because it occurred to me that while my list of responsibilities has increased over the past X years, my salary hasn’t increased. I made this table comparing my peers at other organizations. I would like to achieve pay equity with my peers, which would be X% more than where I am today. It would mean a lot to have your support to advocate for this increase. Would that be possible?”

If you feel like you need more support with asking for a promotion, fill out this [Career Coaching Request Form](#).

Note: Content is adapted from the book [The Unspoken Rules: Secrets to Starting Your Career Off Right](#) with permission from Gorick Ng.