

HR INSIGHTS

Magazine

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New Year, New You: 9 Steps to Get a Promotion in 2016

BY VALERIE GRUBB

If “get promoted” is one of your goals for 2016, it’s time to make that dream a reality (especially if it’s an unfulfilled carryover from your 2015 list). You owe it to yourself (and to your company) to focus on the attitudes and actions that will enable you to excel at your job and achieve the recognition that can lead to a promotion in 2016.

1. Don't be merely good—be excellent

There will always be people who are promoted because of their connections and not because of their performance. Unlike them, however, *you* actually want to lead your company and your human capital efforts to greater success. So don't do your job just adequately—*excel* at it so that you build a strong body of knowledge and experience to bring with you as your career advances. Make your work ethic the gold standard by which everyone else's performance is measured.

2. Develop talent

To move up, you need a successor—someone to do your current job while you assume greater responsibilities (or take on an entirely different role). So do your best to develop the talent around you. If you establish a reputation for creating talent in your wake, the brightest and best will want to come work for you. Then when the time comes for you to move up, you can focus on your new responsibilities, knowing that your old department will be in good hands. And if you're a “department of one,” determine how you can add value beyond fulfilling your usual responsibilities, then train your successor after your promotion.

3. Hire smart people

Don't just hire smart people—hire people who are smarter than you. Jack Welch famously said, “If you're the smartest person in the room, you've got real problems.” Learn not to be intimidated by people who are smarter than you, because hiring them will only make *you* look more brilliant! And smart people bring with them great ideas that not only benefit the organization but can help you, too, as you ascend the corporate ladder.

4. Be vocal

Doing great work won't get you promoted if your boss and other senior leaders don't know about it. You don't need to toot your own horn excessively, but you *do* need for others to see what you're capable of and how your talents can enable you to take on more responsibilities. And don't rely just on your boss to hand you a promotion, because he or she may not want you moving anywhere. So get the word out to other senior leaders, too, about how good you are.

5. Find a mentor

No one gets promoted solely on his or her own efforts and merit. Everyone has some outside help. Find a mentor—someone senior to you who can act as your internal champion—and figure out what you can offer that person to make it worthwhile for him or her to take an interest in you. Don't rely solely on your mentor to get you promoted, though: continue to network throughout the company, so that *many* people know just how good you are and how you can help them achieve their goals. (Remember, networking and mentoring are *always* two-way streets.)

6. Expand your skill set

If you're not learning, you're stagnating. So keep pushing yourself to learn new things, both inside and outside your company. It's critical to understand how the organization makes money, for example, so learn about this by finding a project in an area that you're not familiar with, figuring out what value you bring to it, and volunteering to help. Find ways to get exposure to different departments so you can learn how they function.

7. Be bold and be fearless

Speak up! Be a creative problem solver and build your reputation as someone who adds value across the organization, not just in your department. In corporate America, people tend to be either part of the problem or part of the solution. If you focus on the latter, the company leadership will recognize that promoting you is imperative to the organization's growth and success.

8. Ask for that promotion

Never assume that your boss knows you want a promotion. Explicitly tell him or her that a promotion is a requirement for your continuing with the company. If your boss (or your boss's boss) doesn't think you're ready for a promotion right now, ask "What do I need to do to be ready for one?" Get specifics—then *work hard* to meet those expectations.

9. Be prepared to leave

Sometimes the only way to get a promotion is to jump ship and go elsewhere, particularly if you've made it clear that your staying with the company depends on your eventual promotion. Ultimatums can be tough (and you need to be prepared to follow through with them), but if your company either doesn't recognize your talents or isn't big enough to support a promotion, then move on.

Getting promoted not only enhances your reputation but also elevates the credibility of HR within your company. So plan to make a commitment to make 2016 the year you get promoted! Good luck! ■

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