

CONDUCTING DUE DILIGENCE – INTERNAL APPLICANTS

It is important for the credibility of a search that internal and external applicants undergo the same review process. Organizations sometimes do less due diligence on internal applicants than external ones, assuming that they already know enough about people who have worked for them for years. When in reality, all applicants for a position should be subjected to the same type of review. This means having the same types and number of interviews, with the same panel of interviewers and interview questions. While it may seem unnecessary, it is helpful to conduct reference checks for internal applicants as well as the external applicants. Other aspects of the interview process for external applicants should be offered to internal applicants as well, including but not limited to specific information on the interview itinerary (ie. names, titles, room #s of interviewers), and lunch if that is part of the external applicant interviews.

It may be difficult for a hiring manager to be as frank with internal applicants as they are with external applicants about how their qualifications compare to the job requirements. Allowing an internal applicant to enter or continue in the hiring process when they have no realistic shot at the job can result in feelings of resentment down the road when the hiring decision is announced.

The most difficult scenario that an organization may face is when a very strong internal applicant makes it to the final stages of the interview process but ultimately is not offered the position. There are several ways to minimize the chance that the internal employee will harbor bad feelings or leave the organization. As with every other step of the recruiting process, clear communication is the key.

A best practice approach would be to arrange an in-person meeting with the unsuccessful internal applicant to explain why they were not offered the position.

- Inform them of the key requirements of the position and explain that there are other applicants who more closely align with those requirements.
- Emphasize that the organization needs to gain that particular skill set. It is helpful to assure the internal applicant that you are really glad they applied and that going through the process has given the organization a better understanding of their background.
- Tell the internal applicant they will continue to have opportunities, if appropriate, but for this particular role, it is imperative for the new hire to have all the key requirements.

Having one or more strong internal applicants for a position is a valuable opportunity for an organization. An internal applicant already knows your organization's culture, and can hit the ground running in a new role. The key to overcoming any challenges that may occur during the hiring process is relatively simple: Provide clear and constant communication from the time an internal applicant announces their interest to when the final decision is made. By being clear about the organization's expectations and requirements from the start, you can make the hiring process a positive experience for both the organization and the internal applicant—whether or not they are offered the position.

NOTE: Please refer to [Tips on Preparing for Interviews](#) for additional information on this topic.