

consulting today



New Leaders — The First 100 Days

Consulting Today publishes practical articles by and for consultants, coaches, facilitators and their clients. Sharing our best ideas, models and tools is the way we serve our clients and the field in which we work.

This issue offers five important articles for the new leader, focusing on the priorities and skills needed in the first few months of tenure in a new position. Share it with leaders at all levels as they begin a new challenge.

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The CEO in Transition: The 100-Day Cycle and Other Survival Patterns

By James E. Lukaszewski

Recently, I found myself sitting in a corporate boardroom helping a large company and its newly named, soon-to-be CEO revise its strategic plan (something of an oxymoron, actually). The discussion turned to doing a five-year plan. After about an hour of fruitless and confused facilitated discussion by the vice president of strategic planning, I raised the question of how long the last three CEOs had lasted. The average was 23 months. That's not unusual these days.

I suggested to the recently elected CEO that it might be better to develop a new strategic approach that more closely matched his probable tenure – about 30 months. After a more or less stunned silence they agreed that this approach might avoid establishing overly optimistic goals and objectives. The meeting quickly got down to business.

Based on that experience, here is a memo I offer to all incoming CEOs.

TO: Our New CEO
RE: Your First 100 Days (and the next 800 days after that)

There are important, urgent things you must do immediately to assure your success as CEO. Focusing on these actions will help you move through the first few months and speed your mental transition to chief executive (you aren't there yet . . . it takes a little time . . . you won't "get it" down cold until you've had the job about 300 days . . . you'll see).

Your perspective will change. Your problems will be different. Just how successful you will be will be determined by how much energy you can apply in your first 100 days. It will take about nine 100-day periods before you know things are truly moving in the direc-

tion you expect, or that you will survive, perhaps for another 900 days. By that time, you will have had the job longer than any of your recent predecessors, if that matters to you.

Before we get to those important actions, there are some interesting realities, some of which you are already experiencing. These are the expectations and realities that flow – with you – from your first day as CEO:

1. **People want action from day one**

They expect you to walk in the door and begin making changes, making things happen.

2. **People expect change even though they fear it.** Everyone is well aware of the tension during transition. Tension increases apprehension. Employees

cannot understand why the people at the top of the mountain can't work everything out. They actually believe there is a plan. You can't take the time to worry about this now because the clock is ticking on your own performance and on the future.

3. **Change is continuous.** From your perspective and strategic view, the organization will change significantly about every 100 days during your first three years, even if everything goes smoothly. The first 600 days present your principal opportunity to have an impact on corporate culture. Corporate culture can only be modified through significant fundamental change within the organization as a whole. Old habits never die; they need to be removed.

4. **Cultures are modified with positive, forward pressure applied constantly:** The recipe for culture modification has four crucial ingredients:



*"Old habits never die;
they need to be removed."*

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CEO In Transition, continued

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- A strong, positive leader (a visionary).
- Verbally driven management styles.
- Goals everyone can understand, accept, and achieve.
- Constant positive direction, clarification, and validation.

5. **Nothing you learned prior to taking over will seem to be of great value.** It cannot be. You haven't yet really begun to know the organization. Being totally in charge is totally different. No one will understand this but you. It will be lonely.

Now, let's talk about the success behaviors you'll need from the beginning. During the period covering days zero-to-one hundred, you must be prepared to:

Act fast: Implement a time-lined program of action the day you begin. If that is impossible, set incremental goals and guidelines that achieve rapid situation assessment and the elements of a "move-forward" timeline within 72-to-96 hours of becoming CEO.

This approach will:

- **Test** those who could be your key advisors and future leaders.
- **Beat** the bureaucracy that's probably the reason for past non-progress and is the repository of the "good old days."
- **Scare** the nesters who think they have finally found a place to retire.
- **Subvert** the "could haves", "would haves" and "should haves" that torpedo progress and your success.

Communicate immediately: Plan a daily one-page newsletter or plainspoken e-mail or voice mail written by you. Winston Churchill did this throughout both World Wars I and II. He called them "Minutes." Why not think about starting a "Minute" of your own? Churchill also wrote special orders called "Action This Day." You might want to institute a similar approach for things you need done now.

Your "Minute" is a daily early morning 150 to 300 word message stressing three major topic areas: pro-

ductivity, performance, and items of interest. The first two sections are factual and relate to operational goals and objectives. The last section is your direct communications link to everyone in the organization. It's talking directly each day to each employee about things that are on your mind and theirs.

Caution: If you start this, your people will like it a lot and hope that you continue it. Its purpose is clear: it is anti-rumor, anti-corporate politics, anti-counterrevolution within the organization; it is pro-progress, pro-organizational objective setting; it is pro-success, pro-personal recognition – yours and theirs – and says:

- We will talk.
- We will tell the truth.
- I will listen.
- What I do is your business too.
- There will always be a sense of candor between us.
- We will continuously recognize achievement and achievers.
- Every question will be answered.

Walk: The land of the chief executive is full of wanna-be CEOs, who dwell most of the time in their own silos. Get out and talk to the real people who punch clocks and move the product. Eat, talk, and work with employees. This means dozens to hundreds of employees seeing you, talking to you, understanding your goals and objectives directly and asking questions of you.

It sends powerful messages to supervisors and managers that they too must communicate accurately, effectively, promptly, verbally, and in real time. When employees have an opportunity to speak with you directly about concerns, issues, or fears, it's very much like the commander visiting his troops in the field. It's a chance to personify your leadership and vision, to rally and motivate.

Shake their hands; be with them. You are going to have to change some jobs and take other jobs away. Better make it as pleasant and quick as possible. Enemies accumulate.

"Do it now, ask it now, fix it now, challenge it now, and change it now."

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CEO In Transition, continued

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Talk and act in real time: Do company-wide live teleconferences, which allow employees and managers to hear from you, directly and in real time, and to ask questions and hear you provide on-the-spot answers. Recognize individual performance, achievement, passion and enthusiasm through brief handwritten notes. When it comes to recognition, e-mail is very unsatisfactory and perhaps even insulting. Take the time to write little notes to people. They will tell their moms, remember forever, and will almost never become your enemy.

Repeat yourself: More than half of the people in your organization aren't listening at any given time. The distracted and the disengaged need to be told perhaps as many as ten times before they begin to realize that you really do require them to change.

Teach and live by the ingredients of leadership:

Be and stay positive: Avoid the use of negative language.

Be constructive: Insist on useful, positive suggestions rather than criticism, questions, and complaints.

Be prompt: Do it now, ask it now, fix it now, challenge it now, and change it now.

Be outcome focused: Work in the future rather than in the past. Everyone owns the past in ways that cannot be overcome. As Stephen Covey would say, plan with the end in mind. You'll move forward with twice the velocity and half the politics.

Be reflective: If you must examine the past, look only for those lessons that will usefully inform future actions.

Be pragmatic: Move the organization toward

those things that can actually happen. Dreamy, foggy, unintelligible goals are as detrimental as turgid, impersonal, mindless mission, vision, and values approaches. Do what people can understand, then stretch their imagination.

Be relentlessly committed to positive incremental personal and organizational improvement, every single day. Increments accumulate and form a solid foundation for luck and success.

If your tenure is typical, you'll spend the first 300 days finding out what you can actually accomplish. You'll spend the second 300 days doing as much as you can to get things done. The third 300 days you'll spend trying to survive (the immortality syndrome) and establishing your legacy (a method for keeping your successors from changing what you've done).

Keep in mind the most important reality of all (taught to me by a CEO many years ago): "The company is still run everyday by the people who show up to do their jobs." ☞

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From Doing To Being: A New Leader's Checklist

By Marcia Dorfman

Taking on a new, more senior leadership role is like charging directly into the fast lane on a super highway. Eyes focused and intent, hands gripping the wheel, senses alert, adrenaline pumping. The new leader has hit the road and is ready to take on all challenges. This leader knows what to do. But does she or he know how to “be”?

I asked a number of my current and former executive coaching clients what it was like for them to make this transition, and what tips they had for others about to do so. Here is a compilation of their reflections and my observations.

An Expanded View.

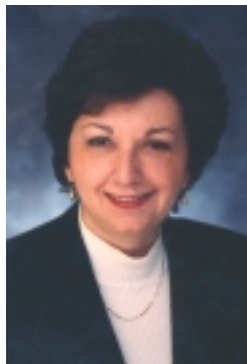
The first thing apparent to leaders in new roles is that they are looking at a larger landscape than before. What that means is:

- Their sphere of influence is wider, broader, deeper.
- Decisions are made more quickly, and with less information.
- Internal politics play a more significant role.
- Performance is measured on bigger goals.
- Senior leadership expects them to be up to speed quickly.
- Agendas differ; conflicts surface more subtly.
- Strategies and plans can be easily derailed.
- Relationships are critical to achieving goals.
- The demands on the leader's time have increased exponentially.

A New Set of Priorities.

In this new landscape, what leaders pay attention to determines both their potential success and personal satisfaction. The successful ones soon learn to:

- Focus on the “big picture”.
- Cultivate relationships with conscious intention.
- Keep their antennae alert.



“In this new landscape, what leaders pay attention to determines both their potential success and personal satisfaction.”

- Acquire the skills to manage effectively through managers.
- Notice the impact of their communication with others.
- Keep their team engaged.
 - Control what they can control.
 - Be disciplined and focused with their time.
 - Find a way to balance work and personal life.

Unique Challenges

New roles bring with them a variety of unique challenges. Some that new leaders may face are:

- A change in relationship from long-standing peer to senior manager.
- Responsibility for functions in unfamiliar territory.
- A mandate to bring together diverse groups and work cultures.
- “Remote management” - leading teams or divisions separated by geography.
 - Metamorphosis from entrepreneur to bureaucrat: how to adapt, yet hold onto their creativity, independence, and sense of urgency.

Unspoken Fears

For a leader in transition, there are many new balls in the air. Anxiety can be high, though it is often masked. While new leadership roles are exciting and rewarding, they are also rife with personal “gremlins” or inner critics, bent on eroding the self-confidence leaders normally project to the world.

Leaders willing to acknowledge their fears to someone they trust will admit they silently ask themselves:

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New Leader Checklist, continued

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- *do I have what it takes?*
- *am I exuding the right presence?*
- *can I make my voice heard?*
- *will I have the impact I want?*
- *will I be able to meet stakeholders' expectations?*
- *how will I manage the competing demands of work and home?*
- And, after years of success, *"is this the one I'm going to fail at?"*

The Shift

In stating their fears to someone else, leaders acknowledge their humanity, their vulnerability, and their openness to personal growth. Paradoxically, it is then easier for them to see their strengths, unique capabilities and potential for greater achievement. When they do, a shift occurs.

"It's exciting for a coach to watch the best become even better."

- They realize they need to pay attention to who they "be" as a leader, as much as to what they "do."
- They notice that it is *because* of their leadership that the work gets done.
- They understand that their primary role is to be an effective visionary, communicator, and change agent.
- They learn that success derives from a powerful belief in themselves and a respectful appreciation of the talents of others.

Qualities of Successful Leaders in Transition

I have observed six major qualities in leaders who have successfully transitioned from "doing" to "being":

- They are clear about and adhere to their personal values.
- They possess an inner strength and resolve.
- They balance logic and creativity.
- They are intuitive.
- They know when to stand their ground.
- They are open to learning.

Tips for Leaders in Transition

Some who have traveled the fast, and often bumpy road, have offered these tips for leaders in transition:

- Think through who will be impacted by you in your new role (new boss, peers, colleagues, team) and prepare for initial conversations with them.
- Seek out others who have made such a transition before for guidance, advice on potential pitfalls, and encouragement.
- Take risks, manage uncertainty, appear calm.
- Learn how to get work done through others.
- Behave the way you expect others to, i.e. "walk the talk"
 - Know when to push back and learn how to do it effectively.
 - Invest your energies in directions where you are being supported.
 - Take advantage of developmental opportunities.
- Tackle difficult communication issues head on with the support of an HR person, mentor or coach.
- Give constant verbal recognition. Reinforce people's value, and let them know what they are doing is on track. And say "thank you" a lot.
- Find ways to get some distance from the job.
- Remember who you are – be yourself!
- Enjoy the ride! Look back periodically to see and celebrate how far you've come.

A Coach's Perspective

It is heart-warming for a coach to be with those who constantly strive for greater personal and professional achievement. It is rewarding to help them believe fully in themselves and see themselves as powerful as others see them, and exciting to watch the best become even better. Any journey of discovery and growth is one well worth taking. ☞

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Transition Meetings: Pathway to Productivity

By Gilmore Crosby

The Transition Meeting, also known as a New Reporting Relationship meeting (NRR), is a simple and effective method for managing leadership transitions. NRRs were developed by the U.S. Navy and have been practiced for decades by the author and his associates.

The Navy conducted research on the impact of transitions. They found that the disruption following a transition (including a consistent decrease in effectiveness and productivity) were reliably reduced from six months to one month when transition meetings were held.

The essence of an New Reporting Relationship transition meeting is a facilitated conversation between the subordinates and new leader. The key elements are as follows:

- **Do it as soon as possible.** Although many leaders assume some time should pass before such a session, no period of familiarization is necessary prior to an NRR. The Navy conducted their NRRs as soon as the new officer came aboard.

- **Provide skillful facilitation.**

A neutral and skillful facilitator, by helping clear up misunderstandings as they happen, can be the difference in the team getting off on the right foot.

Although a do it yourself NRR is not out of the question, a skilled facilitator adds value by orchestrating the process (so the participants can focus on the interactions) and by reinforcing active listening skills on the part of the leader and the subordinates. A leader who facilitates their own NRR is unlikely to objectively catch their own behavior if it is somehow building a wall between themselves and their new subordinates, and runs the risk that the participants will be more cautious/less candid.



“People will warm to the task of being direct if it you don’t let it get circumvented before you start.”

- **Prepare carefully.** At minimum, the facilitator interviews the new leader prior to the session. Ideally, they interview the subordinates as well. The interviews allow the facilitator an opportunity to build rapport, discuss the process, clarify their own role, and stimulate the participants thinking.

Topics range from the leader’s intentions regarding decision making and leadership style to the subordinates’ views on the organization’s strengths and weaknesses.

- **Encourage direct interaction.** Even though a list is created by the group (see Step 2, below), it’s vital that individuals *speak for themselves* during the meeting, when their item comes up on the list.

This may cause some initial anxiety for a few participants (and facilitators!). However, the outcome of many team members gaining the experience of testing the waters directly with the new boss (and visa versa) will be watered down if the facilitator or a spokesperson speaks for the them. It also get in the way if the boss reads off the questions and launches into a monologue without knowing whom they are responding to. Anonymity is counter-productive in an NRR.

People will warm to the task of being direct if it you don’t let it get circumvented before you start. If a participant objects to being direct during the meeting, the facilitator can respectfully encourage them to find some timely way *outside the NRR* to raise it with the leader (while absolutely welcoming them to stay in the session!). Because you may have to spend some time on it, it’s important to discuss this ground-rule in the preparation interviews, and again in the kickoff section.

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Transition Meeting, continued

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Here is a sample of a transition meeting agenda:

Step 1. Kickoff (30 – 45 minutes).

The session begins with introductions, any expectations the new leader may have (such as inviting people to be as open with them as possible), the facilitator's role, and a review of the agenda. It's also helpful if the new leader gives a brief overview of how they intend to manage, so the participants have more to chew on.

Step 2. Leader exits & group generates ask/tell list (approx. 1 hour).

The new leader then steps out of the room for approximately an hour, giving the participants a chance to think out loud and get organized. A cheat sheet of what individuals want to ask or tell the leader is recorded on a flipchart. The facilitator assists the participants in getting behaviorally specific. For example, if they want the new leader to "trust" them, or "show respect," the facilitator will ask them to clarify *what behaviors* would lead them to that judgment about the leader (the subordinates might, for instance, believe delegating certain decisions and tasks would be evidence of trust and respect).

(A short break is advisable prior to step 3.)

Step 3. Leader returns for dialogue and planning with the group.

The leader returns and the participants take turns reading their own items off the cheat sheet, and discussing them with the boss. This takes two hours if briskly paced and skillfully facilitated.

During the dialogue the facilitator tracks commitments (who, what & by-when...tasks and behaviors agreed on by the leader and/or the subordinates), helps untangle miscommunication, and continues to reinforce "being direct." The process is complete with the exhaustion of the "ask/tell" list. For maximum effect, commitments are reviewed in a similar session 3 to 6 months down the road, and informally during the interim.

In sum, Transition Meetings, (with skillful facilitation), consistently speed a work group's journey from forming to performing, and reinforce the behaviors needed to sustain productivity. ☞

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See Gil's lists of possible questions for Transition Meetings on the next two pages.

Transition Meeting, continued

TRANSITION MEETING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEADER

1. What is your primary decision-making style? *Authoritarian* (decide without input and tell), *Consultative* (get input and then make the decision or be 99% certain what you're going to decide but get input – with real possibility of being influenced - prior to making it official), *Group Orientated* (consensus – which, when done skillfully, means a reasonable degree of agreement on everyone's part within a predetermined timeframe - or majority rule via vote), or *Delegative* (decision-making authority is designated to other individuals or roles with clear parameters). When might you use each of these styles?
2. What are expectations about subordinates bringing problems to you?
3. Can they bring a problem without a solution? Is this seen as a weakness?
4. Do you want subordinates to bring problems: problem and analysis: problem, analysis and solutions: alternative solutions?
5. Comment on the following decision-making philosophy: Communication with any employee necessary to problem-solve, but action authorization by chain of command.
6. What is your position on your reports and their subordinates having information and problem-solving meetings?
7. When is a no a “No”?
8. When can a subordinate come back to you on a “No”?
9. What is your meeting style? How are your meetings run? Who runs them?
10. Discuss anger: What makes you angry? When your direct reports are angry at you, do you want to know? How do you intend to deal with anger and related emotions, both yours and others? What is your conflict style?
11. Do you hold grudges? About what?
12. What are your beliefs/practices about socializing with employees?
13. What does an employee need to do in order to obtain a high performance evaluation?
14. What are your expectations about starting work in the morning and quitting time?
15. A year from now, what are the behaviors, norms that you visualize being in place in the organization? How do you want to be known in three months time?
16. What is your open door policy? When can subordinates come to meet with you? When should they not come?
17. As a leader, what are your strengths and historical growing edges?
18. Where do you stand in holding yourself to deadline commitments and expecting deadline commitments of others?
19. If your people think that you are shooting the messenger, do you want them to tell you? If so, how?

Gil Crosby

Transition Meeting, continued

TRANSITION MEETING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SUBORDINATES

1. What are the organization's key strengths? Weaknesses?
2. What do you want the new leader to conserve?
3. What is going on that gets in the way of doing your work?
4. What is the one aspect of your job that excites you the most? What disturbs you the most?
5. How do you function as a team? What is your role in the team?
6. What improvements would you make in the way things are managed?
7. What do you want the leader to know about you? What skills and knowledge do you bring to the organization? How would you introduce yourself if you were asked to do so by pointing out your major strength?
8. What do you want to know about the leader?
9. What changes do you need to foresee that the leader needs to consider?
10. What is your "contract" with the organization? What do you contribute? What do you expect to receive?
11. How are decisions made? Who is consulted before the decision? Who is informed after the fact?
12. Who can veto a decision?
13. Who must sign off on documents and in what order?
14. What type of behavior is necessary to be effective here?
15. What informal rules determine how things really get done?
16. Do you have sufficient power to accomplish your objectives? Whose influence or cooperation do you need and how can you get it?
17. Has leadership been clear and effective? What do you need more of or less of from the new leader?
18. Is it clear who is accountable for what?
19. Are time commitments made and kept?

Gil Crosby

Help New Leaders Build Positive Relationships

By Marsha Hughes-Rease and Beverly Seiford

In her recent bestseller, *Hesselbein on Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 2002), Frances Hesselbein laments that when it comes to making a change at the top, “the landscape of all three sectors — business, government, and social — is littered with the results of poorly planned and managed leadership transition.” It’s true. When an inept leadership transition occurs:

- organization anxiety soars while productivity plummets,
- boards of directors become disillusioned,
- employees don’t understand the changes that are being made and become overwhelmed,
- management teams lead the overwhelmed staff in the wrong direction, and
- the leader’s vision of making a difference in the new organization begins to lose its luster.

A management consultant or executive coach can serve as transition coach to help the newly appointed executive build strong, positive relationships with his or her organization.

These relationships will be critical to the leader’s ability to execute strategy and deliver stakeholder value. In the words of Larry Bossidy, former CEO of Allied Signal, “at the end of the day, you bet on people, not on strategies. Strategies are intellectually simple; execution is not...to execute, you need people....”

One of the most important things the new leader can do during the transition period is to have conversations with key people in the organization. Determining the kinds of conversations that need to take place, with whom, and when, is critical to gaining the right information and building the right relationships. The transition coach can help the leader:

- Select the appropriate people for the important



Hughes-Rease



Seiford

- early conversations,
- Design the right questions to ask to get an accurate sense of a new organization,
- Determine the appropriate timing and forum for conversations, and
- Hone his or her listening skills, to more effectively

see the world the others see and learn what they need to determine strategic next steps. Here are some questions that may be appropriate for the coach to suggest.

Strategic Planning: Has a strategic plan been developed? What was the process for developing it? Who was involved? Is there a common understanding and buy-in of the mission, vision, values, and

goals? How do you know?

Processes: Does the organization have systems and processes in place to achieve the stated goals? Have there been any process improvement or redesign initiatives within the last three years? If so, what were the results of the initiatives? What suggestions do you have for improving current

processes?

Organizational Structure: What is the structure of the organization? What are the current reporting relationships? Is the current

structure effective? Why? Why not? How should it be changed?

Decision-Making: How are decisions made around here? Is the current method effective? What suggestions do you have for improving the decision-making process?

Resources: Do you have sufficient resources to achieve your goals? If not, what’s missing or needs to be addressed? People? Training? Equipment? Physical Plant?

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“Determine the kinds of conversations that need to take place, with whom, and when ...”

Help New Leaders Build Positive Relationships, continued

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Communication: How does everyone find out what's going on around here? What methods of communication are effective? Ineffective? What suggestions do you have for improving communication across the organization?

Performance Indicators: What are the current performance measures? How were they determined? What documentation is available to indicate past and current performance?

Recognition and Rewards: What gets recognized and rewarded? What are the rewards?

Customer Satisfaction:
Who are the key stakeholders? What value do we provide to them? How is this measured?

Other Information: What else do you want to tell me about that will help me to gain a better understanding of this organization?

Employees want information about the new leaders too. They want to know what makes the new leaders tick:-- their leadership style and what the changes will they will make.

One approach that leaders can use to talk about their leadership philosophy, decision-making style, values and beliefs, and ideas about the business is by telling stories from their own life.

The coach can help the leaders recall their life stories and coach on effectively communicating the stories as compelling "moments of truth" that will stay with the listeners. Another benefit of this simple activity may be a rather enlightening experience for the leaders, who may not have recently taken the time to reflect on "lessons learned" from life experiences. They may gain a more profound understanding of their values, leadership philosophy, and ideas about the business!

A powerful question and answer technique known as "Open Forum" provides a structure for the efficient exchange of information. After gaining some keen insights into the organization, the leader brings employees together and provides a brief presentation on new plans, hopes, and dreams for the organization.

Sitting around tables of eight "café-style," listeners are given approximately 15 minutes to discuss and respond to what they have heard by answering the following three questions: "What did we hear?" "What

are our reactions?" and "What questions of understanding do we have?" As table groups, they then decide on their priority questions. A spokesperson from each table asks the questions. This approach yields a higher level of questions and quickly gets a broad spectrum of issues out in the open. It also accelerates relationship building between the leader and the organization by setting a tone of open communication.

The coach can help here too, by preparing the leader to identify key points s/he wants to make. The coach should encourage the leader to keep presentations brief and answer questions as honestly and succinctly as possible. At the beginning of the activity, someone (the new executive or another staff person) should explain the process to participants, ensuring understanding of the intent: not to debate or disagree with what has been said, but rather to gain a clear understanding of content presented.

The transition coach can play a crucial role in helping an executive successfully prepare for the challenges of leading in a new organization. Carole Barnett and Noel Tichy remind us "regardless of the industry, organizational size or age, there will be a crucial window of opportunity for these new leaders to rapidly take charge of their institutions and lead them in a direction that generates wealth, however they define it." (How New Leaders Learn to Take Charge, *Organizational Dynamics*, 2000).

The transition coach can help the executive capitalize on the opportunity to develop a strong, positive relationship with a new organization. ☞

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The Critical Cs: Building Trust in the First 100 Days

By Cindy Phillips

A Harvard study suggests that 30% of leaders in transition do something that is detrimental to their future career success (*Right From the Start*, Ciampa & Watkins, 1999, HBR Press). A leader is most vulnerable during this time because he/she is developing new relationships, attempting to effect change, and feeling a heightened pressure to meet the high expectations of those above and below him.

One of the most difficult tasks for a leader during this period, and perhaps the most critical, is establishing trust. Trust is built from action, not words. Its foundation is formed from commitments made, and honored. There are some principles that can help leaders build the trust that's so critical to their success. I've expressed them as a list of critical Cs.

Credibility – acts ethically, with integrity, and does what he/she says.

Competence – knowledgeable and resourceful.

Consistency – acts and communicates with consistent approach.

Concern – shows personal concern for others, shows human side.

Continuity – respects and honors the past, while showing the steps to the future.

Cause – offers a vision, a chance for others to have meaning and fulfillment.

Challenge – provides an empowering environment, where achievement can occur.

Connectedness – provides inclusion, and builds team cohesion.

Celebration – makes sure to celebrate even the small wins or indications of change.

To put these principles into action, here's a leadership agenda for the initial days during the

transition.

Get an Early Start. A leader can do so much before even starting a new position. In fact, since the first few days can be so overwhelming, pre-start work can be a valuable way to hit the ground running. A leader should learn as much as possible about the company's history, culture, strategy, and key competitors. He/she should also study the organizational charts to start learning names and functional responsibilities. This preparation will demonstrate the leader is informed, *competent*, and is *concerned* enough to understand the people, as well as the tasks.

Meet & Greet. Get out and meet as many people as possible, especially the informal leaders or influencers. Tools such as email, voice mail, or the company newsletter are helpful, but should not replace face-to-face meetings.

Many leaders get too caught up in pleasing the boss, or in solo problem solving, at the expense of the employees who will ultimately execute the changes (*lack of concern*). Making time to listen and asking questions, to even the most disgruntled employees, will quickly payoff in more trust and *connection*.

Learn the Critical Success Factors. A leader can never learn everything about his/her new operation, so determine the critical areas where the most impact or improvement can be made. Become extremely knowledgeable about those one or two important areas, ask a lot of questions, get input from key opinion-makers, and when

you are ready to make recommendations, you will have the *competency* to back them up.

Also learn what is going well, you can leverage those areas by building *continuity* from the old to the new. People will support the changes more easily if they can find comfort and competence in something familiar.



“People will support the changes more easily if they can find comfort and competence in something familiar.”

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Critical Cs, continued

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Set Clear Priorities . So much is happening at the start of any new leadership role, it is necessary to quickly decipher what is important, and what is not. And even once you have, you should constantly re-assess and re-calibrate the message.

In developing your top priorities and vision, a leader will personally gain a clearer focus, demonstrate *credibility* to those above, and establish a clear *cause* for people below to rally behind. Make sure to include the input of key people, as they will offer more support for what they helped create (*connected*).

Secure Early Wins. During the first 100 days, a leader wants people in the organization to feel that something is different, something good is happening. To accomplish this, *celebrating* some early successes will provide a leader the chance to gain the confidence of his/her followers.

To secure early wins, first identify problems that can be tackled and solved quickly, and whose solutions will yield highly visible results. These few small wins will also demonstrate *competence* and *consistency* that provides the trust for larger initiatives.

Plant Seeds for the Future. The momentum that began with small wins must be leveraged in parallel to support your longer-range vision of the future. Small change is easy, but transformational change will require coalitions of support (*connection*). By identifying and including a few key individuals (*continuity*) in your planning, you will build “referent trust” that will cascade to a broader audience as you move forward with implementation.

It is clear that the honeymoon period for a new leader is shorter than ever, and that employee distrust is at an all-time high. Given these conditions, it is even more critical that a leader be intentional about *building trust* early in his/her tenure - it could make the difference between success or failure! ☞

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Transition Traps to Avoid:

- Too autocratic – not including people
- Being too serious- not having fun!
- Too rigid – making too many rules and policies
- Being overly critical- perfectionism
- Unclear or multiple priorities
- Impatience with the speed of change
- Isolating yourself
- Not managing yourself through transition

