

Leadership Success in New Roles



By
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More than ever before, organizations have higher expectations for performance and lower levels of patience for results. This demand for results within shorter and shorter time frames means that both failure and triumph are proclaimed quickly for the new leader.

The performance statistics are startling. *Without effective organizational support, more than 35 per cent of new leaders and senior executives fail to meet the expectations of their organizations.* According to Right Management's survey of human resources managers, one-third of new leaders and senior executives failed in their jobs within the first 18 months of starting new positions. "Failing" in a position is defined as performing significantly below expectations, being terminated for performance, or voluntarily resigning from the new job.

The top reason why new leaders and executives fail is their inability to build strong relationships and teamwork with subordinates and peers. The second biggest reason they fail is their inability to accomplish the most important objectives expected of them, those key few objectives ("KFOs"), followed by their lack of internal political savvy.

The number one way that new leaders and executives can increase their chances for success is to clarify the results that are expected of them within the first year by pinpointing priorities and by identifying those KFOs. The second best way to help ensure new leaders' success is to enlist and engage people in their organization in the implementation of their strategy. The third

best method is to build commitment among their colleagues in other parts of the organization.

An effective organizational support strategy to help new leaders and executives succeed in new roles is new leader coaching.

New leader coaching has been successful with both new and experienced executives from the manager through chief executive officer levels. New leader coaching has been helping leaders make successful transitions to new or expanded leadership roles. Experienced coaches help new leaders navigate challenges, engage leaders, their bosses, and their teams in building a strong foundation of clear goals and solid relationships.

New leader coaching has proven to be particularly valuable when:

- ▲ A high level executive from outside the organization assumes a key position
- ▲ An expatriate begins a new leadership assignment
- ▲ A technical expert assumes a broader leadership role
- ▲ The position being filled has historically seen high turnover (unsuccessful predecessors)
- ▲ The new leader's department presents immediate challenges (high turnover, low morale, or resentment in the organization about an incoming new leader)
- ▲ The new leader is filling a position that is just being created in the organization
- ▲ The new leader and his or her boss are at different locations, or the boss can ded-

icate only limited time to supporting the new leader's assimilation.

Fortunately, a large knowledge base for new leader coaching has been developed that can greatly increase effectiveness during the first year of a new leadership role. For instance, the "on-boarding" period (the six to 12 months when the new leaders are establishing themselves in a new position) almost always involves a predictable set of phases that can be anticipated and successfully worked through. New leader coaching focuses on helping new leaders understand and master the on-boarding process and focus their energy effectively for long-term success.

Maintaining focus is a key contributor of leadership success in new roles. Most senior-level jobs in organizations today have numerous responsibilities that eat up nearly all an executive's time "fighting fires." Executives who survive and thrive tend to be those who manage to delegate, ignore, or otherwise deal with distractions and focus most of their energies on their KFOs.

An individual can successfully accomplish numerous objectives and still be judged a failure if these KFOs are not met. Conversely, if the KFOs are accomplished, often less important missed targets can be overlooked or forgiven.

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