

Insider Insights

New Leaders Should Start New Year with Transition Coaching

By Ronald Bossert

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Most companies do not have a formal on-boarding program (support program designed to help newly hired leaders successfully transition into their new position), and a recent survey conducted by the Corporate Executive Board's Recruiting Roundtable found that 89 percent of new hires indicated that they did not have the optimum level of knowledge and tools necessary to do their new job. Employees who enter a new work environment and a new role without a plan may feel a little "lost at sea." The attitude of "everyone before me has successfully made this transition" does not lead the new executive any closer to "dry land." Expectations are particularly high when new business leaders come on board, and these same new leaders often find they do not have the detailed information, tools or a roadmap to make them successful in their new role.

The first step to managing an effective transition is to develop a transition plan that will provide guidance on how leaders can take charge in their new roles. This plan can make a major difference in the way a new leader performs in a new assignment and should begin with Transition Coaching, a proven, integrated and systematic process that engages new leaders in the company's corporate strategy and culture to accelerate productivity. Transition Coaching helps a new leader more readily offer positive economic value to their employer, while preventing mistakes that can contribute to business failure and leadership attrition.

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Transition Coaching is a process and a plan that offers the new leader the ability to navigate his or her way through the challenges of the transition. When a transition coach works with a new leader, the existing organizational structure, strategy

and culture of the company are considered. Equally important, the new leader's own personality traits, management style and professional skills are assessed. The coach acts as a sounding board to assist the executive in diagnosing the new situation and assessing his/her own skills.

The next step in the Transition Coaching process is to design a transition plan that defines the critical actions that must take place during the first 120 days to establish credibility, secure early wins, and position the leader and team for long-term success. The transition coach assists the new leader in developing the plan, which should cover four critical actions: understanding the challenge; managing style and impact; leveraging relationships; and driving execution. The leader and coach can use these four critical actions to create an actionable plan with metrics to accelerate a successful transition.

Transition Coaching doesn't end after the transition plan is put into place. The transition coach holds regular meetings with the new leader using tutorials, skills practice role-plays, on-the-job actions, and ongoing feedback to provide the new leader with continuous one-on-one support. After six to eight weeks, once early impressions of the new leader have been formed, the transition coach takes a "pulse" check of the key players including the boss, direct reports, peers and other stakeholders to gather early impressions so that the new leader can make an early course correction if needed. The entire process allows a leader to take charge of the new situation, get the information he/she needs to properly set high expectations for the future, and achieve alignment with the team, as well as the larger organization, to move the business forward.

Transition Training Boosts Bottom Line

Organizations that do not offer transition coaching to new leaders might perpetually experience poor financial results, decreased employee morale and costly turnovers. Without the proper transition plan in place, a company might not experience the anticipated productivity gains expected with a management change. On the other hand, if organizations use the right success strategies when transitioning leaders, they will not only prevent failure but will also create additional value to the organization by accelerating the new leader's effectiveness — thus having a more immediate positive impact on the business.

New leaders entering an organization that does not offer Transition Coaching should ask for it. Transition Coaching not only benefits the newly transitioning leader, it benefits the company as well. Return on investment (ROI) studies have shown that the business impact of transition support services is high, and was as high as 1,400 percent ROI for one Fortune 50 company.

By incorporating Transition Coaching into its leadership development processes, the company is making an investment in its team that will result in cost-savings over the long term. Whether promoting an internal "high potential" or on-boarding a new hire, Transition Coaching sets new leaders on a course for success, eliminating the need to repeatedly fill leadership positions, and incur a loss of productivity. The company's decision to accelerate the transition of new leaders with a proven approach will not only drive improved business results but also allow the company to meet customer needs and win competitive challenges in the marketplace. ■