

How to land on your feet in your new managerial role

How to get off to a good start in a new role? Incomplete information, a lack of maturity, and a poor handling of a situation are the main pitfalls executives face.

September 9, 2016

When you take on a new management position, there will inevitably be a gap between what you hoped to find and what you actually find. Friction between expectations and reality must be minimized to avoid turbulence in the landing process. But how? What is the best way to move forward?

Professor [Guido Stein](#)'s 2017 book, [And Now What?](#), serves as an operating manual for executives taking on new executive roles. Analyzing a number of real cases, Stein describes how to avoid the most typical mistakes, from cultural conflicts to disloyal subordinates.

First steps

The author begins by examining what an executive must do when taking on and adapting to a new role. To help illustrate, he shares the experiences of four managing directors from different sectors.

A first critical step is to diagram all the people affected by the job change. According to Stein, executives depend as much — or more — on surrounding stakeholders as they do on their own strengths and weaknesses to lead well. Therefore, managing collegial relationships is essential.

Warding off false expectations, new bosses should focus their early communication efforts on obtaining consensus. At the same time, predecessors should not be ignored to help smooth

the transition.

The professor stresses that there are basically two types of successful executives: dutiful ones and transformative ones — with the power to transform holding more importance in the upper echelons of management.

In search of early wins

Scoring early successes is essential. Concrete accomplishments will help new managers to communicate their priorities and exert influence. Early wins also help those responsible for the hiring decision (by quieting their detractors). Take on simple, high-visibility problems right away, Stein advises.

When devising an action plan, new managers should:

- Learn all the vital things they don't yet know, and set aside things they thought they knew but which turn out to be false.
- Determine which issues are truly essential and deal with them decisively.
- Identify the talent they need and the people they can count on. Making poor alliances brings a higher risk of failure — up to 40 percent higher, in fact.
- Stop every now and then to consider whether they're on the right track and ask others for their opinions.

To perform effectively, the following six action items are key: putting together a mental map to better understand the company and the position; acquiring new knowledge; building working relationships; managing the expectations created; defining one's leadership style; and having a clear communication plan.

Four common mistakes are: isolating oneself; wanting to have a solution for everything; trying to take on too much; and believing that the same skills that led to successes in the past will be sufficient in the new role.

People take center stage

One of the most pressing actions is to take stock of both the informal and formal company culture. In this sense, Google is a good example of the strength of a people-centered culture.

Culture is the backbone of a company; it can be used to drive organizational improvement and better align employees with the business strategy.

One of the issues new executives must address is the talent they need for the short, medium and long term — and how they might make personnel changes.

- **Recruitment and hiring:** bosses must identify the knowledge and skills required for each job.
- **Development and training:** new managers should be aware of the knowledge and skills of existing employees, whose performances should be evaluated throughout the training process.
- **Evaluation and promotion:** a manager must not lose sight of the culture and values of an organization when considering promotions.
- **Compensation:** executives must define a career development model before implementing compensation policies, distinguishing between "good professionals" (who perform adequately) and "very good professionals" with rewards.
- **Internal communication:** a manager must identify channels of corporate communication, knowing that management policies and styles also convey information — and that the rumor mill can and should be managed.

M&A shakeups

Prof. Stein concludes the first part of his book with the particular characteristics of job changes linked to mergers and acquisitions. While intending to expand or transform a business, these operations often carry hidden costs, including human costs.

It's important to keep in mind that mergers are often traumatic processes with clear winners and losers. Adding insult to injury, there is often no good communication plan in place to manage employee expectations and discontent in turbulent times.

The company may lose talent, especially on the acquired side, as a result. A newly arrived manager would do well to keep this in mind, as this situation may jeopardize the success of the whole operation.

7 real cases

The second part of the book offers instruction via seven real cases — some with fictitious names in order to protect the identities of the protagonists. Here, Stein moves from theory to reality and wraps up.

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