

The Next 100 Days: The Real Test of a New Job



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Congratulations. Don't relax just yet, though.

The first 100 days are usually something of a honeymoon period, complete with organisational chaperoning. But the rest of the year is more important in determining your long-term success.

It's over the next nine months that you need to make your mark. As the support dwindles,

it's just you, your job, your boss and colleagues. So what issues do you need to get to grips with in order to emerge unscathed, reputation enhanced?

Expect a dip: It is common to experience an emotional dip after the highs of the first 100 days. The honeymoon period is over. You're not sure how the organisational universe operates, and are still trying to reconcile the differences between your previous and current company.

But now is not the time to reflect on how different things are at your new employer or mentally list the negatives. Instead, step back, remind yourself why you took the role in the first place. Make the transition from acclimatising to acting. Build some key relationships, with a few people you can trust, confide in and who can help you through any sense of displacement.

Hidden networks: After 100 days you'll start to challenge the logic of the business. But while you may be familiar with the systems, structures, and hierarchies that support decision-making, you probably won't have a handle on the hidden networks and relationships that really make things happen. You need to unearth these hidden networks, discover who the gatekeepers, influencers and power brokers are

But don't appear high maintenance by asking everyone how things work. Listen to what's going on around you. Follow the email trails. Enlist the help of a trusted ally who is already plugged in. Only then will you discover how to shake things up and make it stick.

Managing expectations At first, there's some leeway around performance. Remember though, you are being judged. It's important to build relationships, but it's also essential to drive deliverables; something tangible to show for your efforts. Failure to meet expectations equals loss of credibility or worse. But what are the deliverables? Is there clarity of expectation? Get alignment of expectations and aspirations with line bosses, peers and subordinates. Open up discussions early on — identify and ensure shared understanding of aspirations, expectations, objectives, possible barriers, and timeframes. Before joining get as much written down on this as possible, and use as a reference point. Get consensus on where you are on the timeline. Check whether you have the capabilities supporting you to deliver.

Don't get too comfortable. Everyone has a natural style, a usual way of doing things, default boundaries. Joining a new organisation it's easy to retreat into your comfort zone, working at beneath the expected level. It feels good, it keeps you busy.

The trouble is: that's not why you were hired. Avoid the path of least resistance by setting stretch objectives, for the first 100 days, six months, nine months, first year, and so on.

Get structure on what you should be doing, get buy-in, and ruthlessly assess progress. Obtain informal feedback from your boss and peers. Take on a coach (or mentor) to challenge you, especially if you are a senior executive.

Your first 100 days to first year transition is critical. How effectively are you integrating into the organisation and influencing business performance of the business? Have you got the right team in place to help you reach your goals? If not, you need to act now. Leaving it until tomorrow is not an option.