

## HR can help the new executive over the emotional dip when the honeymoon is over

By Toby Lapage-Norris and Deborah Whitehouse



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**The first 100 days is a period of time that has assumed almost mythical significance in politics and business - a time when newly appointed executives come under close scrutiny.**

People wait with great expectation and scrutinise those first statements and decisions - as David Cameron and Nick Clegg recently discovered with the changes to the scope and

role played by the 1922 Committee; getting it wrong can have a long-lasting impact and can turn support to dissent in an instant.

Yet, despite the importance attributed to the first 100 days, as HR professionals will recognise, the transition period from three months to the end of the first year is possibly even more important in determining an individual's future success. Because, when the rhetoric is over, it is time for action - and for being judged, as Cameron and Clegg will no doubt find out in September.

For newly appointed executives it is a time to demonstrate that they can integrate into the organisation in a way that allows them to exert a positive influence on the business. But to achieve this they will need to, with the help of HR colleagues, overcome a number of challenges.

When the honeymoon period of the first 100 days is over, for example, and the chaperoning support is less intense, individuals often experience an emotional dip, doubts about their new role and employer, a feeling of displacement.

Executives will be challenging the logic of the business, bringing their own insights and ideas about effecting change in their new

role. While understanding the overt structures, systems and hierarchies that appear to support decision making processes, there is often less understanding of the hidden networks and relationships that really get things done.

Another issue is the management of expectations. While there may be some leeway in terms of performance in the early days, performance assessment is inevitable. But does the new manager understand what they are expected to deliver, and when?

Finally, faced with a new work environment, it is easy for executives to withdraw into their comfort zone and, without the requisite team support and clarity of expectation, this may lead them to work at a level beneath that they were hired to do. There is also the question of whether they are resourced with the capabilities to achieve their objectives. Is their team up to the challenge, for example?

While much of the responsibility for overcoming these obstacles rests with the executive, there is a lot HR can do to help. After all, if an appointment fails, there is usually a cost to the business in terms of performance, time and morale; a poor message is sent to any unsuccessful internal candidates, as well as to individuals appointed into that role in the future.

So, for example, in the post 100 days period, human resources can act as compass for the new executive, helping them to understand the organisation and navigate through the business. As a business partner they can provide a sounding board and, where necessary, connect a new executive with the gatekeepers, power brokers and influencers, who know how to get things done in the organisation. If there is a post 100 days emotional dip, the HR manager can step in and provide reassurance and support.

Equally, in terms of managing expectations and aspirations, HR can help facilitate discussions early on between the new

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executive and their line boss, peers and subordinates, to identify and ensure shared understanding of objectives, expectations, possible barriers, and time frames. Human resources can also capture similar conversations from the appointment process to use as a reference point later on.

It is important to note, however, that human resources should resist any attempt on the part of the line manager to delegate accountability for the induction and integration of new appointments at the post 100 days stage. It is the responsibility of that line manager to ensure that their people are up to speed and deliver as quickly as possible, and that they have sufficient stretch assignments. Human resources for its part must facilitate this process.

Fairly early on, for example, the line HR manager should be involved in creating a development plan using data gathered from the appointment process. This can be used to address or

support any areas of personal development that might aid the longer-term transition into the role. Also, in helping a new recruit maintain a positive development trajectory, HR must check that individual is moving through the plan's objectives and if there is divergence from the plan, assess why, and what is the best form of intervention.

Hopefully, though, with the help of human resources professionals, the transition from the first 100 days to the end of the first year will be a relatively painless one.

Get it right, and you have an individual in place who can accelerate the business in the direction it needs to go, boost performance and be a valuable part of the talent pipeline.

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