

Transition Support

– The First 100 Days

Moving to a new position within an organisation can provide huge challenges to senior leaders. Within 100 days they must assimilate a new job, a new team, make an impact **and** review the business strategy. New leaders are expected to hit the ground running, and the cost of **not** doing so can be huge, in terms of direct impact on the business when an appointment is not successful and to the individual in terms of their career.

We have been supporting senior leaders through these transitions. This involves using a series of workbooks structured to guide the leader's thinking and observations of the new job, as well as one-to-one transition support sessions with an experienced transition coach.

Leaders at the senior level get there because they are bright, decisive, talented and experienced and they have a good idea of what they need to do...so why do they need a process like this?

In the frenetic pace of today's world, having the space to reflect and to guide and structure interactions with a new team in a disciplined way is invaluable.

The first step of our process starts with the key questions to ask of the direct reports, the key stakeholders, the customers, and the outside analysts in those crucial first meetings in a new job.

These can include:

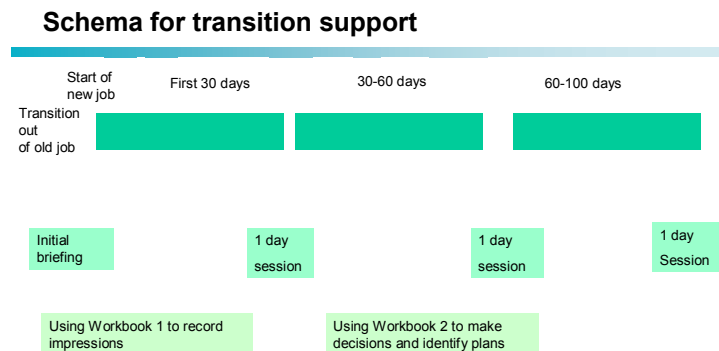
- What are the biggest future challenges and issues and why do they exist?
- What are the opportunities for growth and how can we exploit the potential for growth?
- What are the changes you would make if you were me?

A senior leader, appointed to a P&L responsibility in a global matrixed organisation, used similar questions to prepare for his first team off-site. The simple approach of asking these questions to stakeholders, customers and his team, and then capturing the answers and presenting them back, provided a wake up call for the new team.

Talking this over with the coach allowed him to analyse what his team was really saying to him, where there might be resistance, where the culture needed to shift and how his leadership needed to change to make his mark. He then took the data and used it with the coach and HR support to design the first off-site and to craft his vision.

Ninety days is a surprisingly short time, and as the diagram below shows, making judicious use of that time using the workbooks to jot down observations and reviewing through half day – one day sessions with the transition coach creates a focus to make sure that the pace is being maintained.

How the process works over 100 days



In some cases, leaders work in transition alongside the previous incumbent, which gives them some space to observe, reflect and understand team dynamics. One leader found it particularly helpful, during this time, to use the workbooks to address questions and notice the culture. The “retreat “ part of this process, where he reflected on what he had noticed, allowed him to recognise that he had to embark on a major culture change process; while the thinking space allowed him to plan priorities and strategies for each of the product lines within his business and to recognise the need to bring the team together to create a joint strategy, rather than a series of siloed products and services.

Identifying early wins – making your mark

One section of the workbook focuses on helping leaders identify early wins where they can make an impact. These can be simple steps like changing the layout of the office, changing the format and structure of the monthly meetings or putting up pictures of his or her family in the office.

It’s also a chance to take an honest look at one’s own strengths and weaknesses as a leader and get feedback – based on the whole context of the transition – about what is needed at this point for the organisation. For example, a leader who has risen through staff roles as a strategic thinker needs to readdress his style to engage and lead a larger business and communicate a vision to all levels.

Isn’t this just executive coaching?

The difference between executive coaching and a well-planned transition support approach is that, using the material in the workbooks, the leader is able to take a structured approach to reviewing their strategy, culture and leadership style.

The workbooks help guide the thinking the leader would endeavour to do anyway, but may miss out on due to pressures of those first months. For instance, the process takes a deep look at culture, capturing those vital first impressions that are strong even when it’s a transition within the same company and same geographical region.

One of our definitions of culture is “what you stop noticing after three months”. To notice, observe and then to plan strategically what needs to change in the culture, rather than just ignore those odd things and try and impose one’s old culture, is much more successful in the long run.

The pay-off for the business is obvious and whilst executive coaching supports the personal transition, it may not equip the leader for learning about transitions. This will be only one step in a leader's career, the insights from learning how to succeed in this process can be used again in the next step.

Where one recognises leaders on talent development programmes will be going through these transitions every two years, it can be helpful to provide not just individual coaching but to build the process into their development programmes on a joint workshop – then they can learn from each other as well.

What are the benefits of supporting leaders in key transitions?

The leader:

- quickly realises the effective results;
- is equipped to act and is clear on the strategies that need to be used;
- can make more of an impact and communicate more effectively;
- understands the culture and the team so that changes are more effective and resistance is lowered
- can provide effective support to enhance talent development
- can manage and balance his/her own transition and learning, e.g. work/life balance.

Let's leave the last word with one of the leaders we have worked with...

“This has helped me create pace in the first 100 days by dedicating real time and creating the continuity to come back to what we discussed. It's been great!”

For more information see appendix re content of the process or call Fiona Ellis on 01225 333737 to discuss how it can be used.

Appendix : What is covered in transition support?

The content covers broadly the flow in the diagram below. This is reviewed at the end of 30 days with emphasis on understanding the situation but also on the leaders own reaction to the transition and how he / she can communicate to her/ his staff, boss, and stakeholders.

Transition support



Transition Support workbook content

Part 1	Part 1	Part 2
Section 1	Section 2	
Gathering data – first impressions	How is the transition affecting you?	Long term priorities
Analysing the situation	How do you want to be seen as leader?	What are some of the behavioural / cultural patterns you want to change?
Mapping your stakeholders	Communicating your message as a leader	Having impact and building your credibility
Assessing the team's strengths	How do you need to influence priority stakeholders?	Planning early wins
Accessing the culture	Building your relationship with your boss	Creating a compelling vision and how to convey it
Change approaches		Achieving alignment in the organisation
Significant business issues		Reviewing your team – tough decisions you need to make
		Communicating what changes you want to happen to your team
		Summarising your plan