

Managing a New Employee's Transition

The important work of making a successful hire is not complete when the candidate accepts the offer. Rather, the process continues through the new hire's first 30 to 90 days as he or she manages the transition into the new role. This section describes the process of ensuring a successful transition for your new senior leader. You may also want to review Michael Watkins's [Taking Charge in Your New Leadership Role, A Workbook](#)—a comprehensive and useful guide to aid you and your new leader in this process.

There are many things both you and your new hire can do before his or her first day to make the transition run as smoothly as possible:

- Encourage the new hire to continue to learn as much about the organization as possible before the transition, both through conversations with you and others, and by keeping up with relevant news and sector-related articles. Encourage him/her to join relevant professional associations and, if possible, to attend any public events that your organization is sponsoring before the official start date. Spend time discussing the organization's current strategy and the associated goals and challenges. Ask the new hire to form hypotheses about the organization's operating priorities, to be tested during the first six months or so in order to validate them and/or make changes as needed. But do not push him/her to develop "the answer" too soon. It's likely that there are no quick-fix solutions, and first listening and then acting will yield greater success rates and inspire greater confidence among colleagues who are anticipating the arrival of a new senior leader and who may have attempted to address these issues in the past.
- Make sure to introduce the new hire to the right people before arrival and on the first day. Formally introducing the new senior manager to the organization (and the board as well) before he/she begins is imperative. Employees need to know what to expect, and the new leader will benefit from getting a sense of his/her new team's responsibilities, style, concerns, etc. to help prepare for the first few weeks. Prior to the first day, make an announcement about the new hire, his/her background, and his/her start date to the full organization. Create a detailed agenda for the first day and a general agenda for the first two weeks.
- If possible, name a mentor or "ombudsman." An ombudsman is someone to whom the new hire can go to for objective advice and questions (and thus ideally should not have a reporting relationship with the new hire). This person should understand the institutional history, the leadership team, and the organization's strengths and weaknesses.

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- Provide clear expectations. The hiring manager should provide clear expectations to the new hire in his/her new senior-level role. This should include sharing information on communication styles and ideal communication frequency. For example, you might describe that in your organization weekly written updates of action items and status on key projects tend to be better received than monthly voicemails. It is typically useful for new leaders to err on the side of more communication rather than less, especially in the first few months.
- Provide clear information regarding the team to be inherited. Describe the team's major strengths and weaknesses (i.e., those highlighted on recent performance reviews or development goals) and what major issues need to be addressed. If an internal candidate was considered but not chosen for this role, the new hire needs to know this so he or she can be sensitive to any concerns or disappointment. It is also important that a new senior-level (but non-ED) hire be seen as the "go to" person for his or her team, even if in the early days the plans are being jointly crafted by the ED and the new hire.
- Work together to develop three-, six-, and 12-month priorities. Here you will be building on discussions you had during the interview process. Priorities should encompass learning opportunities and clear, measurable deliverables, and should enable the new leader to develop trust and credibility within the organization. Early wins are crucial, as is beginning to lay a foundation for sustained improvement in organizational performance. But remind him/her to prioritize early on, and not to attempt too much right off the bat.

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