How to be Successful as a New Leader

Ramadhurai K

Planning to join another firm? Invest time and prepare well before joining to deliver a 'wow' performance

So, you are excited to have landed your dream role. Have you thought about how you will deliver a 'wow' performance? If you haven't, you should, as our research suggests that less than 30%-40% of the new hires manage a 'wow' – remaining are living on borrowed time.

This guide is meant to provide you some tips and thoughts on how you can prepare *before* joining. This guide draws from our earlier research which looked at why some hires perform exceedingly well, while others ploughed through (http://resource-bridge.in/are-you-hiring-your-leaders-right/). This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of things to do, but a reminder of strategic actions you can, and should, take now.

To deliver a 'wow' performance within the first two quarters that you have as a new leader, you need to focus on two broad sets of preparation – functional preparation and emotional preparation.

Functional Preparation

- During the interview process, most firms discuss the hiring context, expectations and challenges. As a new hire, having clarity on expectations on the near term goals help a lot. If, after the offer acceptance, there has not been any discussion on the near term goals, get clarity. Apart from goals, understanding why these goals are crucial and what the hiring manager thinks are the potential actionable items, would be good to know. Spend time to understand the issues in more detail, whether through anonymous retail site visits, observing customer behaviour, or similar, to gather unhindered perspectives.

- When you have adequate secondary information, ask for low-risk but focussed information from the company, such as market research reports, or, or even preliminary meetings with 1-2 members from the reporting team, who could help to understand the issues better as well as serve as useful sounding boards to test hypotheses.

- Schedule a second conversation with the reporting manager to air broad options that appeal to you, and generate a deeper conversation. The idea is not to nail down the actions but to engage in a deeper conversation that will help you go one level deeper into the issues before joining. This will help to mull over the issues without additional colouring that invariably comes from being too close to the issues.

- During the induction period, reach out to HR to ask for specific meetings (e.g., reporting manager, team members, clients, distributors etc), reports, presentations from team and activities that will help you to make the most of the induction period. Let not induction be only about 'meet-and-greet'.

Ramadhurai K ("Ram") is a Co-founder & Partner at Resource Bridge, a specialized executive search firm. An MBA from IIM Ahmedabad, Ram co-leads the CEO Practice and leads the CSO Practice. Ram can be reached at ramk@resource-bridge.com.

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- Schedule periodic meetings, each long enough to allow a discussion about business issues as well as personal issues, and to allow a mentoring/coaching relationship to form. If there are 1-2 crucial areas where you think you need specific intervention (e.g., external coaching), do not hesitate to suggest.

- External hires lack the internal networks that provide valuable insights and suggestions (and emotional support), as well as historical information that guides the organization's collective thinking. Spend time to think through who could be useful to network within the firm, and work with HR to schedule meetings with these individuals in the initial period.

- As can be seen, relationship with the CHRO will be key to get several of the above done, so make sure to develop the same before joining. Good practices include frequent touch-points, discussing what you read in the press about the firm or the industry with the HR (and buddy or mentor, if there is one nominated by the firm), without overdoing it.

Emotional Preparation

More often that not, new hires 'fail' not because of functional competency but because of inability to fit culturally. This can be especially hard if you have worked earlier for longer periods with fewer firms.

Yet, demonstrating a fit into the new culture is critical to a welcoming acceptance, which in turn affects how much support you will get from the team. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

- If the induction plan does not have specific module on culture (ie., what's acceptable and what's not acceptable), make sure to schedule a session with the CHRO on this specifically. It is difficult for the CHRO or your new colleagues to talk to you about this, so you need to initiate and lead the conversation.

- With HR help, meet also likely peers or key alumni of the firm, to understand what deliverables and behaviours help to succeed within the firm (e.g., broader performance and cultural expectations, how things 'work').

- Referring to how things were done (or not done) in their earlier organizations is a oft-mentioned irritant. Keep your references to earlier practices to the minimum. This is the new home.

- Where personal circumstances necessitate to have two residences, be clear with key stake-holders about when the transition to a single home would happen and what is driving the same. Continued two-home situation or postponement of mile-stones relating to shifting residence is just not acceptable.

- If the induction plan does not have a scheduled team event, work with the HR to schedule one as part of the induction plan.

As mentioned earlier, this note focuses on the preparation *before* joining. Like two wheels to a racing cycle, functional and emotional preparation are both equally important.

About Resource Bridge

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