

‘Fast Tracked Assimilation’ in the First 100 Days



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What a business leader needs to do to successfully effect the transition of skills and experience of their new senior hire into their organisation..... Fully integrating a new senior hire into an organization begins from the moment a CEO decides to source for that position.

There is much written about how critical the first 100 days are for a new senior hire and how it acts as an indicator of the success of that person and their position in the organisation. This becomes even more important at head of function or CEO level. The process of “on-boarding” a newly hired senior executive is as important as the choice of person in the first place. This is especially important where the new senior hire is an ‘agent-of-change’, where, for example, an organisation is bringing in someone who differs from their “typical” senior hire – perhaps an older profile, or someone from a different sector e.g. taking someone from FMCG(PCG) experience in to an SaaS organisation.

The On-Boarding process must start at the hiring stage. When the profile and position specification are being drafted and developed, organisations and particularly CEOs, need to consider – how am I going to get the best from this person? And how can I make the organisation support this process, as opposed to stand in its way?

It is also crucial that the On-Boarding process is two-way. New senior hires must be made aware from an early stage that they are required to participate in the process and indeed- to an extent- drive it. While it needs to be a process of two-way feedback, it also must be flexible and tailored enough to allow for “course corrections”. On-Boarding has to go beyond the transition period, although that in itself would be a major step forward for many organisations today. One cannot adopt ‘one-sizes-fits-all’ approach but it must be custom-made to the specific needs of the successful candidate and that of their new organisation.

Gone are the days when all new employees could be put through the same 3 day induction covering all aspects of the business from operations and production through to health and safety. Senior new hires, especially, must be treated individually. As the recruiting process progresses, senior candidates need to understand a tailored process is being prepared to ‘on-board’ them as quickly as possible – creating conditions for their success in their new organisation. Clear and open explanations of how the organisation’s structure works, how decisions are made and the general culture of the organisation, help create realistic expectations.

Equally as important, is to create an opportunity for a new senior hire to meet their new team and significant stakeholders.

Information from previous employers as well as clients and peer groups who have experience of working with this person proves invaluable in this process. This is not about reference checking (*while still a must, and the preview of the HR function*), this process is about creating conditions for this new senior hire's success in their new position.

Mentors assigned to manage this process will prove invaluable. However, they must be skilled in helping to clarify the cloud of information (spoken and unspoken) the new senior hire will encounter. An internal liaison makes sense from the perspective of managing their way around and through the challenges of successfully building relationships with superiors, colleagues, and subordinates and giving direction on the organisation's culture. An external mentor/guide provides a level of objectivity and directness to support the new senior hire to act, to adapt and to challenge in order to successfully transition into a fully contributing executive. This is done in a confidential, supportive, non-judgemental and non-threatening manner.

Without such tailored guidance and on-boarding, new senior hires have been shown to perform less effectively during this critical transition period. New senior hires have expressed feelings of being "adrift", and facing "bias" which frustrated their early efforts and possible "wins". Poor or non-existent 'on-boarding' can result in people leaving an organisation early, finding that the new position did not meet expectations. Organisations risk losing their considerable investment in their new executive and having to reinvest in a re-run of their search. Couple this with a team or department being adversely effected by frequent changes in management causing a lack of direction and a resulting potential loss of business focus, and the potential costs become apparent.

With planning, effort and an initial investment of time, the results can be so different and a positive experience for all concerned. Starting the On-Boarding and transition process at the recruitment stage adds a supporting layer to making the right senior hire for your organisation.

As one client said, *"if only we'd done this sooner, we could have saved a lot of grief and difficulty internally and in the market"*.

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