

## ***You've hired for skills and ability, not sectoral bias. How is the new hire to come to grips with how your industry does business?***



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*Your new hire has significant experience and you've hired them because you know that they'll do a great job ...coming from a background of a different industry doesn't matter... one company is the same as the next... more or less....?*

In order to advance any career and broaden experience, all the received wisdom is move into a different industry sector. This makes perfect sense and is indeed good advice. But it also works exceptionally well for the company. Bringing in new talent with a different sectoral experience can bring in a wealth of new experience that your competitors may not have as they continue to exercise their sectoral bias in their hiring strategy. Having a candidate or new hire present themselves from another sector also suggests a possible dynamism and flexibility so often sought when looking for senior management hires.

If a person chooses to gain experience in more than one sector, they are obviously more 'employable', particularly if the sector experiences are quite diverse – it shows this person can adapt to different business paces or cultures. It also means that they are not 'stuck' in the business practices of any one sector which can vary from a steady, long term business planning cycle (e.g. pharmaceuticals) to a very fast paced dynamic environment (e.g. technology). It shows a level of planning and awareness of the world that is critical in successful management.

Once someone has changed sectors more than once, they will find the level of adjustment a little less each time that they make that change. It doesn't necessarily mean there is less difference between the sectors, but that the person is becoming more adaptable, more open to change and therefore adjust to it much more readily. It also means that they contribute and add value to your organisation a lot sooner than others. Basically they're a more attractive candidate.

So, why do some companies specifically look to bring on board a new senior hire from a different sector? Mainly, because of the wealth of diverse and different experience that such hires bring. An organisation that has a slow pace of change (or more importantly, *acceptance* of change by employees) may deliberately look to bring in a senior hire who has the experience they are missing in an effort to begin a long term process of change within the company.

However, it's not necessarily plain sailing – for either the company or the new senior hire. It does require planning. Sometimes, the expectations of a new senior person can be overwhelming for them. The company may be placing all their expectations on one person, who through no fault of their own, may be doomed to failure before they even start. Often a company will see that hiring a senior person from another sector is the answer. Once they are hired, the company just leaves them to their own devices, believing that this new hire is used to a dynamic environment, used to constant change, so by default they will get on fine.

However, the reality can be very different. The new senior hire can meet roadblocks at every turn. Other members of the leadership team may feel that some sort of ‘super – manager’ has been foisted on them, who is single handedly going to change the business practices and culture of their company. The company and other senior managers can feel threatened, and, whether deliberately or unconsciously, may thwart their new colleague’s efforts. This can result in the new senior hire leaving the company feeling very damaged, undoing the sincere efforts of the CEO to introduce a different culture / pace of change etc. into the company. The resulting situation can make it even more difficult to effect the same effort again. This could therefore be considered as the ‘wrong’ decision to have made in the first place, resulting in ‘failure’ by a new senior hire, a ‘failed’ decision by the CEO, and ultimately a ‘failed’ attempt to introduce something different into the company. Future efforts to introduce any type of change may result in harping back to the previous ‘failed’ attempt. Ultimately, it’s not good for the company.

### *The plan is the key....*

So, how can these potential perceived ‘failures’ be avoided? The company must have a plan. A new senior hire needs support when they join a new company, and particularly so if they are moving into a different sector. Engaging in a fast track assimilation programme will provide support to the new senior hire, providing them with the information, the time and the support within the organisation to allow them to adapt, to understand the business practices, the culture and the organisation itself. It has to be more than making sure their computer password is working or their PIN gets them into the staff car park.

With the right support, the new hire is then in a position to understand how their role can input into organisational change, how quickly (or otherwise) it can be done, who the relevant stakeholders are etc. Their assimilation becomes more planned, integrated and inclusive, resulting in positive outcomes for both the individual senior hire and the organisation.

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