

Even Star Hires Can Falter...How to Ensure Their Success

The successful transition and performance of an executive in a new culture or job, peer group or role requires that both the executive and the executive's boss share the responsibility of the assimilation. When this shared process breaks down, so does the optimum success of the new executive.

Clients say: "We expect new hires to hit the ground running."

Not an unusual expectation when hiring experienced, skilled executives from the outside. Clients want new hires to assimilate and perform at their best immediately. Unfortunately, this is not always the way it works out. The successful transition and performance of an executive in a new culture or job, peer group or role requires that both the executive and the executive's boss share the responsibility of the assimilation. When this shared process breaks down, so does the optimum success of the new executive.

Since both parties have a stake in the successful outcome of this new partnership, it would be logical that these transitions are planned and executed in a methodical manner. The reality is that *time demands, business pressures, invalid assumptions* and *personal styles* usually leave the executive to fend for himself/herself. The following represents a cross section of the reasons why we find that even the most talented individuals can falter and what can be done to help them succeed.

Reasons Why Star Hires May Falter

The Culture/Organization Rejection Factor

- The new culture is dramatically different and the new executive doesn't fully understand or know how to adjust his/her style.
- The executive misreads the culture, ie: sees it as "results driven" when it is "relationship driven." The executive is out of sync with what the organization values.
- The executive tries to replicate the systems and processes of their former organization, which may not be appropriate in the new culture.
- The new executive is hired to be a change agent but this has not been communicated to the staff and, therefore, people collectively reject his/her strategies.
- The new executive immediately brings loyal

associates from the outside before assessing the impact these individuals will have on the new culture.

- The new executive is a clone of the hiring executive. The behaviors of the new executive are criticized and rejected by the executive's peers because the new hire is not their boss.

The Managing Expectations Factor

- The manager of the new executive, or the new executive, does not adequately discuss performance expectations or measurements.
- The new executive fails to accurately read the boss' vision, strategy, style, expectations, words, body language.
- Unrealistic expectations exist on the side of the boss and/or the new executive.

The Peers / Stakeholders Factor

- Peers resent the "outsider" for various reasons and see the new executive as an intruder.
- Peers may have wanted the position or have other historical or personal agendas and therefore sabotage the new hire.
- The new executive fails to establish regular and effective communications with peers and other key internal constituencies in the new organization.

The Style Factor

- The executive runs into style clashes at various levels within the organization: upward, lateral or downward.
- The executive pushes changes more rapidly than people can absorb or react to.
- The executive has limited experience in a matrix organization and fails to adequately communicate with his/her multiple bosses.
- The new executive goes it alone without consulting with their boss, direct reports or other stakeholders.

The Boss Factor

- The boss is too busy to mentor, educate or communicate with the new executive, wishes the executive success and leaves him/her to find for self.
- The boss changes the direction without communicating the change to the new executive.
- The boss assumes the new executive's style parallels his/her own and becomes disillusioned when the new executive is not in sync with his/her way of conducting business.

Tips for Successful Integration

The Executive's Role in the Transition

- Identify key stakeholders in the organization and clarify needs, expectations and potential issues. **Work to build alliances and trust.**
- Observe the culture: how people communicate, interact with each other, the decision making process and protocols. **Adapt your style to the needs of the organization.**
- Manage your emotional and behavioral responses in the new environment very carefully. What were acceptable responses in your old environment may not be perceived as adaptive or "a fit" in the new environment. **Be self-aware and in control of your responses.**
- Scan the environment before you put any stakes in the ground – even if you feel pressure to make an impact quickly. **Don't leap until you have the lay of the land.**
- Develop a vision, build coalitions to support your strategies, and implement carefully. **Success requires collaboration from key stakeholders.**

- Select key priorities for the first 100 days, 6 months and 1 year. Review with your new boss. **Success equals meeting the boss' expectations.**
- Be enthusiastic, energized and execute with excellence. **Set a positive, contagious tone.**
- Monitor your progress by checking in often with the boss, direct reports, peers and "clients." **Frequency of contact builds comfort levels, understanding and support.**
- Set a few priorities and build one success upon the next within a reasonable amount of time. **Steady superstars are more effective.**
- Develop people, give positive, constructive feedback and let them shine. **Be strategic in building your alliances.**

The Boss' Role in the Transition

- Provide personal introductions for the new executive throughout the organization. Ensure the executive is invited to meetings across the organization to gain the broadest knowledge, exposure and acceptance. **Show and build support for your new hire.**
- Maintain frequent communication. Review with the executive the expectations you have for performance over the first 100 days, 6 months and 1 year. **Communicate frequently and provide feedback early.**
- Ensure the executive has access to all appropriate communications. **Provide resources to support the executive's learning curve.**
- Enlighten the executive to potential "mine fields." **Do not put your new hire at risk.**

Be the new executive's mentor – ensure your investment succeeds.

Successful Hires Need Successful

Assimilation. CE

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