

## 5 Mistakes to avoid if you are a new CEO

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All new CEOs want to hit the ground running, but as the saying goes, the path to destruction is filled with good intentions. As a coach I have seen five key mistakes that new CEOs often make.

### 1. Going back to what is Familiar

Part of the reason that a leader is hired is because they have a track record of success. So, it is very tempting to come into a new role and try to apply structures, systems and approaches that worked for you in the past. Whilst it makes sense to consider ideas and approaches from an industry leader or your past successes, no two companies are the same. While you might be able to reproduce the policies, structures, processes and technology you can seldom replicate the people or the environment. So, it can be good to start the conversation with a previous idea but be open to the new organisation putting their own flavour on it or changing it into something new entirely.

### 2. Doing What is Comfortable

Have you ever noticed a tendency to hold onto responsibilities in one role after being promoted into another? Are you telling yourself that its easier if you do it than explain it someone else, or are you just getting that warm fuzzy feeling from doing something you enjoy? Ask yourself 'Is this the best use of my time?' Make a list of everything you need to achieve each day and if it is something that can be done by someone with lower pay, it should be delegated. If its difficult, complicated and makes you uncomfortable, then that is probably the thing you should be spending some time on.

### 3. Competing with your staff members

Unless you are running a race at the family fun day, no CEO should be competing with their own staff members. Whilst many people don't like to admit it, it's not uncommon to feel that little green eyed monster niggle you when you see a more junior staff member getting praised for something that you think you could have done better. Its even harder if that person being praised for role that you used to perform and perhaps weren't recognised for. Just because you experience an uncharitable thought, doesn't make you bad person. But it will help if you remind yourself that as the leader, you get credit for all the successes of your team. So, give yourself a good shake and start looking for areas where you can deliberately give your staff a chance to shine. They will like and respect you for it and after a while that green eyed monster will leave you in peace.

## 4. Criticising the previous leader

We live in a world where it is common for political leaders to criticise and blame their predecessors for at least a year after taking up a position. While this may be tolerated in politics, (I'm not sure that it should be), it is definitely in poor taste in an organisation. If you find that you are placing your staff in a position where they must either defend the decisions of the previous leader or join you in criticising them, its time to take stock of your emotions and raise the bar for your behaviour. Even if the previous leader made the decision, chances are that there were many who support and agreed with the rationale. They may not speak up when you criticise your predecessor, but you can guarantee that they feel insulted. Its ok to have a different perspective or want to change the way that things are done but focus on providing the rationale for your decision rather than on criticising the previous decision.

## 5. Trying to change things too quickly

Another leaf taken from politics is the tendency to ask what has a CEO achieved in the first 30, 60 and 100 days. Unless you have been promoted from within the organisation, the first 30 days must be spent familiarising yourself with the organisation. You should be focused on the big picture – do you have money to keep the organisation running, what are the issues that you need to understand and resolve and what norms do you want to establish in the leadership team. After 60 days you may have a few small successes to report but you are more likely to dealing with the back lash that will come from the change in culture you are trying to affect, the strategies you're trying to reprioritise and the accountability systems you are putting in place. You typically start to see some success after the first 100 days, and you will also begin to recognise the direct reports who are more likely to support you going forward. Be careful about making big pronouncements and changes too quickly, no matter how much you think you know, and understand. Chances are, you don't have the true picture and are being fed perspectives by very influential fractions. Move too quickly and you risk alienating the people who could have been your greatest supporters and allies.

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