

Key questions to ask yourself when starting a new job

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One's actions during the first few months in a *new job* have a major impact on the individual's success or failure. Build positive momentum early on and it will drive you through your tenure. Make some early mistakes and you could face an upward battle for the rest of your time in the job.

Here are the five most important questions you should ask yourself as you start a *new role*:

How am I going to create value?

This is the first most important question. Why were you put in this role? What do the stakeholders expect you to accomplish? In what timeframe? How will your *success be measured*? As you try to answer this question, keep in mind that the real answer may not be what you were told when you were recruited for the job. Remember, too, that you will probably have many stakeholders to satisfy and not just your boss, and that they may have divergent views of what constitutes "success." It's essential to understand the full set of expectations so you can reconcile and satisfy them to the greatest degree possible.

How am I expected to behave?

Strive to understand and conform to the norms of behavior in line with the desired organisational culture. Think of *culture* as the organisation's immune system. You can violate key norms of behavior at your peril; becoming viewed as not belonging here can lead to isolation and, ultimately, to derailment. As you seek to understand key norms, keep in mind that they may differ across the organisation. It may also depend on the level at which you are operating.

Whose support is most critical?

Your success is likely to depend on people over whom you have no direct authority; so, you need to build relationships. The starting point in doing this is to understand the political landscape of your new organisation and learn to navigate it. Who has power and influence? Whose support is crucial and why? Armed with this insight you can focus on how you will secure their backing. Usually this involves more than just building relationships. You need to understand what others are trying to accomplish and how you can help them.

How will I get some early wins?

Leaders in transition energise people by getting early wins — quick, tangible improvements in the organisation that create a sense of momentum. Done well, they build your credibility, accelerate your

learning, and win you the right to make deeper changes in the organisation. So, you need to identify the most promising ways to make a quick, positive impact and then organise to do so as efficiently and effectively as possible.

What skills do I need to develop to succeed in this role?

Marshall Goldsmith, the renowned executive coach put it in this way, “What got you here, won’t get you there.” The skills and abilities that got you to this point in your career may not be the ones you need to be successful in your new job, and it’s all too easy to fall into the comfort-zone trap and relax. Put another way, to become fully effective in your new role, you will probably have to do some personal development. Spend more time reading and researching new skills. This doesn’t mean you can’t get off to a good start immediately, but the sooner you understand what new capabilities you need to develop to excel in the role, the better. Failure to grasp this essential point diminishes the potential for future career advancement.

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