

Winning the War for Talent

Companies waste up 40% of the cost of hiring senior executives, according to Kevin Kelly, CEO of Heidrick & Struggles. Transition coaching is a targeted process designed to ensure the fast and effective integration of new senior recruits into an organisation and to ensure that they have the best possible opportunity of success in their new role.

“So you’re starting a new job soon. It seems like a great opportunity; a good fit between your skills, goals, and the organisation’s needs. That alone should increase the likelihood of your success, right? Perhaps.”

For new leaders i.e. people appointed to management or executive positions, the stakes are very high. Kevin Kelly, CEO of executive search firm Heidrick and Struggles is quoted as saying that “...40% of executives hired..... are pushed out, fail or quit within 18 months”.

Derailment of a new leader carries enormous costs for the organisation, including but not limited to: wasted recruitment and relocation costs, base salary, benefits, signing bonus, incentive compensation, training, in addition to opportunity costs, disruption of operations, the time the position remains vacant and the negative impact on morale.

Generally, new leaders are signed on, after significant selection and recruitment costs, and are then thrown into the proverbial pool and told to ‘sink or swim’. This is compounded by the impatience of the senior team or board to see quick results. In the war for talent; the acquisition of talent is but the initial phase. It is in the managing, developing and retention of talent, that the war is won. There is a lot of risk. It is not enough to bring an incredible new leader on board – the organisation must hang onto him and optimise his impact.

Organisations that are successful in developing and retaining talent use a structured approach to assist newly appointed leaders to successfully integrate into the new role. With a structured approach, the chances of successful assimilation increases; without it, the assimilation of the new leader will be marred by the fallout of trial-and-error learning.

Role confusion, ineffective peer relationships, lack of internal political skills and failure to meet key objectives are cited as the four strongest predictors of new leader derailment. Transition Coaching for newly appointed leaders increases effectiveness on a variety of fronts; thorough understanding of the business culture and objectives, increased collaboration and information sharing amongst team members, effective integration of the new leader into the functional team, focused identification and implementation of critical organisational initiatives, increased job satisfaction and reduced risk of derailment.

Successful new leader transition is a study in paradox. To be effective the new leader must focus on learning rather than demonstrating his/her worth. Build alliances whilst not becoming overly political. Seek to improve the organisation without devaluing what already exists.

Transition Coaching provides support to newly appointed leaders to manage their integration into a new role and/or a new organisation. The goal is to decrease the time it takes for a new leader to reach an optimal level of performance and to more quickly adapt to the new context, culture and role. Thus Transition Coaching is a significant support to the organisation's talent management strategy.

Transition Coaching differentiates between orientation/induction (welcoming process) and integration (becoming proficient). A well structured transition/integration process helps new leaders develop a deep understanding of, and respect for, the organisation as they enter it. An effective transition process is not easy and requires a significant commitment of time and energy. It must be championed and supported by the new leader as well as the new leader's manager.

As a new leader is assimilated into the organisation, Transition Coaching simultaneously supports effective transition and integration at a number of levels: Organisational, Business Unit, Functional and Personal.

Organisational transition is the opportunity for new leaders to meet with top executives to learn about organisational history and culture, brand identity, strategic direction and initiatives to support current priorities.

Business Unit transition provides an understanding of the balance between strategic thinking and the mechanics of organisational functioning. This part of the process identifies organisational resources and decision-making processes and facilitates formation of important collegial relationships.

Functional transition is where new leaders roll up their sleeves and really begin to lead their teams. Personal transition addresses the non-work side of the leader's life.

By addressing the needs of new leaders on these four levels, the organisation has gained an important business advantage – fully integrated leadership. In addition, Transition Coaching can also become a valuable recruiting tool. A way to let candidates know how important they are to the organisation. In a way that the competition cannot.