



**ATLANTA CHALLENGE**

Building extraordinary teams and leaders

**LEADER'S GUIDE  
TO CREATING  
SUCCESS  
IN A  
NEW ROLE**

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## SUCCESS IN A NEW ROLE

*The first ninety days of a new role are important. During this time, the employee makes an initial impression, one that can last a long time. For instance, one of my clients approached his new executive role with the same style he used in his previous organization, one with a culture that rewarded aggressive, competitive behavior. Unfortunately, the new organization was more collaborative. Even though this executive realized his mistake and adapted within a few months, it took years for his reputation to fully recover.*

**Listed below are some of the areas that leaders need to consider in order to succeed in their new role.** In many instances, it will be too soon for you to know the answers. If that is the case, look for mentors you can ask to find out. For instance, if you don't know much about your manager, ask colleagues who have a successful relationship or set up a meeting with the manager to get a sense of their style and requirements.

**Clarify success.** What does the formal job description say about key performance metrics? What are the unspoken requirements of the job? What does your manager expect? What are the unspoken rules about how to get the job done? What are the political issues that require delicate navigation?

**Help one's manager to be successful.** What is your manager trying to achieve? What are their professional aspirations? What are their personal aspirations? What is your manager's communication style? How does the manager like to get updates, and how often? What are the manager's pet peeves? What are things to NOT do when working with this manager? What is the best way to give the manager more time, eliminate hassles, and be successful?

**Observe and discover.** One mistake that some new managers and executives make is to rush in and change things too soon. Some new managers wait too long. Most executives have a couple of months to observe, assess, and map out a plan, but the window of opportunity to learn before acting varies with the situation. Learn about the main issues in your area of responsibility and then take the time to test those hypotheses before reaching conclusions.

**Develop a vision and strategy.** Grab the reigns of your new area of responsibility or organization proactively. Nothing does this better than having a vision and strategy for success. Get input from the right people, develop a shared vision, plan your strategy, get buy-in from key players, and communicate the vision and strategy to all involved. After that, you can set metrics and hold people accountable for making the vision and strategy happen.

**Get the right team in place.** The job of getting to know and assessing your team can be challenging when you start a new job. However, you can set up meetings to get to know your team, start to set expectations, learn as much as possible about how to support the team and bring value, and develop initial impressions about who gets results and who doesn't. After getting to know the team, the you will likely benefit from reviewing who belongs on the team and who doesn't, how to build the best team to implement the vision and strategy, and how to bring the team together and engage them.



## SUCCESS IN A NEW ROLE

**Learn the culture and fit in.** It is dangerous to be an outlier or be perceived as eccentric, especially in organizations with strong cultures. What is the culture of the organization? Which behaviors exemplify this culture? Which behaviors are shunned? What are the values of the organization, and how are these expressed? Which values and behaviors are never tolerated? What are the informal ways that things get done in the organization? Who are people that best embody the culture, and how can you learn from them? How do you need to adapt your style to the culture and values of the organization? What do you already do naturally that will easily fit with the culture?

**Align with the key players.** Who are the formal and informal leaders in the organization? Who holds the most political power? Who is seen as up-and-coming talent? Who is on the most important projects? Who on the team is performing well and has the potential to keep growing? Who on the team appears to be in the wrong role or have a poor attitude? Who is on the way out? Start thinking about your power base in the organization and how to build relationships with key people.

**Discover and avoid political land mines.** Managers and executives in new roles sometimes have to tread lightly, especially in highly political organizations. There are pet projects, sacred cows, special agendas, powerful people who might get offended, conflicts between managers that can force people to pick sides, and managers who have more power than their titles might suggest. It is hard to see these issues, which is why the metaphor of a buried land mine makes sense. However, you can ask questions to learn more about the political landscape and not go in naively.

**Create a development plan to keep improving.** Marshall Goldsmith's book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* concisely explains why every manager and executive needs to keep developing. It is unlikely that you will know everything there is to know about the industry, business, or leadership. At some point during your first ninety days, come up with a development plan for succeeding in the role and also set the stage for success into the future.



# SUCCESS IN A NEW ROLE

Get answers to these core questions first, and then develop a plan for getting the rest answered.

	What (metrics)	How (process, tone, attitude)
<i>How does the <u>job description</u> define success?</i>		
<i>How does your <u>manager</u> define success for your role?</i>		
<i>How do <u>you</u> define success in this job?</i>		



# SUCCESS IN A NEW ROLE

## Starter Questions

### What does success mean in your new role?

- ◆ For you? For the organization? For your manager? For who else?
- ◆ To whom does your success especially matter, and what are the implications for your performance, relationship building, and other actions in your first few months?
- ◆ How can you make sure you have the support and resources you need to succeed?

### How can you make sure you and your manager get off on the right foot?

- What are your manager's personal and professional goals?
- How can you help your manager succeed?
- What does your manager need you to do immediately? In the near term? Medium term?
- What is your manager's communication style?
- How does your manager like to get updates?
- What are your manager's pet peeves?
- How can you help your manager have fewer hassles?

### How can you get to know your team?

- What outcome do you want to achieve with your team in your first few weeks/months?
- How can you assess your team to make sure you have the right players?
- How can you set the right tone?
- How can you learn from them?
- What activity might help you get to know them?
- What else is important?

### How can you plan for long-term success?

- How can you learn and fit in with the culture?
- How can you get to know key players and align with them?
- Who do you need to know?
- How can you avoid key landmines and mistakes?
- How can you take enough time to observe and discover before making rash decisions?
- What is your overall development plan in your new role?
- What else is important for your success in your new role?