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You Got the Job—Now What?

Build a plan for success in your new role.

Not all healthcare organizations have formal onboarding programs for new leaders, and fewer still have comprehensive programs beyond the basics for the first month or two. Even if your new company has a formal onboarding process, it is important that you build your own comprehensive approach to starting a new job that includes an action plan you can implement.

To ensure success in the hard-earned role you just secured, whether the job is at a new organization or an internal transfer or promotion, the requirements for success will be different than in the past. Initial questions to consider are: what is your mandate in the new role? How will you know how well you are performing?

Other differences between jobs that you may need to adjust to include communications requirements, work pace expectations, and the necessary skills and approaches to leadership for success. One of the best ways to build a comprehensive new-role action plan is to ask yourself (and your new manager and others) the right questions, use the answers to those questions to build specific, actionable steps and then purposefully implement that plan during the first six months in the new job.

And if you are a manager of new employees, you can support your new

hires and effectively onboard them as part of your team by helping them build their action plan for success. Support your new direct reports by collaborating with them to ask and answer the critical planning questions outlined here.

Establish a Mindset and Skill Set for Success

Start with the assumption that the new role will be nothing like your old role. A common and fundamental mistake people make in a new position is believing that the needed skills and approach to work will be the same as in the past. Additional questions to ask yourself before you start your new role include:

- How is this role different from my previous roles? What different skills will be required for me to succeed? How will I need to work differently than in the past?
- How do my current skills fit the role? Where is there a mismatch? What's my learning plan to close any gaps? Think about feedback you have had in the past about your weaknesses and how you can mitigate them in this role.
- Why have I been selected for the role? What strengths can I leverage to gain early wins?

Based on your answers, craft two or three action items focused on making

the necessary adjustments to your mindset and skill set.

Stay on Track With Your Manager

Understanding your top priorities according to your manager is a critical step once you start your new job. Don't wait to be told what the priorities are. Instead, discover what is of greatest importance by using these questions to help establish two or three additional action plan items that will help you reduce risk and seize opportunities:

- What are the top two or three priorities according to my manager? Plan a meeting or two focused on understanding what your boss and other senior leaders really want from you.
- What steps can I take to stay on the same page as my manager? How often does he or she want to communicate? Be sure to ask for and show that you appreciate feedback. Doing so will encourage your manager to keep providing it on a regular basis.
- Am I clear about the "how" in addition to the "what?" How do I need to work in this new role compared with my previous role? Are there different expectations about how I should communicate or how I should lead?

Establish a Strong Fact Base

Learning the business as quickly as you can is another critical early step to successful onboarding. Build into your plan action steps to ask and answer questions about the new organization or team with which you now work. Continue to ask these questions on a regular basis to keep up with the dramatic pace of change in the healthcare field:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? What are the key business drivers and metrics?
- Who are my “customers,” and what are their biggest needs? Talk directly with your customers about what they find most important.
- What are the needs of other constituencies—including local communities, government bodies, partners, vendors or suppliers—outside of the customers?

Build Relationships

Throughout every stage of your career, building relationships and establishing a base of trust and credibility is important. Remember that while your past successes helped you land the job, they do not help you keep it. Forming relationships and delivering results through those relationships is one key to sustained success. Consider these questions:

- What specific steps can I take to stay focused on building relationships with my team, leadership and peers?
- How can I find out who the key influencers in the organization are and which of those influential leaders is most critical to my success?

Lack of focus on building trusting relationships immediately in a new role is a key reason for lack of success. The reason being that when you build effective relationships with key influencers, you are more likely to gain all the information you need to secure early wins in your new role.

Secure Early Wins

Though most leaders want to make an impact in their new role quickly,

listening and learning from others first is the prudent approach. Ask yourself:

- What can I accomplish immediately that demonstrates to everyone that I can have a positive effect on the organization or team? How can I gain a commitment from my boss and team? What action steps are needed?
- Am I paying attention to how others are reacting to my new initiatives? Pay particular attention to any unexpected reactions, as they may indicate that you missed the mark or overstepped some bounds.

Answering these questions will help give you a practical way to think about company politics, and better prepare you to follow any formal and informal rules.

Create a Compelling Future

Great leaders establish a vision that is compelling to the team and organization and then implement a plan to accomplish it.

- What is a difficult but realistic goal or vision that I can quickly establish? The goal/vision should unite people around a common cause. It should be simple to understand, compelling and something the entire organization can contribute to in some way.
- How will I connect the goal/vision with what is important to people and what they care about? How can I inspire my team to accomplish something different and big? How can I make this goal compelling to each team member and my entire organization?
- How can I most effectively communicate this goal/vision?

Setting compelling goals should establish a positive future for the organization and create shared success.

Build Your Team/Organization

Another set of important action steps relate to whether you have the right people to accomplish your mandates. When coming into a new role, you have the opportunity to bring a fresh perspective on talent.

- What are my team’s biggest needs? Where is the team strong, and where do we have issues? How effective was the leader before me at meeting the team’s needs?
- What are the wider organizational needs? How is overall morale and engagement? How will I connect what I want to achieve with what people in the organization want to achieve?
- How will I help my direct reports—who are critical to driving change—build their teams and a commitment to the new priorities?

Use Your New Role Action Plan

Your action plan will help you get ahead of any potential issues that could derail you in the new role and ensure your long-term success. When building your plan, focus on a dozen key actions from the list above for the first three to six months. Keep asking and answering these questions, and make adjustments to ensure you stay on track. ▲

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