



Setting People up to Succeed

Each year a handful of senior people in your organisation will go through a one-off, high risk/high reward career transformation. Standard training and development responses are not designed to deal with these sorts of abnormal development needs. These people deserve special attention during these career transformations to make sure we set them up to succeed and not to fail.

Who are we talking about?

Each year we make a handful of key appointments that can substantially influence how our company will perform. Occasionally it is a low risk appointment—someone already working in the company who we transfer into a similar job in another business unit or location. However, in most cases these appointments have significant risk attached.

Risk Factors for Internal Appointments

Internal appointments which involve “career step changes” have a high inherent risk of failure. These are appointments where the nature of the job to be performed changes substantially (see side bar) or where there is a change in the fundamental level of the job (as described by Elliot Jacques).

Internal appointees face two key risks:

1. They misunderstand the role requirements of the new job. The behaviours which made them successful in their old job don't work in the new role and they have no experience of what will work to draw from.
2. They fail to step up to the higher strategic level required of the new role. They crowd their subordinates by interfering in work at that level and ignore the work they should be doing.

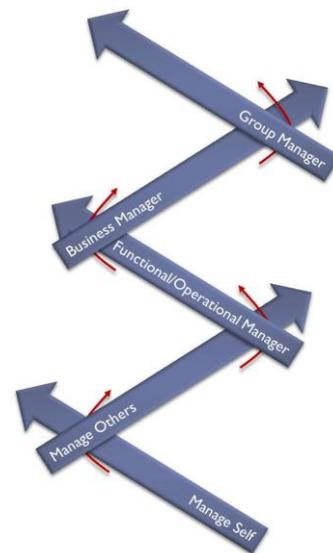
Risk Factors for External Appointments

External appointees may or may not face these problems. In addition they need to learn how to be effective within an unfamiliar culture and informal power structure. If they have been brought in as change agents they need to be effective in that role without acting so dissimilar to the existing culture that they are rejected before they can achieve any change.

Common Risk Factors

All new leaders have to turn the group of people who

Where the “nature of the job” changes



The Costs of Getting it wrong!

- The organisation suffers under an ineffective leader and is then leaderless while a replacement is found
- Those who made the selection decision have their judgement questioned
- Sunk costs (recruitment expenses and investment in development of internal staff) are lost
- Corporate reputation in the



report to them into a high performing team, and they need to do it quickly. How can they speed up so that it happens in 2 months rather than in half a year? How do they manage important first impressions? What sort of leadership style is appropriate for the team they are leading?

recruitment market is damaged

What Organisations should be doing

We spend a lot of money and time trying to find the right people to appoint to senior roles. It is only common sense and good risk management to make sure our investment pays off.

In the words of the Dusty Springfield song “wishing and hoping and praying” are not sufficient to make sure that the people we appoint have a better than even chance of succeeding in their new roles. (and if you want to hear that song click [here](#))

HR Departments should be made accountable by the CEO for ensuring that everything possible is done to make these senior appointments are successful.

The HR Department needs to establish a program with the following features:

- It should cover the top echelon of the organisation (depending on size this means any appointment within 2 or 3 roles of the CEO)
- Every appointment should be reviewed to see how many “high risk” factors as described above are in evidence
- The new appointee should be provided with access to an experienced external coach for the first 6 months of their new role. The coach is responsible for developing a plan with the new appointee to make sure they are successful in their new role
- That plan should be signed off with the Head of HR and the appointee’s supervisor
- Elements of the plan (depending on individual circumstances) should include:
 - Clarifying the new role accountabilities and authorities
 - Determining what behaviours will be successful in the new role and how to develop those which are not already in the appointee’s repertoire
 - Understanding the new organisational culture and how to work within it
 - Understanding what sort of leadership style will be most effective in the new circumstances and with the new team
 - Building an effective work team, and doing it quickly
 - Making sure the appointee is working at the right strategic level
 - Getting clear feedback on progress so corrections can be made early

