

Make the Most of a Promotion

After the excitement wears off, you need to get down to business. Here's how:

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Being promoted is almost always a cause for celebration. But it can also be a source of stress. Some 52% of U.S. corporate leaders surveyed last year by Development Dimensions International, a leadership development and executive hiring consultant, said that a clear sense of performance expectations would have been most helpful in the transition to a new role. And 20% of the respondents reported that being promoted was their number one challenge—and source of stress—in 2007, according to the report "Leaders in Transition: Stepping Up, Not Off." To minimize the stress, Matthew Pease, vice president of Executive Solutions at DDI and co-author of the report, suggests you confirm the job expectations, goals and roles with the senior executives at the onset of the job. "Put the end in mind at the beginning and start with the business outcomes that are needed," he says.

Your First 90 Days

Establish authority. With the culture of the organization in mind, refrain from making any immediate decisions, but make it clear that you will be in charge and accountable. Take stock, listen and make decisions carefully with the message that you value input from your team members.

Communicate constantly. "The way you communicate has to change as you move farther away from the front lines," says Michael Watkins, author of "The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels." Because you're likely to receive filtered information, establish alternate channels of communication by engaging with customers and others. Mr. Watkins says to set the tone for open, honest discussion that allows employees to share bad news and problems.

Focus on the business. When promoted within an organization, relationships must be restructured. "Former peers-turned direct reports and disappointed peers need time to grieve," says Mr. Watkins. Then re-enlist the good employees to work for you. "Take your personal relationships out of equation and turn your attention to the business goals and outcomes," says Mr. Pease.

Delegate differently. You may be used to delegating only specific tasks or projects but you'll need to think differently as you begin to delegate entire functions and business units. "When you manage, 10, 100, or 1,000 the degree you can pay attention to detail drops so you'll need to reset your own expectations and learn more effectively through others," Mr. Watkins.

Look for new advisors. Seek new advice to manage the stress of handling a job that is more political, more ambiguous and must rely more on others to get things done. "We tend to rely on what we've done in the past, but that won't make us successful in the future," says Mr. Pease. Mr. Watkins advises to identify people who exemplify high performance at your level and find out why they're successful.

Get feedback from above and below. To make sure you're on the right track, ask for comments from above and below on how you're doing. "It doesn't need to be formal performance appraisal but just some guidance," says Mr. Watkins. Finally, Mr. Pease says to secure early wins to help boost morale, credibility and accountability.

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