

# The First 90 Days

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## The Survivor's Guide for Success at Your New Job

*The First 90 Days* is basically a survivor's guide for leaders in how to hit the ground running when they start a new job. Rather than "sink or swim", it's a systematic way to survive and thrive in your new role.

The beauty is, *The First 90 Days* really helps you thrive on the job whether you are new to the job, or have had the job for a while. It helps whether you lead teams or are a one-man band. It's one of the best books that demystifies what it means to be effective in terms of self-leadership, team-leadership, and organizational leadership. It's the corporate warrior's playbook for success.

## The Five Propositions

1. *The root causes of transition failure always lie in a pernicious interaction between the situation, with its opportunities and pitfalls, and the individual, with his or her strengths and vulnerabilities.*
2. *There are systematic methods that leaders can employ to both lessen the likelihood of failure and reach the breakeven point faster.*
3. *The overriding goal in a transition is to build momentum by creating virtuous cycles that build credibility and by avoiding getting caught in vicious cycles that damage credibility.*
4. *Transitions are a crucible for leadership development and should be managed accordingly.*
5. *Adoption of a standard framework for accelerating transitions can yield big returns for organizations.*

# My Favorite Practices for New Job Success

There are a lot of practices to learn and absorb. If I reflect on the ones that I use the most for the greatest impact, they boil down to this:

1. *STARS (Start-up, Turnaround, Realignment, Sustaining Success)*
2. *The Five Conversations (situation diagnosis, expectations, style, resources, personal development)*
3. *Build your advice and counsel network (technical advisers, cultural interpreters, and political counselors)*
4. *Identify challenges and opportunities*
5. *Secure early wins*
6. *Setting up action-forcing events*
7. *Identifying supporters, opponents, and convincibles*
8. *Leverage "teachable moments"*
9. *Make waves of change*
10. *Structured reflection*

When you read *The First 90 Days*, be sure to pay extra attention to the language of STARS and think of it in terms of a lens across people, process, and product. Each of those can be a in a very different situation. For example, if you think that the product is in a Start-Up, but others think of it as a re-alignment, that can cause some serious problems in your effectiveness. Once you understand the lay of the land, you can better bridge where things are, with where you would like things to be.

## Key Backbone for New Job Success

1. Promote Yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a clear break-even point</li><li>• Assess your vulnerabilities</li><li>• Watch out for your strengths</li><li>• Relearn how to learn</li><li>• Rework your network</li></ul>
2. Accelerate Your Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define your learning agenda</li><li>• Identify the best sources of insight</li><li>• Create a learning plan</li></ul>
3. Match Strategy to Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diagnose the business situation</li><li>• Understand the history</li><li>• Identify challenges and opportunities</li><li>• Lead with the right skills</li><li>• Focus your energy</li><li>• Diagnose your portfolio</li><li>• Reward success</li><li>• Adopt 4-D Development (managerial functions, geographic regions, career cross-roads, and STARS business situations)</li></ul>

4. Secure Early Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid common traps</li> <li>• Make waves of change</li> <li>• Establish long-term goals</li> <li>• Focus on business priorities and behavioral changes</li> <li>• Define your A-team priorities</li> <li>• Secure early wins</li> <li>• Build credibility</li> <li>• Leverage "teachable moments"</li> <li>• Secure tangible results</li> <li>• Launch pilot projects</li> <li>• Elevate change agents</li> <li>• Avoid predictable surprises</li> </ul>
5. Negotiate Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for 5 conversations (situational diagnosis, expectations, style, resources, and personal development)</li> <li>• Don't trash the past</li> <li>• Don't stay away</li> <li>• Don't surprise your boss</li> <li>• Don't approach your boss only with problems</li> <li>• Don't run down your checklist</li> <li>• Don't try to change the boss</li> <li>• Take 100% responsibility for making the relationship work</li> <li>• Clarify mutual expectations early and often</li> <li>• Negotiate timelines for diagnosis and action planning</li> <li>• Aim for early wins in areas important to the boss</li> <li>• Pursue good marks from those whose opinions your boss respects</li> </ul>
6. Achieve Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design organizational architecture (strategy, structure, systems, skills, and culture)</li> <li>• Identify misalignments (skills and strategy, systems and strategy, structure and systems)</li> <li>• Avoid common traps</li> <li>• Craft strategy</li> </ul>
7. Build Your Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess your existing team</li> <li>• Align goals, incentives, and measures</li> <li>• Establish new team processes</li> </ul>
8. Create Coalitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map the influence landscape</li> <li>• Identify supporters, opponents, and convincibles</li> <li>• Use the tools of persuasion</li> <li>• Sequence to build momentum</li> </ul>
9. Keep Your Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take stock</li> <li>• Avoid vicious cycles</li> <li>• Aim for self-efficacy (adopt success strategies, enforce personal disciplines, build your support systems)</li> <li>• Build your advice and counsel network (technical advisors, cultural interpreters, and political counselors)</li> <li>• Structured reflection</li> </ul>
10. Expedite Everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a common language (STARS model, agenda for technical, cultural, and political learning, five conversations about situation, expectations, style, resources, and personal development, A-item priorities, goals for behavior change and ideas for early wins, priorities for strengthening their advice-and-counsel network)</li> <li>• Develop high-potential leaders</li> </ul>

- Bring in people from the outside
- Use performance-support tools

## Implementing "The First 90 Days" Strategies

Week	Phase	Tasks
1-2	Self-Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess your new role and responsibilities</li> <li>• Identify tasks to delegate</li> <li>• Develop a formal communication plan</li> <li>• Analyze your strengths and weaknesses in the new position</li> </ul>
2-4	Accelerated Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a learning agenda with specific questions about the organization's past, present, and future</li> <li>• Identify key information sources within and outside the organization</li> <li>• Schedule meetings with identified sources</li> </ul>
3-5	Strategy Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a STARS analysis of your current business situation</li> <li>• Develop a leadership approach tailored to your STARS category</li> </ul>
4-6	Boss Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule the five key conversations with your boss</li> <li>• Prepare specific talking points for each conversation</li> </ul>
5-8	Early Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify 2-3 early-win projects to launch</li> <li>• Develop a risk analysis for your first 90 days</li> </ul>
6-10	Team and Organization Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an alignment analysis of your organization or team</li> <li>• Create an action plan to address any misalignments</li> <li>• Create assessment criteria for evaluating team members</li> <li>• Develop individual development plans for key team members</li> </ul>
8-12	Alliance Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map out your influence landscape</li> <li>• Develop strategies for building key alliances</li> </ul>
Ongoing	Personal Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a self-care plan for your first 90 days</li> <li>• Set up boundaries to protect your work-life balance</li> </ul>
10-13	Transition Acceleration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an onboarding process for new team members</li> <li>• Create a system for sharing lessons learned and best practices within your team</li> </ul>
13	90-Day Review and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a detailed 90-day action plan based on the book's principles</li> <li>• Set up regular check-ins to review and adjust your plan as needed</li> </ul>

30 Days	60 Days	90 Days
<b>Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priority 1</li> <li>Priority 2</li> <li>Priority 3</li> </ul> <b>Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal 1</li> <li>Goal 2</li> <li>Goal 3</li> </ul> <b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milestone 1</li> <li>Milestone 2</li> <li>Milestone 3</li> </ul> <b>Outputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnosis of the Situation</li> <li>Identification of Key Priorities</li> <li>Plan for Next 30 Days</li> </ul> <b>Manager Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Situation Conversation with Manager</li> <li>Expectations Conversation with Manager</li> <li>Buy-in of Plan for Next 30 Days</li> </ul>	<b>Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priority 1</li> <li>Priority 2</li> <li>Priority 3</li> </ul> <b>Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal 1</li> <li>Goal 2</li> <li>Goal 3</li> </ul> <b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milestone 1</li> <li>Milestone 2</li> <li>Milestone 3</li> </ul> <b>Outputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of Necessary Resources of Key Initiatives</li> <li>Presentation of Early Assessments</li> <li>Plan for Next 30 Days</li> </ul> <b>Manager Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess Progress for Previous 30 Days</li> <li>Discuss Plan for Next 30 Days</li> </ul>	<b>Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priority 1</li> <li>Priority 2</li> <li>Priority 3</li> </ul> <b>Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal 1</li> <li>Goal 2</li> <li>Goal 3</li> </ul> <b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milestone 1</li> <li>Milestone 2</li> <li>Milestone 3</li> </ul> <b>Outputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Wins</li> </ul> <b>Manager Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Results with Manager</li> </ul>

## The First 90 Days

They say you never get a second chance to make a first impression. This is unfair, because the first impression may be far from true. But it's long-lasting, and it can be very hard to get rid of the image stuck to your personality by mistake. Unfortunately, this image can impact your future relationships. And your career as well, by the way.

"The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter" by Michael D. Watkins is dedicated to an important problem in the professional world – the problem of transition, in particular to a leadership role. According to Watkins, the first 90 days in a new position are crucial: they will define if you fail or succeed as a leader.

Watkins, a co-founder of Genesis Advisors, a leadership development consultancy, tells us about ten fundamental principles that can help a newly appointed leader make the transition an easier process. These ten principles represent a systematic approach, following which you can lay the foundation for your wins and avoid wrong moves that can prove disastrous.

### Key transition milestones

Your transition begins the moment you are being considered for a job. By roughly the three month mark key people in your organisation – your bosses, peers, and direct reports – typically expect you to get some traction.

Thus, you should use the 90-day period as a planning horizon. Doing so will help you confront the need to operate in a compressed time frame. No matter how much preparation time you get, start planning what you hope to achieve by specific milestones.

FIGURE 1-1

### The break-even point

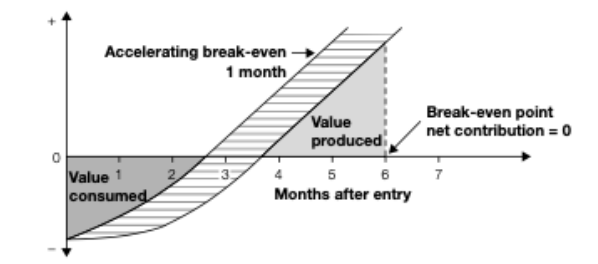


FIGURE 1-3

### The virtuous cycle of transitions

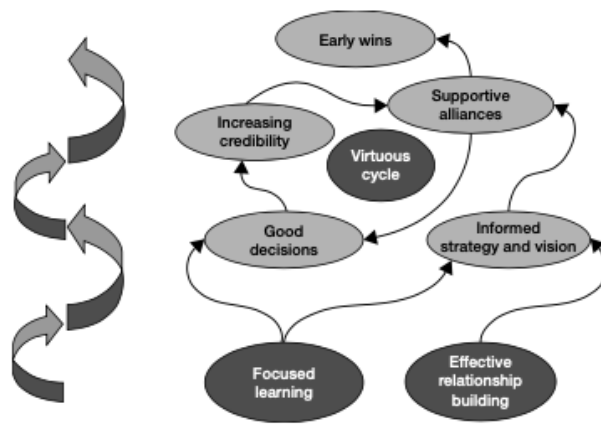


FIGURE 1-3

The virtuous cycle of transitions

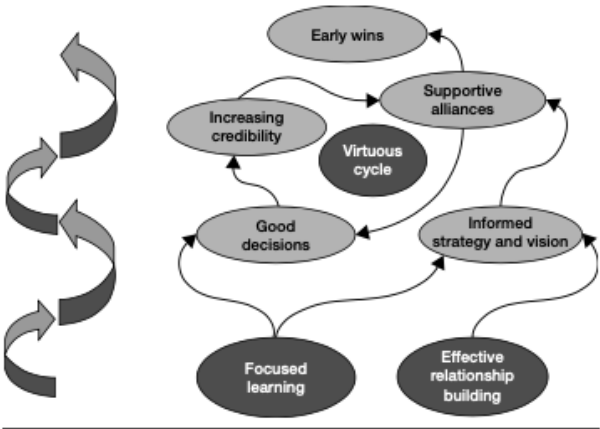


TABLE 1-1

Transition Risk Assessment

To transition effectively, first identify the risks you face as you move into your new role using the Transition Risk Assessment. Start by checking off the types of transitions you are experiencing using the middle column. Then, for each item you checked, assess how challenging you are finding that particular shift on a 1–10 scale, where 1 means very easy and 10 means very difficult. Total the numbers in the right-hand column to get your Transition Risk Index (up to 100). The index gives you a sense of the magnitude of the challenge and the specific dimensions of your overall transition on which you most need to focus.

Type of transition	Check each that applies	Assess relative difficulty for you (1–10)
Moving to a new industry or profession		
Joining a new company		
Moving to a new unit or group in the same company		
Being promoted to a higher level		
Leading former peers (assuming you have been promoted)		
Moving from one function to another (e.g., sales to marketing)		
Taking on a cross-functional leadership role for the first time		
Moving geographically		
Entering a new national or ethnic culture		
Having to do two jobs at the same time (finishing old role while starting new one)		
Taking on a newly created role (as opposed to an existing role)		
Entering an organization in which major change already is going on		
Sum the numbers in the right-most column to calculate your Transition Risk Index		

FIGURE 1-4

### Key transition milestones

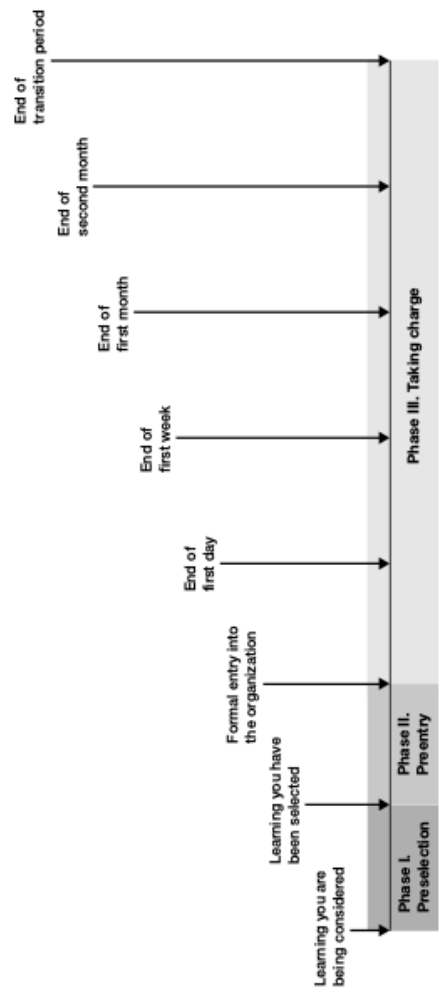


FIGURE 1-1

### Core promotion challenges

*For each core challenge there are corresponding strategies that newly promoted leaders should employ.*

What's really changed?	What should you do?
<b>Broader impact horizon.</b> There is a broader range of issues, people, and ideas to focus on.	Balance depth and breadth.
<b>Greater complexity and ambiguity.</b> There are more variables, and there is greater uncertainty about outcomes.	Delegate more deeply.
<b>Tougher organizational politics.</b> There are more powerful stakeholders to contend with.	Influence differently.
<b>Further from the front lines.</b> There is greater distance between you and the people executing on the ground, potentially weakening communication and adding more filters.	Communicate more formally.
<b>More scrutiny.</b> There is more attention paid to your actions by more people, more frequently.	Adjust to greater visibility.



FIGURE 1-2

The culture pyramid

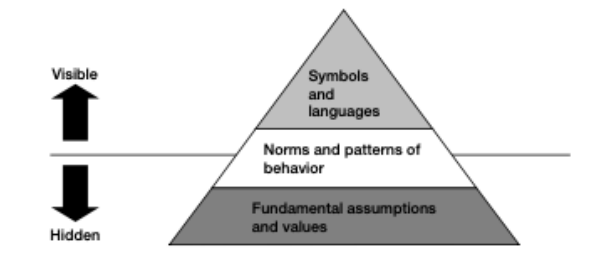


TABLE 1-1

Onboarding checklists

Business orientation checklist

- As early as possible, get access to publicly available information about financials, products, strategy, and brands.
- Identify additional sources of information, such as websites and analyst reports.
- If appropriate for your level, ask the business to assemble a briefing book.
- If possible, schedule familiarization tours of key facilities before the formal start date.

Stakeholder connection checklist

- Ask your boss to identify and introduce you to the key people you should connect with early on.
- If possible, meet with some stakeholders before the formal start.
- Take control of your calendar, and schedule early meetings with key stakeholders.
- Be careful to focus on lateral relationships (peers, others) and not only vertical ones (boss, direct reports).

Expectations alignment checklist

- Understand and engage in business planning and performance management.
- No matter how well you think you understand what you need to do, schedule a conversation with your boss about expectations in your first week.
- Have explicit conversations about working styles with bosses and direct reports as early as possible.

Cultural adaptation checklist

- During recruiting, ask questions about the organization's culture.
- Schedule conversations with your new boss and HR to discuss work culture, and check back with them regularly.
- Identify people inside the organization who could serve as culture interpreters.
- After thirty days, conduct an informal 360-degree check-in with your boss and peers to gauge how adaptation is proceeding.

TABLE 1-2

**Assessment of problem preferences**

Assess your intrinsic interest in solving problems in each of these domains on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very little interest and 10 means a great deal of interest.

Design of appraisal and reward systems	Employee morale	Equity/fairness
Management of financial risk	Budgeting	Cost-consciousness
Product positioning	Relationships with customers	Organizational customer focus
Product or service quality	Relationships with distributors and suppliers	Continuous improvement
Project management systems	Relationships among R&D, marketing, and operations	Cross-functional cooperation

TABLE 1-3

**Preferences for problems and functions**

	Technical	Political	Cultural	Total
Human resources				
Finance				
Marketing				
Operations				
Research and development				
Total				

## Chapter 1. Prepare Yourself

Preparing yourself means letting go of the past and embracing the imperatives of the new situation to give yourself a running start. It can be hard work, but it is essential.

### Recognise the new role requires a different way of working

- Do not continue to do what you are comfortable with (e.g. micro managing in your field of expertise).

- LET GO of familiar and “easy” working patterns and habits. Challenge yourself. Is this really what this new job requires for success?

## **Establish a clear breakpoint from your old to new job**

- Mentally give yourself the time and opportunity to do this.
- Think through the differences between your old and new job.
- How will you need to think and act differently in the new role?

## **Plan the first 90 days — even if it’s a quick sketch**

- Most people will expect you are 100% transitioned and delivering value by the end of 90 days.
- What do you want to achieve by the end of the first day? First week? First month, second month, and third month?

## **Identify your potential vulnerabilities**

- Your strengths and interests: when times are tough, you may fall back to something you are good at as it feels like you can make progress in this area. Be wary! What are you ignoring by acting in this way? Also, is this the role of your new job or your old job?
- Your weaknesses: which areas are you least interested in working on? This could be functional (e.g. HR, finance) or a problem type (e.g. technical, cultural, political). Know this upfront so you can keep an eye on yourself, as you are likely to ignore these areas.

## **Rework your network**

- Find political counsellors and personal advisors.

## **Getting Promoted**

A promotion means you’re expected to demonstrate a new behavior, as your duties change. Doing the same but more, a typical mistake people make, doesn’t work. At this stage, Watkins recommends considering the following:

**Rethink what you delegate.** Naturally, as you get promoted, the area of your responsibility gets wider, and the tasks become more complex and ambiguous. A good idea is to start delegating. But keep in mind that delegating must fit the context: in a small organization of 5 people, you can delegate specific tasks. If you lead 50 people, you can delegate projects. And if it’s a 5,000 organization, your direct reports can run businesses.

**Communicate more formally.** A leader role lets you see a broader picture but, at the same time, you move farther away from the front-line workers. To stay involved in the key processes, you should maintain regular contact with everyone through meetings or other ways of communication.

## **Onboarding into a New Company**

Joining a new company, leaders lack situational context: they are perceived as strangers who don’t know the culture. Effective onboarding consists of four pillars that help overcome the

initial barriers:

1. Business orientation. Learn about your company but don't focus on its specific parts. Treat it as a whole.
2. Stakeholder connection. Identify stakeholders as soon as possible and build a stable relationship with them. As Watkins points out, "you don't want to be meeting your neighbors for the first time in the middle of the night when your house is burning down."
3. Expectations alignment. Be ready that your expectations before you join the company can differ from the reality: because recruiting is like romance, and employment – like marriage, says Watkins.
4. Cultural adaptation. Culture is a set of patterns of communication, thinking, and acting based on shared values. The author describes it as a three-layered pyramid: the surface layer includes symbols and shared languages (like acronyms used in a specific field); the middle layer concerns organizational norms and accepted behavior; and the lower one is about values and assumptions – for example, how exactly the power is distributed in the company.

In addition to that, Watkins recommends analyzing your strengths and weaknesses, keeping in mind that what was your strong suit in your old role can transform into a vulnerability in a new one – for example, attention to detail can lead to micromanagement in a leadership position.

### Questions to consider:

- How has your role changed with this promotion or new position?
- What tasks or responsibilities should you now delegate?
- How will you adapt your communication style for your new role?
- What are your current strengths and weaknesses in this new context?

- ☐ Identify tasks to delegate in your new role
- ☐ Develop a more formal communication plan
- ☐ Analyze your strengths and weaknesses in the new position

### Checklist

1. If you have been promoted, what are the implications for your need to balance breadth and depth, delegate, influence, communicate, and exhibit leadership presence?
2. If you are joining a new organization, how will you orient yourself to the business, identify and connect with key stakeholders, clarify expectations, and adapt to the new culture? What is the right balance between adapting to the new situation and trying to alter it?
3. What has made you successful so far in your career? Can you succeed in your new position by relying solely on those strengths? If not, what are the critical skills you need to develop?
4. Are there aspects of your new job that are critical but that you prefer not to focus on? Why? How will you compensate for your potential blind spots?

5. How can you ensure that you make the mental leap into the new position? From whom might you seek advice and counsel on this? What other activities might help you do this?

## Chapter 2. Accelerate Your Learning

To be successful, you have to understand what happened in the past. The book suggests developing a structured learning agenda. Talk to people both internal and external to the business, in as many different business units as possible and at different levels.

### Create a learning agenda

Before speaking to individuals, create a structured list of questions. Ask the same questions each time. This ensures you are not swayed by individuals who speak passionately about one topic but fail to mention others (loudest voice in the room syndrome).

The book includes a great selection of questions you may want to ask. Think about asking about the past, the present and the future. An example of each type of question:

- **Past:** what has contributed to our good performance? This lets you know what you should value in the existing organisation, so you don't accidentally eliminate it.
- **Present:** what is the company vision? This tells you whether the strategy is well cascaded throughout the organisation.
- **Future:** what are our most promising opportunities? This leverages existing knowledge for quick wins in the future.

Be aware you may give more credence to the first few people you interview, and may become lazy in your learning approach towards the end. Don't allow yourself to do this, as it means you will be swayed by whomever you spoke with first.

### Understand the work culture

You should use your learning agenda to diagnose the company's work culture. The book suggests two frameworks to help with this. Framework one looks at symbols, norms and assumptions.

- **Symbols:** these are physical markers, e.g. logos, dress code
- **Norms:** these are shared social rules and behaviours, both positive and negative
- **Assumptions:** these are unarticulated beliefs, truths people take for granted.

Of the three topics above, assumptions are the key to understanding a culture. The two most relevant assumptions for new leaders to understand are:

- **Power:** who can make decisions? Who has the authority? What do you need to do to get power?
- **Value:** which actions create or destroy value?

The second framework focuses on behaviours. I didn't find this framework helpful as it isn't MECE (mutually exclusive collectively exhaustive). However for completeness, it includes:

- **Organisational culture:** how people treat each other, values they share, routines they follow.

- **Professional culture:** how different managers across business units behave.
- **Geographic culture:** self explanatory — how people in different locations behave.

Once you understand the culture you are inheriting, you need to decide whether you want to adapt to this culture or change it.

FIGURE 2-1

**Sources of knowledge**

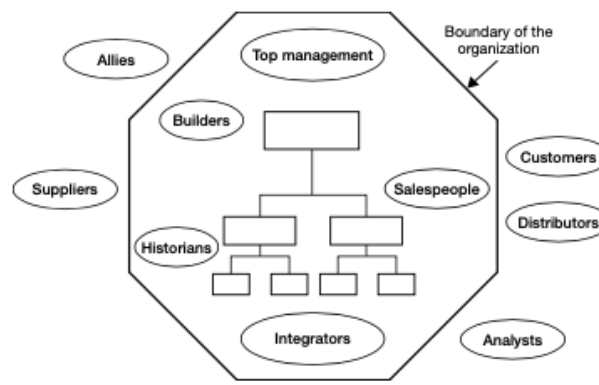


TABLE 2-1

**Structured methods for learning**

Method	Uses	Useful for
Organizational climate and employee satisfaction surveys	Learning about culture and morale. Many organizations do such surveys regularly, and a database may already be available. If not, consider setting up a regular survey of employee perceptions.	Useful for managers at all levels if the analysis is available specifically for your unit or group. Usefulness depends on the granularity of the collection and analysis. This also assumes the survey instrument is a good one and the data has been collected carefully and analyzed rigorously.
Structured sets of interviews with slices of the organization or unit	Identifying shared and divergent perceptions of opportunities and problems. You can interview people at the same level in different departments (a horizontal slice) or bore down through multiple levels (a vertical slice). Whichever dimension you choose, ask everybody the same questions, and look for similarities and differences in people's responses.	Most useful for managers leading groups of people from different functional backgrounds. Can be useful at lower levels if the unit is experiencing significant problems.
Focus groups	Probing issues that preoccupy key groups of employees, such as morale issues among frontline production or service workers. Gathering groups of people who work together also lets you see how they interact and identify who displays leadership. Fostering discussion promotes deeper insight.	Most useful for managers of large groups or people who perform a similar function, such as sales managers or plant managers. Can be useful for senior managers as a way of getting quick insights into the perceptions of key employee constituencies.

(Continued)

TABLE 2-1

**Structured methods for learning (continued)**

Method	Uses	Useful for
Analysis of critical past decisions	Illuminating decision-making patterns and sources of power and influence. Select an important recent decision, and look into how it was made. Who exerted influence at each stage? Talk with the people involved, probe their perceptions, and note what is and is not said.	Most useful for higher-level managers of business units or project groups.
Process analysis	Examining interactions among departments or functions and assessing the efficiency of a process. Select an important process, such as delivery of products to customers or distributors, and assign a cross-functional group to chart the process and identify bottlenecks and problems.	Most useful for managers of units or groups in which the work of multiple functional specialties must be integrated. Can be useful for lower-level managers as a way of understanding how their groups fit into larger processes.
Plant and market tours	Learning firsthand from people close to the product. Plant tours let you meet production personnel informally and listen to their concerns. Meetings with sales and production staff help you assess technical capabilities. Market tours can introduce you to customers, whose comments can reveal problems and opportunities.	Most useful for managers of business units.
Pilot projects	Gaining deep insight into technical capabilities, culture, and politics. Although these insights are not the primary purpose of pilot projects, you can learn a lot from how the organization or group responds to your pilot initiatives.	Useful for managers at all levels. The size of the pilot projects and their impact will increase as you rise through the organization.

The more efficiently and effectively you learn, the more quickly you will close your window of vulnerability... The faster you climb the learning curve, the earlier you can begin to make good business decisions.

For a successful transition, you must keep learning. Watkins mentions the following technique that can help you learn faster and more effectively:

## Defining Your Learning Agenda

Your learning agenda consists of three blocks of questions answering which you can make hypotheses about why things happen the way they do:

1. **Questions about the past:** How did this organization perform in the past? What are the causes of its successes and failures? What changes were made, and who was in charge of implementing them?



2. **Questions about the present:** What is the company's vision? Who has influence, and who is trustworthy? Why? What are the key processes in the company?
3. **Questions about the future:** What are the challenges and opportunities? What are the barriers to the needed changes?

Watkins also mentions the 4 domains of learning, each of which can provide a different type of information. In the technical domain, you learn about technologies, processes, and systems. In the interpersonal domain, you learn about people – your boss, peers, etc. The cultural domain is about values and norms. Finally, the political domain concerns informal structures that shadow the formal ones, which are not visible to the people who are new to the organization.

## Identifying the best sources of insight

The information about your organization can be provided from both inside and outside. The best sources of internal information are frontline workers, key members of finance, legal, and human resource areas, so-called natural historians (people who have worked for the organization for a long time). As for the external information, these are customers, suppliers, and distributors.

### Questions to consider:

- What are the key questions you need to ask about your organization's past, present, and future?
  - How did we get to this point?
  - Who are the best sources of insight within and outside your organization?
  - How can you efficiently gather information across the technical, cultural, political, and interpersonal domains?
  - SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
- ☐ Create a learning agenda with specific questions for each time frame (past, present, future)
- ☐ Identify and schedule meetings with key information sources

## Checklist

**2. Accelerate your learning.** You need to climb the learning curve as fast as you can in your new organisation. You must be systematic and focused about deciding what you need to learn and how you will learn it most efficiently.

1. How effective are you at learning about new organisations? Do you sometimes fall prey to the action imperative? To coming in with "the" answer? If so, how will you avoid doing this?
2. What is your learning agenda? Based on what you know now, compose a list of questions to guide your early inquiries. If you have begun to form hypotheses about what is going on, what are they, and how will you test them?
3. Given the questions you want to answer, who is likely to provide you with the most useful insights?
4. How might you increase the efficiency of your learning process? What are some structured ways you might extract more insights for your investment of time and energy?

5. What support is available to accelerate your learning, and how might you best leverage it?

6. Given your answers to the previous questions, start to create your learning plan.

## Chapter 3. Match Strategy to Situation

	Start-Up	Turnaround	Accelerated Growth	Realignment	Sustaining Success
<b>Overview</b>	Assembling capabilities to get a new business or initiative off the ground	Saving a business or initiative in serious trouble	Managing a rapidly expanding business	Reenergising a previously successful organisation facing problems	Preserving vitality of a successful organisation and taking it to the next level
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building strategy, structures, and systems from scratch</li> <li>• Recruiting a high-performing team</li> <li>• Making do with limited resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reenergising demoralised stakeholders</li> <li>• Making decisions under time pressure</li> <li>• Implementing painful cuts and personnel changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting in place structures and systems to permit scaling</li> <li>• Integrating many new employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convincing employees that change is necessary</li> <li>• Restructuring the top team and refocusing the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing in the shadow of the former leader</li> <li>• Playing good defence before new initiatives</li> <li>• Finding ways to take the business further</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing things right from the beginning</li> <li>• People energised by possibilities</li> <li>• No rigid preconceptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change necessity recognised</li> <li>• External support from constituencies</li> <li>• Quick wins have big impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth potential motivates people</li> <li>• People willing to stretch themselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant pockets of strength exist</li> <li>• People want to maintain success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong team may be in place</li> <li>• Motivated to continue success</li> <li>• Foundation for growth may exist</li> </ul>

TABLE 3-1

**The STARS model**

Start-Up	Turnaround	Accelerated growth	Realignment	Sustaining success
Assembling the capabilities (people, financing, and technology) to get a new business or initiative off the ground	Saving a business or initiative widely acknowledged to be in serious trouble	Managing a rapidly expanding business	Reenergizing a previously successful organization that now faces problems	Preserving the vitality of a successful organization and taking it to the next level
<b>Challenges</b> Building the strategy, structures, and systems from scratch without a clear framework or boundaries Recruiting and welding together a high-performing team Making do with limited resources	Reenergizing demoralized employees and other stakeholders Making effective decisions under time pressure Going deep enough with painful cuts and difficult personnel choices	Putting in place structures and systems to permit scaling Integrating many new employees	Convincing employees that change is necessary Carefully restructuring the top team and refocusing the organization	Living in the shadow of the former leader and managing the team he or she created Playing good defense before embarking on too many new initiatives Finding ways to take the business to the next level
<b>Opportunities</b> You can do things right from the beginning. People are energized by the possibilities. There are no rigid preconceptions.	Everyone recognizes that change is necessary. Affected constituencies offer significant external support. A little success goes a long way.	The potential for growth helps to motivate people. People will be inclined to stretch themselves and those who work for them.	The organization has significant pockets of strength. People want to continue to see themselves as successful.	A strong team may already be in place. People are motivated to continue their history of success. A foundation for continued success (such as a long product pipeline) may be in place.

TABLE 3-2

**Diagnosing your STARS portfolio**

Use the table to identify the mix of STARS situations you face. First, identify which elements (projects, processes, products, perhaps even complete businesses) in your new responsibilities fall into the various STARS situations in the first column; list those elements in the second column. You need not have something in every category. Everything may be in turnaround, or it may be a mix of two or three types. Then use the third column to estimate the percentage of your effort that should be allocated to each category in the next 90 days, making sure it adds up to 100%. Finally, think about which of these situations you most prefer to do. If you also assigned that situation the highest priority, be sure that your preferences are not overly influencing your priorities.

STARS situation	Job element	Priority percentage
Start-up		
Turnaround		
Accelerating growth		
Realignment		
Sustaining success		
		100

TABLE 3-3

**Leading change in turnarounds versus realignments**

	Turnarounds	Realignments
<b>1. Organize to learn</b> Figure out what you most need to learn, from whom, and how you can best learn it.	Focus on technical learning (strategy, markets, technologies, and so on). Prepare to act quickly.	Focus on cultural and political learning. Prepare to act deliberately.
<b>2. Define strategic intent</b> Develop and communicate a compelling vision for what the organization will become. Outline a clear strategy for achieving that vision.	Prune noncore businesses.	Hone and leverage existing capabilities. Stimulate innovation.
<b>3. Establish A-item priorities</b> Identify a few vital goals and pursue them relentlessly. Think about what you need to have accomplished by the end of year 1 in the new position.	Make faster, bolder moves. Focus on strategy and structure.	Make slower, more deliberate moves. Focus on systems, skills, and culture.
<b>4. Build the leadership team</b> Evaluate the team you inherited. Move deftly to make the necessary changes; find the optimal balance between bringing in outside talent and elevating high potentials within the organization.	Clean house at the top. Recruit external talent.	Make a few important changes. Promote high potentials from within.
<b>5. Secure early wins</b> Think through how you plan to "arrive" in the new organization. Find ways to build personal credibility and energize the ranks.	Shift the organizational mind-set from despair to hope.	Shift the organizational mind-set from denial to awareness.
<b>6. Create supporting alliances</b> Identify how the organization really works and who has influence. Create key coalitions in support of your initiatives.	Gain support from bosses and other stakeholders to invest the required resources.	Build alliances sideways and down to ensure better execution.

TABLE 3-4

**STARS challenges and preferences**

*Survey respondents were asked to identify which STARS situation they thought was the most challenging and which they most preferred (i.e., would choose if they could). The differences in their assessments are striking, particularly when the sums of the numbers for more action-oriented, authority-driven STARS situations (start-up, turnaround, and accelerated growth) are compared to those that call for more focus on learning, reflection, and influence (realignment and sustaining success).*

STARS situation	Most challenging	Most preferred
Start-up	13.5%	47.1%
Turnaround	21.9%	16.7%
Accelerated growth	11.6%	16.1%
Realignment	30.3%	12.7%
Sustaining success	22.6%	7.4%
Total	100%	100%
Start-up, turnaround, or accelerated growth	47.1%	79.9%
Realignment or sustaining success	52.9%	20.1%

What kind of change leader am I? Here the answer has implications for how you should adjust your leadership style. Careful diagnosis of the business situation will clarify the challenges, opportunities, and resources available to you.

You cannot figure out what to do if you don't understand the situation. To analyze at what point your company currently is, Watkins suggests using the STARS Model, where "STARS" stands for five common business situations:

**Start-up.** In a start-up, you have to start the business, project, or product, assembling capabilities – people, funding, and technology. Here the prevailing mood is "excited confusion", and you're expected to channel that energy in the right direction.

**Turnaround.** This is a situation where a group is in trouble, and changes need to be done – rapidly and decisively. People can be in despair, and they want you to make a plan and give them confidence.

**Accelerated-growth situation.** This means a business is growing fast, and you're supposed to put in processes to help it expand, including hiring more people and introducing more discipline and systems to work within.

These three situations share the same characteristics: they require a lot of energy and intensive work.

**Realignment.** In a realignment, your task is to "revitalize" a product, process, or project – because problems are already looming, even though not everyone sees them yet. You will have to convince your people they need to be open to change.

**Sustaining-success situation.** Here you're supposed to preserve the success that already exists. The organization cannot just rest on its laurels. You need to understand why it's become successful and let the business prosper. Besides, you must keep people motivated, so invent challenges.

In contrast to the first three types, realignment and sustaining-success organizations are already formed, which means you don't start from scratch and usually have time before making important decisions.

As we see, each of the situations described is unique and needs to be handled accordingly by a leader.

### **Turnaround: rapid diagnosis, aggressive moves**

The key challenges for turnaround situations are:

- People are not motivated
- Time pressures to make tough decisions quickly with limited information
- Executing difficult decisions, often HR and personnel related

However the opportunities are:

- Small successes can have a large impact
- You may find support from external parties (e.g. clients, suppliers)

- People recognise the need to change

### **Realignment: build support for the required change**

Realignment requires more subtle leadership skills. You will need strong change management skills and to deeply understand the existing culture and political environment of your business.

When realigning a business, the challenges are:

- Managing established and ingrained cultural norms that no longer serve the business
- Convincing people that change is required

The opportunities are:

- There are many existing strengths in the business you can leverage
- People want to experience continued success as individuals and as a business

### **Sustaining success: understand culture & politics**

The leadership skills to sustain success are the same as for realignment: change management and cultural and political awareness.

To sustain success, these challenges exist:

- Making the “right” decision so you do not cause problems in the future
- Living in the shadow of the past revered leader
- Determining how to make a step change in the business performance

The opportunities are:

- Frameworks for success are often already in place, including strong teams
- People are motivated to continue succeeding

### **Questions to consider:**

- Which STARS category best describes your current situation?
- What are the specific challenges and opportunities in your situation?
- How should you adapt your leadership style to match the situation?

☐ Conduct a STARS analysis of your current business situation

☐ Develop a leadership approach tailored to your STARS category

### **Checklist**

**Match your strategy to the situation.** Different types of situations (see STARS model above) require you to make significant adjustments in how you plan and execute your transition. A clear diagnosis of the situation is essential for developing your action plan.

1. What portfolio of STARS situations have you inherited? Which portions of your responsibilities are in start-up, turnaround, accelerated-growth, realignment, and sustaining-success modes?

2. What are the implications for the challenges and opportunities you are likely to confront, and for the way you should approach your transition?
3. What are the implications for your learning agenda? Do you need to understand only the technical side of the business, or is it critical that you understand culture and policies as well?
4. What is the prevailing climate in your organisation? What psychological transformations do you need to make, and how will you bring them about?
5. How can you best lead change given the situation you face?
6. Which of your skills and strengths are more likely to be most valuable in your new situation, and which have the potential to get you into trouble?
7. What are the implications for the team you need to build?

## Chapter 4. Negotiate Success

TABLE 4-1

**The five conversations**

Conversation	Current status	Priorities for the next 30 days
<i>Situation:</i> How does your boss see your STARS portfolio?		
<i>Expectations:</i> What are you expected to accomplish?		
<i>Resources:</i> What resources do you have at your disposal?		
<i>Style:</i> How can you best work together?		
<i>Personal development:</i> What is going well, and what do you need to do differently?		

TABLE 4-2

**Matching support to your situation**

Situation	Typical roles for your boss
Start-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help getting needed resources quickly</li> <li>• Clear, measurable goals</li> <li>• Guidance at strategic breakpoints</li> <li>• Help staying focused</li> </ul>
Turnaround	Same as start-up, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for making tough personnel calls</li> <li>• Support for changing or correcting external image</li> <li>• Help cutting deeply enough, fast enough</li> </ul>
Accelerated growth	Same as start-up, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for getting investment to fuel growth at the right rate in the right ways</li> <li>• Help making the case for new systems and structures</li> </ul>
Realignment	Same as start-up, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help making the case for change, especially if you're from outside</li> </ul>
Sustaining success	Same as start-up, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant reality testing: Is this a sustaining-success situation, or is it a realignment?</li> <li>• Support for playing good defense and avoiding mistakes that damage the business</li> <li>• Help finding ways to take the business to a new level</li> </ul>

TABLE 4-3

**The five conversations and your team**

List your team members in the first column. Then assess where you stand in having the five conversations with each one. Circle the ones that are your priorities.

Team member	Situation	Expectations	Resources	Style	Personal development

Many new leaders just play the game, reactively taking their situation as given—and failing as a result. The alternative is to shape the game by negotiating with your boss to establish realistic expectations, reach consensus, and secure sufficient resources.

By “negotiating success”, Watkins means engaging with your boss to shape the vision of how to achieve the desired goals. To build a productive relationship, he recommends starting with don’ts and do’s – things you better do, and things you better don’t do.

**Don’ts:** don’t stay away – if your boss doesn’t like reaching out to you, do it yourself, otherwise you may create communication gaps; don’t approach your boss only with problems; don’t run down your checklist, etc.



**Do's:** clarify expectations early and often; try to win in areas that are important to your boss; earn respect from those whose opinion your boss values, etc.

## Planning for 5 conversations

There are 5 types of conversations you will have with your boss. To have a healthy dialogue, prepare for each of them:

**1. The situational diagnosis situation.** Here you check if you see the situation the way your boss does from the STARS viewpoint: is it a turnaround or an alignment?

Reach a common understanding of the situation, and think about what role your boss will play.

**2. The expectations situation.** The goal is to negotiate expectations: what will be considered a success? How will you measure performance?

Try to understand your boss's priorities. Focus on what they care for. Be careful not to shut down a project they started. Underpromise and overdeliver.

**3. The resource conversation.** The resources you will need depend on the situation: in a start-up, it's money, technical support, and the right people; in a turnaround, it's authority to make tough decisions; in an accelerated growth one, it's investments; in realignment situations, it's public backing to make the people grasp the need for change; and in sustaining-success ones, it's, again, money and technical support.

**4. The style conversation.** Every person has their own way of learning, communicating, and making decisions. Figure out your boss's style: do they like to know everything in detail? Then overcommunicate. Do they want to be consulted before you make, say, personnel decisions? Adapt to their style.

**5. Personal development conversation.** Ask your boss how, in their opinion, you work. It doesn't have to be a formal review. Cover both soft and hard skills.

## Questions to consider:

- What are your boss's expectations and priorities?
- How can you align your goals with your boss's vision?
- What resources will you need to succeed in your role?

☐ Schedule the five key conversations with your boss

☐ Prepare specific talking points for each conversation

## Checklist

**Negotiate success. Because no other single relationship is more important, you need to figure out how to build a productive working relationship with your new boss (or bosses) and manage her expectations.**

1. How effectively have you built relationships with new bosses in the past? What have you done well? Where do you need improvement?
2. Create a plan for the *situational conversation*. Based on what you know, what issues will you raise with your boss in this conversation? What do you want to say up front? In what order do you want to raise issues?

3. Create a plan for the *expectation conversation*. How will you figure out what your new boss expects you to do?
4. Create a plan for the *style conversation*. How will you figure out how best to work with your boss? What mode of communication does he prefer? How often should you interact? How much detail should you provide? What types of issues should you consult with him about before deciding?
5. Create a plan for the *resource conversation*. Given what you need to do, what resources are absolutely needed? With fewer resources, what would you have to forgo? If you had more resources, what would the benefits be? Be sure to build the business case.
6. Create a plan for the *personal development conversation*. What are your strengths, and where do you need improvement? What kind of assignments or projects might help you develop skills you need?
7. How might you use the five conversations framework to accelerate the development of your team? Where are you in terms of having the key conversations with each of your direct reports?

## Chapter 5. Secure Early Wins

TABLE 5-1

**Problematic behavior patterns**

Lack of...	Symptoms
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The group can't clearly define its priorities, or it has too many priorities.</li> <li>Resources are spread too thin, leading to frequent crises and firefighting. People are rewarded for their ability to put out fires, not for devising enduring solutions.</li> </ul>
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People exhibit great variation in their levels of performance.</li> <li>Employees don't understand the negative consequences of inconsistency.</li> <li>People make excuses when they fail to meet commitments.</li> </ul>
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The group uses internal benchmarks to measure performance.</li> <li>Improvements in products and processes unfold slowly and incrementally.</li> <li>Employees are rewarded for maintaining stable performance, not for pushing the envelope.</li> </ul>
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members compete with one another and protect turf rather than work together to achieve collective goals.</li> <li>People are rewarded for creating fiefdoms.</li> </ul>
Sense of urgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team members ignore the needs of external and internal customers.</li> <li>Complacency reigns, revealed in beliefs such as, "We're the best and always have been" and "It doesn't matter if we respond immediately; it won't make any difference."</li> </ul>

TABLE 5-2

Early wins evaluation tool

This tool helps you assess the potential of candidate focal points for getting early wins. Complete one for each candidate focal point, carefully answering the evaluation questions. Then total the scores for the evaluation question, and use the result as a rough indicator of the potential.

CANDIDATE EARLY WIN \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the following questions, circle the response that best describes the potential.

	Not at all	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a significant extent	To a great extent
Does the focal point offer an opportunity to make a substantial improvement in the performance of your unit?	0	1	2	3	4
Is this improvement achievable in a reasonably short time with available resources?	0	1	2	3	4
Would success also help lay the foundation for achieving agreed-to business goals?	0	1	2	3	4
Will the process used to achieve the win help you make needed changes in behavior in the organization?	0	1	2	3	4
Now total the numbers that you circled, and fill in that number here: _____					
The result will be a number between 0 and 16 that is a rough measure you can use to compare the attractiveness of candidate focal points. Use common sense in interpreting these numbers. If the candidate scores 0 on the first question, for example, it doesn't matter if it scores 4's on all the others.					

TABLE 5-3

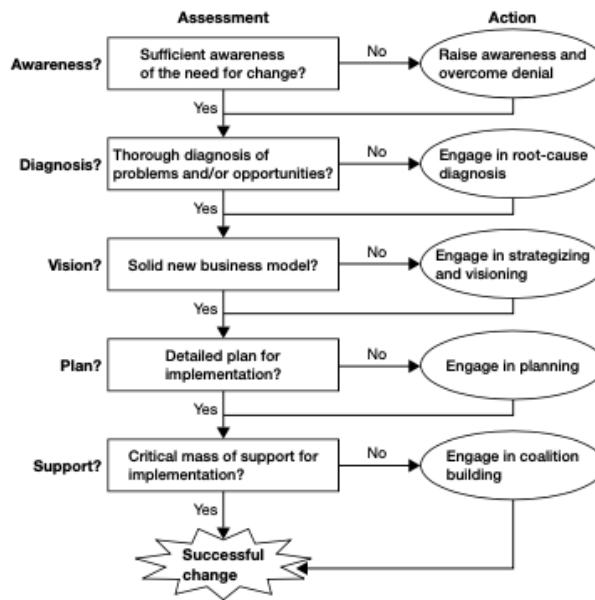
**FOGLAMP project checklist**

*FOGLAMP is an acronym for focus, oversight, goals, leadership, abilities, means, and process. This tool can help you cut through the haze and plan your critical projects. Complete the table for each early-win project you set up.*

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Question	Answer
<b>Focus:</b> What is the focus for this project? For example, what goal or early win do you want to achieve?	
<b>Oversight:</b> How will you oversee this project? Who else should participate in oversight to help you get buy-in for implementing results?	
<b>Goals:</b> What are the goals and the intermediate milestones and time frames for achieving them?	
<b>Leadership:</b> Who will lead the project? What training, if any, do they need in order to be successful?	
<b>Abilities:</b> What mix of skills and representation needs to be included? Who needs to be included because of their skills? Because they represent key constituencies?	
<b>Means:</b> What additional resources, such as facilitation, does the team need to be successful?	
<b>Process:</b> Are there change models or structured processes you want the team to use? If so, how will they become familiar with the approach?	

FIGURE 5-2

**Diagnostic framework for managing change**

*Early wins excite and energize people and build your personal credibility. Done well, they help you create value for your new organization earlier and reach the break-even point much more quickly.*

The wins you get in the first 90 days can be a strong accelerator of your success in the future. There are two main things you can do to make your early wins work for you later: build credibility in the first 30 days and launch early-win projects.

First of all, you have to realize that even if you're a new person, your colleagues already have an opinion about you. They may not know anything, but they think they do – because they've heard something from someone. You have a reputation, and you should try to learn what it is – and then see if you want to reinforce it or build another one.

So how can you build credibility?

1. Be demanding but able to be satisfied. People must know they will be held responsible for the results. At the same time, if you're never satisfied, they will become demotivated.
2. Be accessible but not too familiar. Be approachable but keep your authority.
3. Take tough calls but stay human.

Once you've built credibility, you should try to identify opportunities to get visible results and start launching early-win projects. You can use the following guidelines:

1. Keep the long-term goal in mind. You know the agreed-to business goals; let your actions stay in tune with them.
2. Identify focal points. Focus on a few things. That will help you save energy and resources.
3. Elevate change agents. Promote specific people or appoint them to specific positions.

## **Avoid predictable surprises**

You should also do some risk analysis to understand in which areas problems can appear, says Watkins. This can be external environment (like government policies, markets, and competitors), internal factors (like loss of key personnel), and organizational politics (like people who are untouchable).

Remember that it's easier to prevent a problem than to fix it. Besides, many problems are predictable.

## **Questions to consider:**

- What quick wins can you achieve in the first 30 days?
- How can you build credibility with your team and stakeholders?
- What potential risks or "predictable surprises" should you be aware of?

☐ Identify 2-3 early-win projects to launch

☐ Develop a risk analysis for your first 90 days

## Checklist

**Secure early wins. Early wins build your credibility and create momentum.** In the first few weeks, you need to identify opportunities to build personal credibility. In the first 90 days, you need to identify ways to create value & improve business results that will help you get to the break-even point more rapidly.

1. Given your agreed-to business goals, what do you need to do during your transition to create momentum for achieving them?
2. How do people need to behave differently to achieve these goals? Describe as vividly as you can the behaviours you need to encourage and those you need to discourage.
3. How do you plan to connect yourself to your new organisation? Who are your key audiences, and what messages would you like to convey to them? What are the best modes of engagement?
4. What are the most promising focal points to get some early improvements in performance and start the process of behaviour change?
5. What projects do you need to launch, and who will lead them?
6. What predictable surprises could take you off track?

## Chapter 6. Achieve Alignment

FIGURE 6-1

Elements of organizational architecture

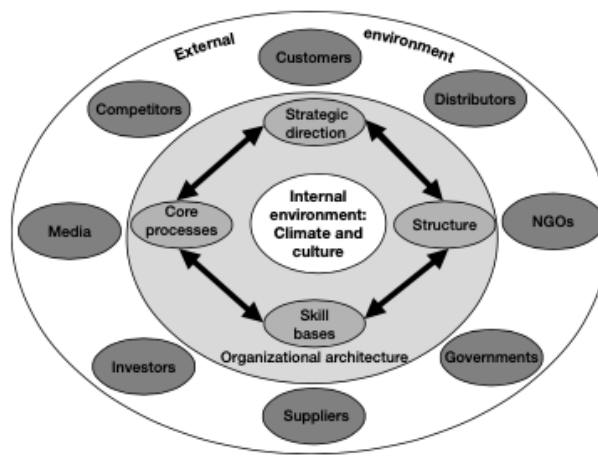
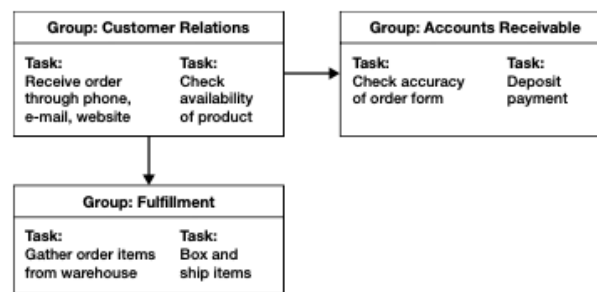


TABLE 6-1

**Process analysis example**

Production/Service-delivery processes	Support/Service processes	Business processes
Application processing	Collections	Quality management
Credit screening	Customer inquiry	Financial management
Credit card production	Relationship management	Human resource management
Authorizations management	Information and technology management	
Transaction processing		
Billing		
Payment processing		

FIGURE 6-2

**A process map**

*Aligning an organization is like preparing for a long sailing trip. First, you need to be clear on whether your destination (the mission and goals) and your route (the strategy) are the right ones. Then you can figure out which boat you need (the structure), how to outfit it (the processes), and which mix of crew members is best (the skill bases). Throughout the journey, you keep an eye out for reefs that are not on the charts.*

As a leader, you are the one responsible for the group or unit architecture. Watkins talks about four elements of organizational architecture that need to be aligned to work together: strategic direction (vision and strategy), structure (how people are organized in units), core processes (systems that add value), and skill bases (capabilities of people).

In your first 90 days, it's important to identify potential misalignments between these elements. They can be different:

1. Misalignments between strategic direction and skill bases. For example, your goal is to increase the number of ideas for products, but your team is not ready to work as fast as latest technologies dictate;
2. Misalignments between core processes and strategic direction. You focus on the needs of a specific customer group, but you fail to compile information about them etc.

To achieve alignment, you need to work with the architecture elements, says Watkins: define the direction (customers, capital, commitments), shape the group structure (units, reporting relationships, decisions rights, and performance measurement system), align core processes (analyze processes and align them with structure), and develop skills (individual expertise, relational knowledge, metaknowledge etc).

### Questions to consider:

- Are there any misalignments between strategy, structure, processes, and skills in your organization?
  - How can you address these misalignments?
  - What changes in organizational architecture might be necessary?
- ☐ Conduct an alignment analysis of your organization or team
- ☐ Create an action plan to address any misalignments

### Checklist

**Achieve alignment.** The higher you rise in an organisation, the more you must play the role of organisational architect. This means figuring out if the organisation's strategic direction is sound, bringing its structure into alignment with its strategy, and developing the processes and skill necessary to realise your strategic intent.

1. What are your observations about misalignments among strategic direction, structure, processes and skills? How will you dig deeper to confirm or refine your impressions?
2. What decisions about customers, capital, capabilities, and commitments do you need to make? How and when will you make these decisions?
3. What is your current assessment of the coherence of the organisation's strategic direction? Of its adequacy? What are your current thoughts about changing direction?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation structure? What potential changes are you thinking about?
5. What are the core processes in your organisation? How well are they performing? What are your priorities for process improvement?
6. What skill gaps and underutilised resources have you identified? What are your priorities for strengthening skills bases?

## Chapter 7. Build Your Team



FIGURE 7-1

**Synchronizing architectural alignment and team restructuring**

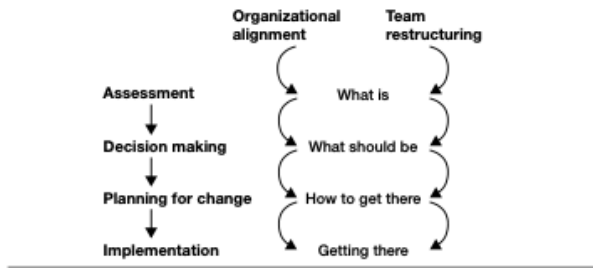


TABLE 7-1

**Assessment of evaluative criteria**

Evaluative criteria	Relative weights (Divide 100 points among the six issues)	Threshold issue (Designate with an asterisk)
Competence		
Judgment		
Energy		
Focus		
Relationships		
Trust		

FIGURE 7-2

**Using push and pull tools to motivate people**

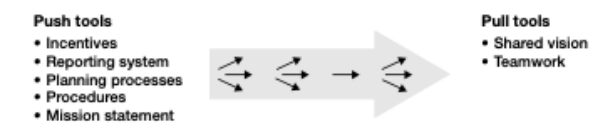


TABLE 7-2

**Inspirations for vision statements**

<p>Feeling committed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to an ideal</li> <li>• Sacrifice to realize the ideal</li> </ul>	<p>Achieving great results?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive for excellence, quality, and continuous improvement</li> <li>• Provide challenging opportunities</li> </ul>
<p>Making a contribution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service to customers and suppliers</li> <li>• Create a better society and a better world</li> </ul>	<p>Being part of a team?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork and constant concern for the good of the team</li> <li>• A climate that emphasizes personally rewarding work in groups</li> </ul>
<p>Promoting individual growth?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for the individual, expressed as elimination of exploitative or patronizing practices</li> <li>• Provide the means for people to reach their potential</li> </ul>	<p>Having control of one's destiny?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quest to be dominant and in control</li> <li>• Rewards, recognition, and status—individually and for the organization</li> </ul>
<p>Embodying trust and integrity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical and honest behavior</li> <li>• Fairness</li> </ul>	

*The most important decisions you make in your first 90 days will probably be about people. If you succeed in creating a high-performance team, you can exert tremendous leverage in value creation. If not, you will face severe difficulties, for no leader can hope to achieve much alone.*

Before building a team, you'll have to be careful to avoid some common traps, says Watkins. These include criticizing previous leadership instead of focusing on the results and making real changes; not balancing stability and change – after all, you cannot change too much too fast; making implementation-dependent decisions too early – key initiatives require buy-in from the team.

## Assess your team

A new leader should understand who is who, and to do so, he needs to assess his team. For this reason, he should establish evaluating criteria, considering factors like competence, judgment, energy, focus, relationships with others, and trust.

He should also evaluate people in their functional expertise, of course. A good way is to develop templates that would include function-specific key performance indicators (KPIs).

## Evolve your team

According to the author, by the end of the first 30 days, a leaders is supposed to assign people to one of the following categories:

1. Keep in place. The person is demonstrating good results in his current position;
2. Keep and develop. The person needs to improve, and you have resources to help;
3. Move to another position. It's more appropriate to use the person's skills in another position.
4. Replace: low priority – when it's not urgent, and high priority – when it should be done as soon as possible.

5. Observe for a while. You're not sure what to do with this person yet.

These assignments should not necessarily be treated as final decisions; you can always revise them.

### Questions to consider:

- How will you assess your team members' competencies and potential?
- What changes in team composition might be necessary?
- How can you develop and motivate your team members?

☐ Create assessment criteria for evaluating team members

☐ Develop individual development plans for key team members

### Checklist

**Build your team.** If you are inheriting a team, you need to evaluate, align, and mobilize its members. You likely also need to restructure it to better meet the demands of the situation. You need to be both systematic and strategic in approaching the team-building challenge.

1. What are your criteria for assessing the performance of members of your team? How are relative weightings affected by functions, the extent of required teamwork, the STARS portfolio, and the criticality of positions?
2. How will you go about assessing your team?
3. What personnel changes do you need to make? Which changes are urgent, and which can wait? How will you create backups and options?
4. How will you make high priority changes? What can you do to preserve the dignity of the people affected? What help will you need with the team in the restructuring process, and where are you going to find it?
5. How will you align the team? What mix of push (goals, incentives) and pull (shared vision) will you use?
6. How do you want your new team to operate? What roles do you want people to play? Do you shrink the core team or expand it? How do you plan to manage decision making?

## Chapter 8. Create Alliances

TABLE 8-2

### Analyzing motivations, driving and restraining forces, and alternatives

Use this table to assess what motivates pivotal players, as well as the driving and restraining forces acting on them, and their perceptions of their alternatives (what choices they believe they have).

Pivot players	Motivations	Driving and restraining forces	Alternatives

TABLE 8-3

### Framing arguments

Use the following categories and questions to identify the types of arguments you need to make to convince people.

Logos—data and reasoned arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What data or analysis might they find persuasive?</li> <li>• What logic(s) might appeal to them?</li> <li>• Are there biases to which they are falling prey and, if so, how might you demonstrate this?</li> </ul>
Ethos—principles, policies, and other “rules”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there principles or policies that they could be convinced should operate here?</li> <li>• If you are asking them to act counter to a principle or policy, can you help them justify making an exception?</li> </ul>
Pathos—emotions and meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there emotional “triggers,” for example loyalty or contribution to the common good, to which you could appeal?</li> <li>• Can you help them create a sense of meaning by supporting or opposing a cause?</li> <li>• If they are reacting too emotionally, can you help them step back and get perspective?</li> </ul>

*To succeed in your new role, you will need the support of people over whom you have no direct authority. You may have little or no relationship capital at the outset, especially if you’re onboarding into a new organization. So you will need to invest energy in building new networks.*

A part of your 90-day plan should be to figure out whom you must influence, who is likely to support you, and persuade “the swing voters.” You need to understand your influence landscape, says Watkins, and see who influences whom in your organization. This information can be learned in the work process, through careful observation. The thing is, if you can influence those who have influence over others, the chances that your ideas will be widely accepted will increase.

The sources of power can be:

- expertise
- control of information

- connections to others
- access to resources (like rewards)
- personal loyalty

So if you see someone with expertise or someone having the boss's loyalty, try to make this person your ally.

## Identify supporters, opponents, and persuadables

Supporters are people who share your vision of the future – or people who are new to the company and don't know how it used to be before. The opponents are those who will disagree with you no matter what you do – for example, people scared that a change will undermine their current status or will make them look incompetent. Finally, persuadables are those who don't really care about your plans but can still be persuaded to support you – like people waiting to see how exactly things will go before they decide whose side to take.

Once you've identified your supporters, adversaries, and persuadables, you can work on making people your allies. Keep in mind that if you do manage to turn your adversaries into friends, it will have a deep symbolic meaning, says Watkins. And if the main source of opposition comes from fear of change, there are steps you can take to tackle change resistance.

## Questions to consider:

- Who are the key influencers in your organization?
- How can you build relationships with potential allies?
- What strategies can you use to win over "swing voters"?

☐ Map out your influence landscape

☐ Develop strategies for building key alliances

## Checklist

**Create alliances.** Your success depends on your ability to influence people outside your direct line of control. You therefore should start right away to identify those whose support is essential to your success, and to figure out how to line them up on your side.

1. What are the critical alliances you need to build – both within your organisation and externally – to advance your agenda?
2. What agendas are other key players pursuing? Where might they align with yours, and where might they come into conflict?
3. Are there opportunities to build long-term, broad-based alliances with others? Where might you be able to leverage shorter-term agreements to pursue specific objectives?
4. How does influence work in your organisation? Who defers to whom on key issues of concern?
5. Who is likely to support your agenda? Who is likely to oppose you? Who is persuadable?

6. What are the motivations of pivotal people, the situational pressures acting on them, and their perceptions of their choices?
7. What are the elements of an effective influence strategy? How should you frame your arguments? Might influence tools such as incrementalism, sequencing and action forcing events help?

## Chapter 9. Manage Yourself

FIGURE 9-1

Yerkes-Dodson human performance curve

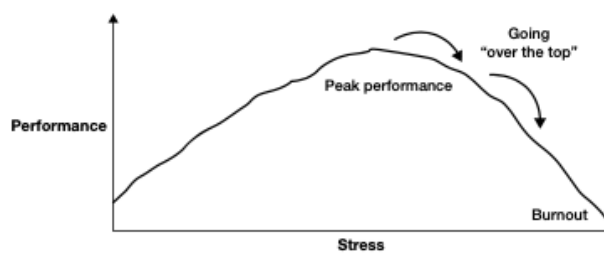


TABLE 9-1

Assessment of core challenges

Core challenge	Diagnostic questions
Prepare yourself.	Are you adopting the right mind-set for your new job and letting go of the past?
Accelerate your learning.	Are you figuring out what you need to learn, whom to learn it from, and how to speed up the learning process?
Match your strategy to the situation.	Are you diagnosing the type of transition you face and the implications for what to do and what not to do?
Negotiate success.	Are you building your relationship with your new boss, managing expectations, and marshaling the resources you need?
Secure early wins.	Are you focusing on the vital priorities that will advance your long-term goals and build your short-term momentum?
Achieve alignment.	Are you identifying and fixing frustrating misalignments of strategy, structure, systems, and skills?
Build your team.	Are you assessing, restructuring, and aligning your team to leverage what you're trying to accomplish?
Create alliances.	Are you building a base of internal and external support for your initiatives so that you're not pushing rocks uphill?

TABLE 9-2

**Types of advisers**

Type	Role	How they help you
Technical advisers	Provide expert analysis of technologies, markets, and strategy	They suggest applications for new technologies. They interpret technical data and provide analysis. They provide timely and accurate information.
Cultural interpreters	Help you understand the new culture and (if that is your objective) adapt to it	They provide you with insight into cultural norms, mental models, and guiding assumptions. They help you learn to speak the language of the new organization.
Political counselors	Help you deal with political relationships within your new organization	They help you implement the advice of your technical advisers. They serve as a sounding board as you think through options for implementing your agenda. They challenge you with what-if questions.

TABLE 9-3

**Assessment of your advice-and-counsel network**

	Technical advisers	Cultural interpreters	Political counselors
Internal advisers and counselors (inside your new organization)			
External advisers and counselors (outside your new organization)			

*The life of a leader is always a balancing act, but never more so than during a transition. The uncertainty and ambiguity can be crippling... For all these reasons, managing yourself is a key transition challenge.*

You cannot manage people without being able to manage yourself. Transition can be an overwhelming experience, so it makes sense to think about how to make it easier for yourself.

Take a deep breath and think how you're feeling. Are you excited? Confident? If yes, why? If not, why not? Is there anything bothering you? How do you handle your interactions?

Answering these questions can help you organize your own thoughts.

Now it's time to engage in self-management. According to Watkins, self-management is built on three pillars:

1. Adopt 90-day strategies. This concerns all the information provided in the previous 8 chapters.
2. Develop personal disciplines. Success or failure is the result of daily choices. Look through the following list and think if these are a part of your routine – or if you still need to develop

them:

- Plan to plan. Every day evaluate how well you met your daily goals and plan for the next day.
- Focus on the important. As Watkins says, it's easy for the urgent to crowd out the important. Don't let this happen.
- Go to the balcony. If you're emotionally unstable, take a step back and see what decisions you need to make.

### 3. Build your support system

- Assert control locally. Get your new office set up: it's hard to focus on work if basic things are not in order.
- Stabilize the home front. Your family also feels the impact of your transition. Do everything that needs to be done to make it easier for them: for example, if you have to move to another location, let your children finish the school year where they're currently living.

### Questions to consider:

- How can you maintain your physical and mental well-being during the transition?
- What strategies can you use to manage stress and avoid burnout?
- How will you balance your professional and personal life during this crucial period?

☐ Create a self-care plan for your first 90 days

☐ Set up boundaries to protect your work-life balance

### Checklist

**Manage yourself.** In the personal and professional tumult of a transition, you must work hard to maintain your equilibrium and preserve your ability to make good judgments. The risks of losing perspective, becoming isolated, and making bad calls are ever present during transitions.

1. What are the greatest vulnerabilities in your new role? How do you plan to compensate for them?
2. What personal disciplines do you most need to develop or enhance? How will you do that? What will success look like?
3. What can you do to gain more control over your local environment?
4. What can you do to ease your family's transition? What support relationships will you have to build? Which are your highest priorities?
5. What are your priorities for strengthening your advice-and-counsel network? To what extent do you need to focus on your internal network? Your external network? In which domain do you most need additional support – technical, cultural, political, or personal?

## Chapter 10. Accelerate Everyone



FIGURE 10-1

### Transition Heat Map

The *Transition Heat Map* is a tool for summarizing the most important transition acceleration priorities in your organization, as shown in the example below. Start by listing the key organizational units or groups or projects in the left-hand column. Then identify any major change events that are occurring in each of these units, groups, projects. Finally assess the relative intensity of key types of transitions—onboarding, promotion, geographic moves, and lateral moves—that are occurring in each organization. The result is a summary that you can use to communicate about priorities.

Organizational unit	Major change events	Transition intensity			
		Onboarding	Promotion	Geographic moves	Lateral moves
Unit A	Rapid growth	High	Low	High	Medium
Unit B	Turnaround	Medium	Low	Low	High
Unit C	Acquisition	None	Low	Medium	High

TABLE 10-1

### Reasons for transition failures

#### Reasons that apply to all transitions

- Insufficient clarity about expectations and mandates. Leaders are not given enough information, or conflicting information, about what they need to do to be successful.
- Not taking the STARS situation into account in hiring and promotion. Leaders are selected without enough attention being given to whether they're best suited for the challenges of the situation—for example, putting a person who is great at turnarounds in a sustaining-success or realignment situation.
- Pushing leaders to make leaps that are too big. Leaders are placed in new roles with very high levels of transition risk; they take on too much, and fail.
- Having a Darwinian leadership culture. Leaders are not provided with adequate support during transitions, perhaps because the culture misguidedly reinforces a sink-or-swim approach to leadership development.

#### Promotion-specific reasons

- People are promoted only because they're good at their current jobs. Leaders are not evaluated adequately on their ability to be effective at higher levels.
- Training is provided too late or not at all. Leaders do not receive training (or receive it many months later) in the skills they need to be effective and so lose the opportunity to build credibility during their transitions.
- Leaders are required to do their old jobs and their new ones. The company does a poor job of succession planning, causing newly promoted leaders to expend energy on their old roles at the most critical period in their new ones.

#### Onboarding-specific reasons (also applies to moves between units)

- Cultural fit is not taken into account in recruiting. Leaders are hired because they have certain capabilities, whether or not they're a good fit for the culture.
- Support for cultural adaptation is not provided. Newly hired leaders are expected to figure out the culture on their own and make unnecessary early mistakes.
- Support is not provided for identifying and connecting with key stakeholders. Newly hired leaders are expected to figure out on their own who will have influence over their success, and they don't make the right connections early enough.

TABLE 10-2

### Transition versus developmental coaching

Transition coaching	Developmental coaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach helps leader to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assess both the business situation and himself in his new role</li> <li>– Create a strategy to build momentum</li> <li>– Create a strategy for managing himself</li> <li>– Develop an action plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coach's business acumen ensures right mix of advice and behavioral coaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach helps leader to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assess existing competencies and behaviors</li> <li>– Identify gaps in competencies as well as dysfunctional behaviors</li> <li>– Correct these challenges and build key competencies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

FIGURE 10-2

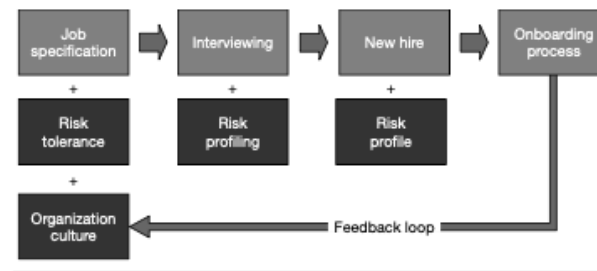
**Linking recruiting and onboarding**

TABLE 10-3

**The development grid**

The rows represent functions in which you have worked, and the columns represent types of business situations you have experienced. Chart every position you have held, plus any major project or task force assignments. For example, if your first job was in marketing in an organization (or unit) in the midst of a turnaround, place a circled 1 (indicating your first management position) in the corresponding cell of the matrix. If your next position was in sales in a new unit (or dealing with a new product or project)—a start-up situation—enter a circled 2 in that cell. If at the same time you were on a task force dealing with operations issues for the start-up, enter a 2 inside a triangle (indicating a project assignment) in the appropriate cell. Record all your jobs, and then connect the dots to illuminate your professional trajectory. Are there any blank columns or rows? What do they signify about your readiness for new positions? About your potential blind spots?

	Start-up	Turn-around	Accelerated growth	Realignment	Sustaining success
Marketing					
Sales					
Finance					
Human resources					
Operations					
R&D					
Information management					
Other					

We've been talking about the impact of transitions on individuals, but what about companies? What is the impact on performance of many transitions going at the same time at different levels?

Look at these numbers: about ¼ of the leaders of all 500 Fortune companies change jobs every year. The annual rate of executives' transition is 35 percent. Naturally, every transition impacts the performance of so many other people – peers, direct reports, and bosses.

Accelerating these transitions by only 10 percent can significantly improve the company's performance; besides, acceleration is a great source of competitive advantage. It makes so much sense to use the acceleration techniques, doesn't it?

A 90-day transition framework described by Watkins may seem complicated at first sight, as he digs deep in the details. But try applying it step-by-step: plan for your first day, then for your first week, and then your first month. Accomplish your goals by milestones. Make sketches. This way, you can write your own story of success.

**Questions to consider:**

- How can you help your team members transition effectively?
- What systems can you put in place to accelerate learning and integration for new hires?
- How will you create a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation?

☐ Develop an onboarding process for new team members

☐ Create a system for sharing lessons learned and best practices within your team

## Checklist

### 10. Accelerate everyone.

**Finally, you need to help all those in your organisation – direct reports, bosses, and peers – to accelerate their own transitions. The fact that you're in transition means they are too.**

#### CHECKLIST

1. What are the most important transitions in your organisation, and how often do they occur?
2. Is the organisation able to identify where and when transitions are occurring?
3. Is there a common core transition acceleration framework, language, and toolkit?
4. Do leaders have the support they need, when they need it, and throughout their transitions?  
What could be done to provide focused resources for on-boarding and promotion transitions?
5. Are the company's systems for recruiting and accelerating transitions linked in appropriate ways?
6. Should transition acceleration be part of your organisation's curriculum for developing high-potential leaders?
7. How might the 90-day framework be used to accelerate organisational change – for example, restructuring or post acquisition integration?

## Reflection and Action Plan

Final questions to consider:

- What are the most critical actions you need to take in your first 90 days?
- How will you measure your progress and success?
- What potential obstacles do you foresee, and how will you address them?

☐ Create a detailed 90-day action plan based on the book's principles

☐ Set up regular check-ins to review and adjust your plan as needed