Executive transitions with twins

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Learn how evidence-based insights lead to a higher impact during the first 100 days.

- Understand the dominant operating system and the inherited culture.
- Identify early action with highest impact.
- Create the shared agenda with the future team.
- Twins create impact and relevance during the first 10 days.

It is probably one of the most defining moments in a CEO's career - the joy of being appointed, the fulfillment of the new role and the fullness of responsibility of leading a company. The fact is that this special moment is often marred by a high failure rate. We know that a good start is crucial to the future success of a CEO. Instead of following more ineffective tips, general recipes, or outdated practices, it is important to get an immediate overview of the aspects of leadership that are crucial to success but often invisible.

Management changes at the top of a company are incisive and decisive moments for everyone involved. The first 100 days are usually considered a grace period. However, reality shows that the pressure on the new manager is enormous. It consists of the expectation that he/she should now "fix it". Everyone involved is waiting for a significant change of direction, "the" decision about the future of the company, a new, more efficient business model or more effective leadership. Friends and foes alike interpret even weak signals prematurely as long-term success or failure.

Time is often of the essence. The increasingly dynamic markets, the complexity of the organization, the uncertainty of the

environment and ambiguous signals are constantly changing the context. The ability to plan measures and limited resources restrict the ability to act. It is therefore important to act quickly, remain agile and strengthen the organization's resilience at the same time. The first 100 days are about creating the best conditions for future success.

In a situation like this, experienced CEOs remain calm. They hold many conversations, listen, observe, get opinions from all those involved and promote unfiltered communication. On the one hand, it is important to understand the market environment and the value chain. On the other hand, it is important to understand the organization's existing capabilities, identify new capabilities, identify future developments and initiate necessary changes. A good start is important for the future success of the organization and the CEO.

CEOs' energy, time and attention are always limited. And, control over your own calendar is quickly lost. So it is important to focus on the important things. Our experience teaches us that these always include (1) people, (2) strategy and (3) management.

The selection of the management team has top priority. It is important not only to focus on the best talent, but also to develop a functioning team. Important personnel decisions are part of the first 100 days. With a well-functioning team, the common ground for strategy and leadership can be established. Developing good relationships within the team takes time, but is crucial to success.

Strategy has second priority. It is about shaping the common agenda as a team. People must be able to understand the new boss. This requires many discussions about the meaning and purpose of the organization.

The third priority is management - the art of leadership. While strategy is about tangible things such as customer values, structures, key figures, etc., leadership is about intangible values and the corporate culture. As formal and informal norms, routines and instruments, the latter determine the behavior of all employees in the organization. Quiet signals are amplified and every difference between old and new is understood as a sign. Employees ask themselves, what is different now, how does this affect me, what are the true intentions behind the words? The new management team must recalibrate expectations and send

the right signals.

The unfiltered view. New managers have the opportunity to redefine the framework of the organization or project and calibrate the operating system for the new agenda. A new business and leadership model needs insights - the unfiltered perspective for rapid learning. Weak signals need to be recognized and amplified. Unorthodox analysis helps to challenge and reinterpret assumptions to gain a fresh understanding of the context. Through precise diagnosis of the framework and the operating system, we prevent the organization from degenerating into routines that have themselves become obsolete.

As a new CEO, you need to understand in depth how the organization defines success and how you can shape it in a dynamic market. You need to get up to speed quickly, learn fast and shape the future agenda. At the same time, urgent operational issues need your attention. Familiar recipes, well-intentioned recommendations, unquestioned myths, and obvious traps abound!

From change to capability development. In addition to deciding on new goals, strategies, structures and metrics, new CEOs need an organization with the capabilities to deliver. Our research shows that 80% of traditional change programs fail at an early stage. In a volatile environment with empowering leadership, dynamic capabilities need to be built over time. They enable the organization to adapt quickly, flexibly, and robustly to a new market environment.

Immediate measures with impact: Time is of essence and every context is different. In order to identify the important levers, it is necessary to (first) diagnose and (then) decide - but we often manage to identify the right levers for immediate measures hand in hand.

New CEOs must decide where quick action is needed and where a development program is required. At the same time, they must avoid early announcements of new business models, a different culture or a changed cost structure, even if this goes against expectations. This requires experience from those who have done it before.

Our experience and research teach us that quick, unfiltered insights for deep understanding of immediate actions and

developing the future agenda are critical to the success of the first 100 days.

Why guess when you can know? With our twins, the executive survey and the toolbox for corporate development, CEOs can quickly gain insights to shape a relevant agenda with impact beyond the first 100 days.

About Management Insights

Founded by Lukas Michel, Management Insights draws on more than 25 years of research and practice to help people understand how their organizations work. The Organization Twin brings organizational patterns into view for reflection, dialogue, and informed choice.

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