

Blogpost : Advice for New Managers and Leaders



DOMINIC GOURLEY OF HS NEW ZEALAND, DAVID BYRUM OF HS AUSTRALIA

Based on Culture Bites Episode 104 published on Oct 12 2021

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Leaders are always under the spotlight, particularly when they are new to the role. They are very visible and the higher up they move in an organization the more visible they become. But how can they set themselves up for success? We will shed some light on four distinct areas that new managers and leaders must pay close attention to – **KNOWING, PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING and COMMUNICATING** - and also point out some differences between internal promotions versus external hires.

The first step in the new role as a manager or leader is to **KNOW**. This means knowing the business and the processes, but to also to be very clear about who your stakeholders are and what your role is. Know the processes of the specific organization that allow the machine to work, such as recruiting, reviews, purchase orders, approvals and signature levels – the very practical aspects of the business. You need to know how the system works to make the system work, so to speak. There also needs to be an in-depth understanding of the role which goes beyond the job description; that is clarity around which decisions you are supposed to make and where the limits of the role are and generally, what is expected of you. This is really a two-way street, however, as you also need to be clear about what you can (and want to) expect of others. With regards to knowing your stakeholders, there are some differences depending on whether you were hired internally or externally.

When you have been hired into a company and nobody knows you, you need to get to know the people and they need to get to know you. A great way to operationalize this process lies in creating a stakeholder map that will contain everybody you interact with in the new role. This goes beyond peers and direct reports and will also contain groups such as clients and suppliers as well as the two levels up managers. You should identify all the groups that will be relevant in your specific role, create clarity around the expectations you have of one another in terms of deliverables but also in terms of relationships and set up the channel of communication that you will be using. If you start hearing stories about individuals and the company from others you can listen to their opinions, but make up your own opinion based on your own experiences and interactions. From here you can not only start learning about them but also create opportunities for them to get to know you. You are a brand which will grow quickly – so you have the great opportunity here to consciously decide what you want it to be. The stakeholder map is a great tool for setting priorities in getting to know people on a scale from 1-10, 10 being I know them they know me, then prioritize the biggest hotspots that needs to be addressed.

When you have been promoted up in your own organization it is quite a different story. While you will already know some people well and they will know you, you will face the challenge that you are still in the team, but you are not in the team. Your team is no longer your team, but you are part of the peer team. This could be called your new “primary team” which you will represent when you get back to the team you lead. This situation is often tricky to navigate and you should try to start afresh. This is best done by checking your LSI profiles and by being mindful of your behaviors and thinking. This will enable you to employ more Constructive behaviors. Breakout reports can be helpful in making you see whether you are perceived as equally Constructively across various groups. An added challenge can be that you will wear multiple hats at all times – that of a player, that of a captain, and that of a coach. You will slip into a different role depending on the situation and as you go further up you will be less of a player and less of a captain and more of a coach. Particularly for those promoted internally who used to actually **DO** the job and tasks it can be tempting to keep **DOING** that job. Or thinking that the person who does their old job now is not doing it as well or as quickly as I would.

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In this situation it can help to pause, breathe and ask yourself “what can I learn here?”. Your role is not to do and to tell, but to coach and to engage. In any case you will need a good induction program which should span six to twelve weeks. Now this may seem like a big time investment but it will be worth gold when you get to know the people and the processes first before you really get started on your job.

The second area that needs to be considered is **PLANNING**. This includes measures of success and responsibilities and the timing of those measures. A structure that David recommends to leaders is to break goals down into quarters and always keep an eye on this quarter and the next. Goals should cover three areas: there should be a mix of personal goals, team goals and goals for the organization. How they are weighed will be a matter of the position you are in. The more senior the position the more strategic and less tactical the goals will be. You need to clarify what you want to achieve in a given timeframe. As you build new plans, you will need to truncate the timeframes you are looking at meaning that you go down to the month and even the week. Know what you are looking to achieve so you can measure that. Most goals are what I will deliver and how I will deliver it, and you are totally responsible for the latter. But you also need to consider the why which needs to be aligned with the mission of your organization. Have others help to develop and achieve that plan will be more Constructive and Achievement oriented than fixating the goals. Although you totally own this question, it is wise to bring in more people. It is likely that you don't have all the information so you do need the involvement of others. If you know whom to ask for a particular piece of information, you could ask that individual for their time. If not, it might be wise to discuss in a group setting what is needed and get input from various people. Having said that, while information is an important part you will also need the commitment of those involved to ensure things will be done in the right way.

It is a key role as a leader to clarify responsibilities and accountabilities and to be crystal clear about task distribution and delegation. As we mentioned above, it is crucial for a new leader to understand that they cannot do everything on their own, but they will reach goals by leading other people towards those goals. The question now is whether these actions should happen in a particular order or simultaneously. These first two steps, knowing and planning, will happen in parallel, or even somewhat circular. These activities will fill up the first three months of being in the new role, after that the window closes in a way. After these first three months, implementation will need to start as we show in the next step.

Once we have designed the plan and gotten to know our people we can start to **IMPLEMENT** that plan. The plan needs to be reviewed frequently with regards to how things are going, whether we are on schedule, we are delivering what we said, are we behind, or are we ahead? The main focus of a leader should be on recognizing excellence as well as exception (like correcting mistakes, recognizing what has not been done rather than what has been done). However, too much of the latter will drive security-oriented behaviors. Our Management/Impact® will help you understand the balance between your use of management by excellence versus management by exception. It should be tipped towards excellence due to the security-oriented or Defensive mindset that we may nurture otherwise. When going into feedback sessions with our reports it is crucial to have a mental list of what is good which we will mention first before going into what is not so good. In a one on one session this can mean to have our report reflect on what is going really well and what could be better and what they expect from you rather than just you asking “what about this, what about that?”. These reviews can take the form of both group reviews as well as individual reviews – both of which are equally important. One on one reviews are part of the role, also with regards to helping that person grow and help them develop. We have a tendency to jump in on the task side, a tendency, however, that leaders need to be cautious of.

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Therefore, they can be separated out in a way that one week the review will be about activities and tasks, the next week it will be about personal aspects – what does the person want to learn, how do they want to grow and how can you help as a leader? Remember that as a leader your role is to grow and nurture people.

This implementation phase is also one characterized by intense **COMMUNICATION** as well as tweaking and adjusting of the plans that have been made. To get a handle on the communication part we can go back to the stakeholder map and review what needs to be communicated with each of the stakeholders and how we will do this. There is a fine line to walk between the Constructive behavior of sharing what you are doing and achieving versus the aggressiveness of boasting. Are you communicating mainly metrics and extrinsic aspects or does the message include celebrations or achievements in terms of milestones reached on a project but also personal? The message will be quite different. Then there is the question of frequency for these reviews. You could get together for a weekly or a monthly update. Another aspect to consider in your leadership role wearing the coach's hat that you want to inspire others to reflect and act rather than telling them what to do. This involves carefully wording questions that will do this job.

When you adjust a plan it is also important that you communicate that change. Mind you, there is a big difference between changing priorities all the time (often to please others) and to consciously tweak your plan. A good rule of thumb is to never change your plan without a good reason. If you don't have a good reason at that point, don't change your plan just yet. Ask yourself whether the urge to change a plan is coming from a Passive lens, i.e. pleasing others, or from a Competitive lens, that drives us to work hard and do more and we want to be seen more in control. Both of these are not good reasons to change a plan. When outside conditions have changed, however, we may need to adapt to a new situation, which would be a good reason to alter a plan.

And lastly, recognizing the good efforts of team as well as individual performance is a crucial part of the role of a leader. When someone is having a great day, you could personally congratulate them to acknowledge what they have done and make a point of how meaningful this is for the team and the organization. You should try to create a champion team – not a team of champions. And you should emphasize that the team plays together and wins together. When having a corporate lunch or breakfast it is important to link that meal to the achievement which it is rewarding. Verbal acknowledgements from a leader are a powerful and often underestimated driver for members of an organization feeling they are rewarded in a culture. This can work in the other direction, too, so even as a new leader you can go to your higher level manager and recognize what they may have done under immense pressure and thank them for pulling the team together. Recognize what they are doing by shooting them a quick email to thank them. Remember that the higher up you go the less feedback you get and this will be valuable to them.

You want to learn how you can develop as a leader using our tools? We are looking forward to reading from you info@humansynergistics.de.