

2021 Edition



Your First 100 Days

A Vitas Consult Guide

Section 01

Transition goals

Five goals for your transition planning

Congratulations on your appointment to the new role!

This guide is designed to help you make your best possible transition into your new job. Take possession of this responsibility: don't entertain a Darwinian sink or swim attitude!

In planning your transition to the new role and your first three months (or 100 days) or so in role the aim is to avoid the “triple dip effect” where the appointment of a new leader results in a decline in direct report’s performance, engagement and intention to stay with your new organisation. Widely respected Corporate Leadership Council research dating back a number of years shows that, where a new appointee is transitioned smoothly into their new role these negative results can be avoided and that where this does not happen the negative impacts on staff performance, engagement and intention to stay are both clear and damaging.

A well balanced transition plan should assist you in five main areas:

1. To gain deeper knowledge of the new portfolio - most especially to gain a realistic and informed appreciation about any present gap between the stated strategies of the new teams you will be responsible for in the future and the current operational realities or *de facto* strategies. This will involve you in getting to grips with both initial perceptions and the underlying reality - which is, as you know, usually more complex and subtle than you might first imagine (or was admitted at interview)!

At the end of your transition period, I believe you will want to be able to answer the following deeper knowledge questions with some confidence:

- What are the long and the short term goals, plans and budgets associated with my new and expanded portfolio?
- What are the current performance levels against plans?
- Why are the timeframes for achievement set in the way they are?
- What are our relationships with internal clients and external partners like?
- How are these strategies and individual manager's goals aligned?

2. To accept and deal with the real capabilities of the organisation and the people. Your new organisation's people's capabilities will vary considerably. You are likely to have been appointed in order to lead some order of change. Some leaders and managers will relish creating and leading change but this is not universally true. You may develop an agenda for change and perceive that the platform for change is on fire: others may yet need to feel the heat.

- It is particularly here that a mentor can add value in your transition.
 - Mentors need to be well chosen, well briefed and to have a periodic check in with their client - your appointing manager. A mentor needs to be politically astute and organisationally savvy.
 - They should be released from their mentoring role when you have been fully absorbed into the normal performance management process.
 - Mentors need to avoid being passive. The value they bring to your transition can be better assured if your appointing manager is both requiring and supportive. In turn, you, the mentee needs to be rather demanding of your mentor - simply in order to realise the value of the relationship!

The real capabilities of the organisation and its people

At the end of your transition period, you will want to be able to answer the following questions about the organisation and its people's capabilities with considerable confidence:

- What are the key success factors for all operations in my portfolio?
- How much time will I need to understand contexts, critical processes, relationships, etc., before I make changes?
- What are the stated and un-stated processes, accountabilities and systems?
- What 'landmines' were built into prior decisions and why?
- What is the true depth of difficulty in (any underperforming) group?
- Which individuals hold the real power?
- What are the real lines of authority?
- What is the actual role of (high profile leadership teams)?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the leadership and/or management team? Are both acknowledged by the members?
- What is the actual experience and professionalism of the people over whom I now have influence?
- Do formal job responsibilities exist? Why? Why not?
- What are the management philosophies here?
- Is there real or imagined alignment between these philosophies and the way that leaders/managers are rewarded?
- In decision making, how much emphasis is placed on managerial consensus? Why? Why not?

Your ‘newcomer’s insight’

3. To discover and prioritise multiple expectations.

Deeper investigation of many complex organisations tends to leave the impression that they are not adept at prioritising.

Consequently they often appear to wear out their key resources (not just people) because the difficult choices have not been made.

A newcomer moving to lead an expanded or changed portfolio often perceives this very clearly: we call it ‘newcomer’s insight’.

Whilst this insight is valuable to you and the organisation, it can negatively impact your own morale if you are not prepared for this experience.

4. To navigate political waters and establish

alliances with the right people. This is often seen as the most difficult challenge. An experienced mentor or buddy could help you to make sense of the subtle power plays that really are at work, often just under the surface, but this may also be available to you through the managerial line.



Using your people skills

5. To set a strategic agenda for action that has buy in and generates a sense of urgency. This strategic agenda setting, at leadership level, takes place typically around two months post appointment. You will be making use of your excellent people skills as you do this. You will also be wanting to actively solicit feedback on the impact you have been making so far and you should now have built substantial connections with key people well placed to provide you with their initial views and insights. Your most important conversation will, of course, be with your manager.

In these discussions you will be wanting to lay out your draft business plans, deliverables and timescales and to determine ...

- Whether you have their unequivocal support for these business plan and the priorities you have been formulating?
- What changes they would make if they were in your position?
- Their level of, hopefully, enthusiastically positive response to the plans, deliverables and the timelines you are proposing?

Work with your mentor should have helped you to assess your skills and knowledge gaps and identify ways to make positive changes in the wider business. You should now be actively working on your personal development plan to ensure any identified skills or knowledge gaps are closed. An ongoing part of your plan is likely to be focused on extending your contacts and associations both within and outside your new organisation. Now is the time to seek out any relevant groups, networks and/or events that might be happening.

Section 02

Others involved in your transition

Who is ‘on your case’ and ‘on your side’?

Whilst you really are the captain of your own transition there are other people involved: how you draw in their contributions will significantly impact the success of your transition.

1. Behind Every Successful Transition Lies an Effective Support Network

The individuals surrounding you can serve as powerful sources of support and development during the transition process (and beyond). Human Resources/Personnel/the Talent Management Team with the support of your manager/s and, sometimes, the outgoing leader can all be key to your success.

2. From Flexible, Reactive Guidance to Intense, Focused Assistance

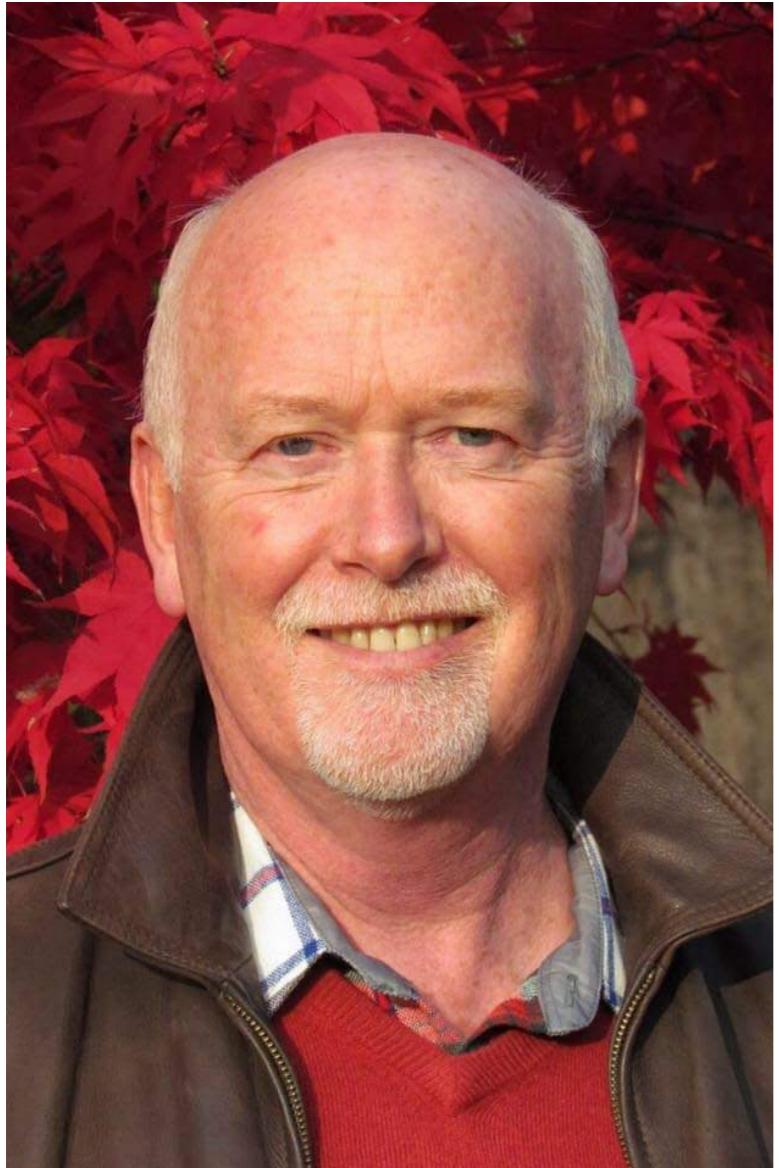
Many leaders succeed, in large part, to the extent that their support networks become active participants, rather than passive observers in their transition process. Each group in the leaders’ support networks plays a unique, yet complementary role in ensuring their transitions are as smooth as possible. Think about how you can turn passive observation into positive support

- How can you best work with Human Resources/Personnel/the Talent Management Team to ensure stakeholders in your appointment with the transition support tools and resources that will enable them to shift from reactive, passive observers to proactive, focused participants?

3. Fast Starts Do Not Happen in the Absence of Gentle Exits

High performing new-to-role leaders hit the ground running when their previous managers and their new managers work together to prepare leaders for their new roles and carefully orchestrate a smooth hand-off of responsibilities. This will be critical for you.

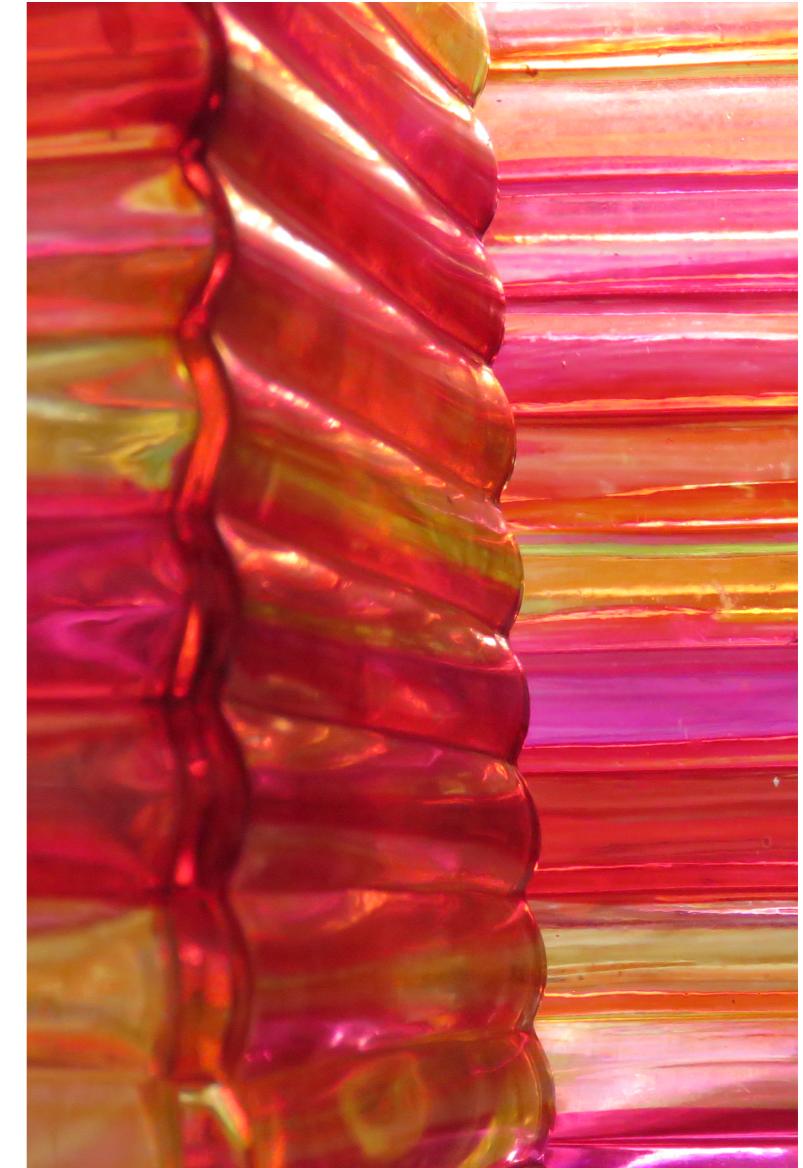
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John Evans, the author of this guide, is an executive coach, organisational development consultant, business psychologist, leadership and talent management leader.



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