The Leadership Transition Workshop

Putting newly appointed leaders and their teams on the right track with an accelerated, positive transition.

www.garywinters.com
The four card exercise

Change is inevitable, except from vending machines.
Unknown

Person

Project

Tool

Environment
Comparing Change and Transition

Change happens to you.  Transition happens inside you.

Change is external.  Transition is internal.

Change starts with the new beginning.  Transition starts by letting go.

Managing change is challenging.  Managing transition is more challenging!

**Change looks like:**

- New and improved!
- Bigger!
- Smaller!
- Cheaper!
- More efficient!
- Faster!
- Better!

**Transition looks like:**

- Having to let go
- Wanting to hold on
- Being confused
- False starts and stops
- Two steps forward
- One step back
- Loss of balance

“It has been estimated that under good conditions, employees spend 5-10% of their time and energy on the changes that affect them. Under more difficult conditions, they can easily spend half their time and energy that way. And when change is fundamental and far-reaching, they can spend all their time and energy coping with it.”

William Bridges
The Transition Model (Bridges)

Letting Go  Neutral Zone  Beginnings

Denial  Resistance  Exploration  Commitment

Past  Future

Core leadership competencies:

1. Straight talk (telling the truth)
2. Understanding and working with resistance
3. Be congruent (walking the talk)
4. Tolerance for ambiguity, confusion, risk
5. Monomaniacal focus on vision and values
Sources of resistance

- **Loss of control**: It’s exciting when it’s done by us, and threatening when it’s done to us.

- **Express uncertainty**: Not knowing enough makes comfort difficult if not impossible.

- **Surprise, surprise!**: People are shocked when decisions are sprung on them.

- **The “difference” effect**: Change requires people to change patterns and habits. The greater the required change, the more resistance.

- **Loss of face**: Sometimes it appears that making a change means admitting the past was wrong.

- **Concerns about future competence**: Can I do it? How will I do? Will I be embarrassed?

- **Ripple effects**: Changes often disrupt other plans and projects and priorities.

- **Change is more work**: It usually requires more time, energy and mental preoccupation.

- **Past resentments**: If there have been previous change efforts that were led poorly, people remember.

- **The threat of change is real**: People may lose status, clout, comfort, or other things.

*Source: Linda Ackerman*
Helping people let go
- Identify who is going to lose what
- Understand and acknowledge the losses
- Let people grieve the loss
- Provide timely information over and over
- Clearly define what’s over and what isn’t
- Create a way to mark the ending
- Find ways to honor the past
- Take a piece of the past into the future

Navigating the neutral zone
- Explain that it’s perfectly normal
- Protect people, when possible, from other changes
- Define short-term goals and milestones
- Encourage experimentation and risk-taking
- Don’t push too soon for closure and certainty

Helping with the new beginning
- Don’t rush it!
- Clarify and communicate the need(s) for change
- Ensure that policies and priorities align with the new beginning
- Walk the talk
- Build opportunities for success
- Reward people for changing
- Celebrate the New Beginning
- Ask for their commitment
Five mistakes to avoid if you’re the new leader just taking charge

If you’ve just been appointed the new leader of a team, a department, a division, or perhaps the whole organization, congratulations! It’s an exciting time and can be overwhelming, since you want to put your best foot forward and make your mark.

But before you hit that ground running, take a few minutes to consider five classic mistakes that new leaders often make. Make sure you’re not one of them.

**Mistake #1: Thinking it’s about you, when it’s really about them.**

As you begin your new assignment, it’s quite tempting to be seduced by the congratulations, the accolades, and the possibilities. But you must resist the idea that this important event is all about you. It’s not, at least to your new staff. It’s really about them. You can bet the house that what’s on each of the minds of those people who now report to you is WIIFM – *what’s in it for me?*

The truth is, they don’t work for you. *You work for them.* Your new team will succeed when you recognize a very important truth: *you need them more than they need you.*

So – think about what you can do to make them successful. To paraphrase President John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what they can do for you. Ask what you can do for your team!”

**Mistake #2: Throwing your weight around before throwing your “wait” around.**

New leaders can be so enthusiastic about their new authority that they start barking out marching orders – “Do this! Do that!” because, well, they can. They have positional power.

People will do what you tell them to do, because people can be motivated by fear. But not for long.

My advice? *Slow down to go fast.* Take time to get to know your staff, their strengths and weaknesses, and the issues. Spend more time listening than talking. Earn their trust as you begin to share your vision.
**Mistake #3: Paying attention to the big picture and ignoring the small stuff.**

As you take charge, it’s natural to sharpen your focus on the big picture – your vision, where you want to take the team, set some goals and objectives. It’s important work and cannot to be overlooked.

But just as important to your team is the so-called small stuff. They want to know how you like to operate. How do you feel about being called after hours? What should someone do if they strongly disagree with a pending decision, or if they feel you are about to make a mistake? How do you like to get information – in person, on the phone, or by email? Is your door always open, or do you prefer people set up appointments to talk to you? Do you have some pet peeves that people should know about?

Everyone has to learn how to work with you. Save them the trial-and-error approach that only reveals your preferences when people guess wrong, and let them know as much of your so-called “small stuff” as quickly as you can.

**Mistake #4: Ignoring the power of symbolism.**

Make the power of symbolism work for you. When Tom, a new General Manager for a furniture rental company, came on board, he soon learned that people had been complaining for months about the poor conditions in the employee restroom. Within 24 hours, Tom had it cleaned, repaired and freshly painted. Later, at his first staff meeting, he already had them excited to meet a new leader who demonstrated he would listen, he cared, and he would take action. Look for a powerful symbolic act.

**Mistake #5: Confusing change with transition.**

William Bridges points out in *Managing Transitions* that change is external – it happens to you, while transitions are internal – it happens inside you. Change starts with a beginning, while transition starts by letting go of the past.

It’s easier to get your arms around change than transition, because the latter means helping people acknowledge loss, let go of the way things were, and only then move on. If you ignore the dynamics of transition, you just push behavior underground.

Why else would people spend time at the proverbial water cooler discussing all the changes in the organization?

So even if your arrival is the most exciting event you can remember, pay conscious attention to how people are managing their transition – not just what they say about the change. Help them let go.
Four priorities for new leaders

1. Connect with your boss.

2. Connect with your team.

3. Connect with your peers.

4. Connect with your customers.

Ask them:

- What does my group do well?
- What would you like to see changed?
- Is there anything you think we should start doing, or do more often?
- Is there anything you think we should stop doing, or do less often?
- If you could give me one piece of advice, what would it be?
- If you could give my group one piece of advice, what would it be?
Most of the change we think we see in life is due to truths being in and out of favor.

Robert Frost

Next steps

A highlight of this workshop for me was:

My suggestion to sustain our momentum is: