

The president of the United States gets 100 days to prove himself; you get 90. The actions you take during your first few months in a new role will largely determine whether you succeed or fail.

Leaders experience many transitions, so the ability to transition quickly and effectively into a new role has become a critical skill. Yet people still go through these all-important career crucibles with little preparation and no reliable knowledge or tools to help them.

This book aims to change that, by identifying the essential transition tasks. Do the right things and you will rapidly create momentum that will propel you to even greater successes:

1. Prepare yourself
2. Accelerate your learning
3. Match your strategy to the situation
4. Negotiate success
5. Secure early wins
6. Achieve alignment
7. Build your team
8. Create alliances
9. Manage yourself
10. Accelerate everyone

The STARS Model

	Start-Up	Turnaround	Accelerated growth	Realignment	Sustaining success
Overview	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	Reenergising a previously successful organisation that now faces problems	Preserving the vitality of a successful organisation and taking it to the next level
Challenges	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	Reenergising demoralised 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 organisation	Living in the shadow of the former leader and managing the team he or she created Playing good defence before embarking on too many new initiatives Finding ways to take the business to the next level
Opportunities	You can do things right from the beginning People are energised by the possibilities There are no rigid preconceptions	Everyone recognises 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 organisation 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.

1. Prepare yourself. This means making a mental break from your old job and preparing to take charge of the new one.

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 organisation, 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 council on this? What other activities might help you do this?

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.

CHECKLIST

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.

3. 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.

CHECKLIST

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?

4. 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.

CHECKLIST

1. How effectively have you built relationships with new bosses in the past? What have you done well? Where do you need to improve?
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 ill 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?

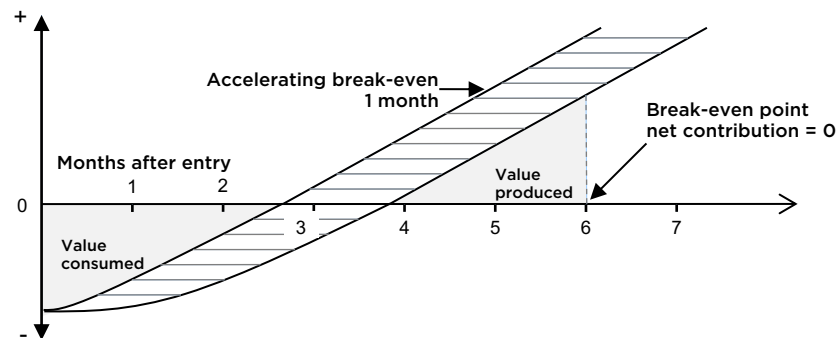
5. Secure early wins. Early wins build your credibility and create momentum. In the first few weeks, you need to identify opportunities to build personal credibility. In the first 90 days, you need to identify ways to create value & improve business results that will help you get to the break-even point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

CHECKLIST

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?

Break-Even Point

The average time it takes for a typical midlevel leader who has been promoted or hired from the outside is 6.2 months. However, even if this time may vary, the goal is the same: to get there as quickly and effectively as possible.

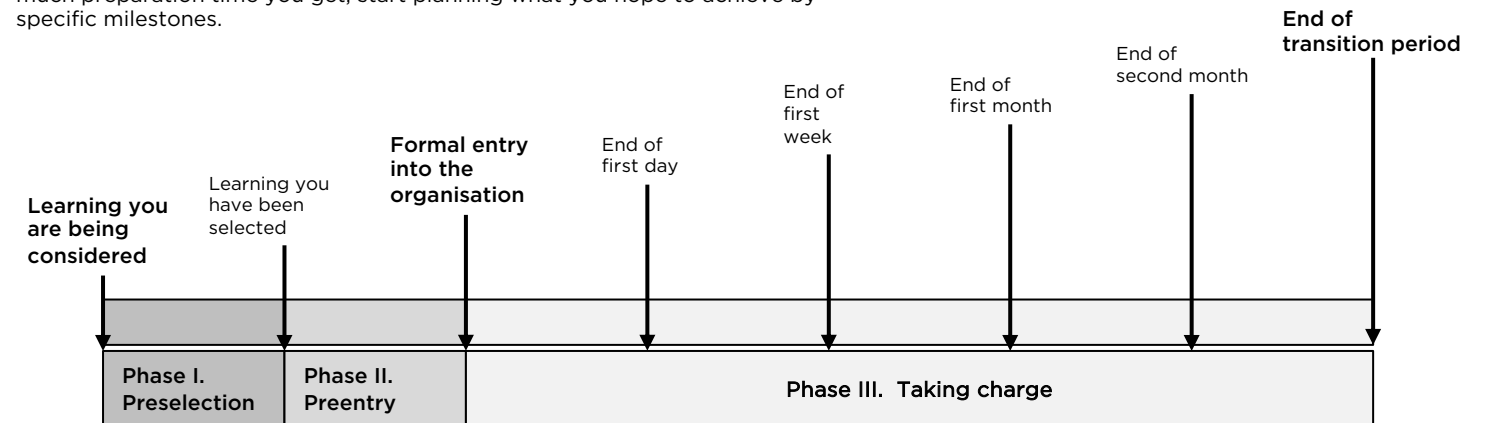


The book provides a blue print for dramatically condensing the time it takes you to reach the break-even point, regardless of the level in your organisation.

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.



6. 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.

CHECKLIST

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?

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

CHECKLIST

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 you 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?

8. 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.

CHECKLIST

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?

9. 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.

CHECKLIST

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 ill 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?

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.

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