

Guest comment: Starting out on the right foot

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Philip Beddows, a partner at career mentoring firm IDDAS, advises on how to get a head start in a new job.

If you've recently landed a new position you're probably feeling a mixed range of emotions – excitement, apprehension, uncertainty. But don't let them go to your head. After the courtship and contract negotiation have reached a happy conclusion, the real work begins.

Almost without exception, within the first few weeks and months, both sides will experience, to greater or lesser extent, 'buyer's remorse'. You will wonder if you've made the right move, and the organisation will wonder if it has made a wise decision to bring you into its venture. An early exit could be expensive for both parties.

So, what can you do to help make sure that your most recent investment in your own personal equity has the best chances of success?

Plan on the basis that there is no honeymoon period; reality can strike from day one and you may find surprises when the real firm you have joined emerges now that you've moved from being a 'prospect' to a 'client'! Understanding why this occurs, and developing strategies to mitigate the potentially harmful side effects, is a critical part of making a success of the new role.

Here are some points that may help you:

- Recognise and appreciate the different culture and do your best to be seen to fit in.
- Be clear about the expectations of your bosses (note the plural – we live in a matrix world), and those of your peers. Understand the key performance metrics on which you will be measured, and know what your success looks like to others.
- Communicate your objectives clearly and be able to demonstrate that you are achieving results from them.
- Seek out opportunities for early 'wins' that will provide tangible evidence that you are delivering against the promises that got you hired.
- Beware corporate politics: it's a dangerous occupation. Be wary of cliques or taking sides: you have a 50% chance of being wrong.
- Engage positively with any existing 'on-boarding' process for new hires, and make it effective.
- You may have been hired by an influential 'sponsor' but remember that sponsors come and go. Changes in management teams or firm dynamics can change how you are viewed.
- Success and the activities in which you become involved can provide the means to achieving future goals. Your own personal reputation and integrity will always be important.

- Integrate, and build a wider support network within the firm and amongst valuable clients.
- Don't be dependent on colleagues for friendship – friendship is not your primary aim at work, even if it helps!
- Nurture your clients in bad as well as good times.
- Under-promise (within reason, of course) and over-deliver, and avoid being too 'gung ho' early on.
- Work on a personal strategy/business plan and ensure you maintain momentum and continue to add value to the enterprise you've joined.
- Let all headhunters who have helped you, and those who have not, know where you are now. They may come in handy if your world changes.

As a new hire, you have the great advantage of arriving without any pre-existing baggage (notwithstanding any old colleagues having arrived before you, which may bring its own challenges). You are able to start with a clean sheet.

Do not fall into the trap of thinking in terms of surviving the first 90 or 100 days – the on-boarding process never ends, and your career (aligned to your life) remains a critically important part of your investment portfolio. Never let it plateau and make sure that your new investment outperforms the job market index.

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