



THE FIRST 90 DAYS

By Michael D. Watkins

INTRODUCTION

- The president of the US gets 100 days to prove themselves. You get 90.
- How your first 90 days go, can be the track of your position.
- New job or new position at same company...you have a window to get it right.
- Your goal in every transition is to get as rapidly as possible to the break-even point. This is the point at which you have contributed as much value to your new organization as you have consumed from it. As shown in figure I-1, new leaders are net consumers of value early on; as they learn and begin to take action, they begin to create value. From the break-even point onward, they are (one hopes) net contributors of value to their organizations.
- When more than two hundred company CEOs and presidents were asked for their best estimates of the time it takes a typical midlevel leader who has been promoted or hired from the outside to reach the break-even point, the average of their responses was 6.2 months.
- This book provides a blueprint for dramatically condensing the time it takes you to reach the break-even point, regardless of your level in your organization.
- Common traps:
 - Sticking with what you know
 - You believe you can be successful by doing what you have always done.
 - May need to stop some things and embrace new competencies.
 - Falling prey to the “action imperative”
 - You feel like you need to take action, and you try too hard to put your stamp on the new role.
 - Too busy to learn so you make bad decisions.
 - Setting unrealistic expectations
 - You don’t negotiate or establish clear, achievable objectives.
 - Attempting to do too much
 - You rush off in all directions, launching multiple initiatives in the hope that some will pay off.
 - Causes confusion.
 - Coming in with “the” answer
 - You come in with your mind made up or you reach conclusions too quickly about “the” problems and “the” solutions.
 - Engage in the wrong type of learning



- Too much time on the learning the technical part of the business and not the cultural or political part of the business.
 - Build relationships and insight.
 - Create information conduits
 - Neglecting horizontal relationships
 - Spend more time on peers and stakeholders, not just bosses and direct reports.
- Avoid vicious cycles and create virtuous cycles.
- Transition failures happen because new leaders either misunderstand the essential demands of the situation or lack the skill and flexibility to adapt to them.
 - Prepare yourself
 - Make a break from the old job.
 - Accelerate your learning
 - Match your strategy to the situation
 - Secure early wins
 - Negotiate success
 - Achieve alignment
 - Build your team
 - Create coalitions
 - Keep your balance
 - 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. There is much you can do to accelerate your personal transition and to gain more control over your work environment. The right advice-and-counsel network is an indispensable resource.
 - Accelerate everyone
 - Watkins, Michael. The First 90 Days, Updated and Expanded (p. 22). Harvard Business Review Press. Kindle Edition.
- Map out your first 90 days
 - Begins when you get the job.
 - Create a plan of what you want to accomplish
- Calculate transition risk index
- Acceleration Checklist
 - What will it take for you to reach the breakeven point more quickly?
 - What are some traps you might encounter, and how can you avoid them?
 - What can you do to create virtuous cycles and build momentum in your new role?
 - What types of transitions are you experiencing? What are your most challenging and why?



- What are the key elements and milestones in your 90-day plan?

1: PREPARE YOURSELF

- General
 - It's a mistake to believe that you will be successful in your new job by continuing to do what you did in your previous job, only more so. "They put me in the job because of my skills and accomplishments," the reasoning goes. "So that must be what they expect me to do here." This thinking is destructive, because doing what you know how to do (and avoiding what you don't) can appear to work, at least for a while. You can exist in a state of denial, believing that because you're being efficient, you're being effective.
 - At the broadest level, preparing yourself means letting go of the past and embracing the imperatives of the new situation to give yourself a running start. It can be hard work, but it is essential.
- Getting Promoted
 - It is a new journey.
 - Must juggle between keeping a wide view and drilling down into details.
 - Every time you are promoted, the complexity and ambiguity of the issues you are dealing with increases.
 - You need to rethink what you delegate.
 - No matter where you land, the keys to effective delegation remain much the same: you build a team of competent people whom you trust, you establish goals and metrics to monitor their progress, you translate higher-level goals into specific responsibilities for your direct reports, and you reinforce them through process.
 - At first, you delegate tasks. Then projects, then processes, then departments. As you move up, you have to let go of more.
 - As you move up, more about influence than positional authority. Interesting, but true.
 - Issues you are addressing are much more complex.
 - The people are also more capable and stronger willed.
 - The good news about moving up is that you get a broader view of the business and more latitude to shape it. The bad news is that you are farther from the front lines and more likely to receive filtered information. To avoid this, you need to establish new communication channels to stay connected with what is happening where the action is. You might maintain regular, direct contact with select customers, for instance, or meet regularly with groups of frontline employees, all without undermining the integrity of the chain of command.



- You also need to establish new channels for communicating your strategic intent and vision across the organization—convening town-hall-type meetings rather than individual or small-group sessions, or using electronic communication to broadcast your messages to the widest possible audiences.
- Exhibit the right presence
 - What does leadership presence look like in this new role?
 - What do you want it to look like?
- Onboarding into a New Company
 - Often a lateral move. Doing what you know how to do from somewhere else.
 - Focus on these things:
 - Business Orientation
 - Understand the business environment.
 - Learning about the company as a whole.
 - Stakeholder Connection
 - Who are the key stakeholders?
 - Build productive relationships with them.
 - You don't want to be meeting your neighbors for the first time in the middle of the night when your house is burning down.
 - Expectations Alignment
 - Are we all on the same page?
 - Cultural Adaptation
 - Understand the overall culture.
 - What is culture? It's a set of consistent patterns people follow for communicating, thinking, and acting, all grounded in their shared assumptions and values.
 - Likewise, every organization typically has a shared language—a long list of acronyms, for instance, describing business units, products, processes, projects, and other elements of the company. So it's essential that you invest early on in learning to speak like the locals. At this level, it's relatively easy for newcomers to figure out how to fit in. If people at your level don't wear plaid, then you shouldn't either, unless you're trying to signal an intention to change the culture.
- Preparing Yourself
- Establish a clear breakpoint
 - Moving to a new position...establish a clear breaking point with old position.



- Assess your vulnerabilities.
 - What are your problem preferences?
 - What are the problems you gravitate towards? Which do you avoid?
 - Now transfer your rankings from table 1-2 to the corresponding cells in table 1-3. Then sum the three columns and the five rows. The column totals represent your preferences among technical, political, and cultural problems. Technical problems encompass strategies, markets, technologies, and processes. Political problems concern power and politics in the organization. Cultural problems involve values, norms, and guiding assumptions. If one column total is noticeably lower than the others, it represents a potential blind spot for you.
 - The row totals represent your preferences for the various business functions. A low score in any row suggests that you prefer not to grapple with problems in that functional area. Again, these are potential blind spots.
 - You can do a lot to compensate for your vulnerabilities. Three basic tools are self-discipline, team building, and advice and counsel. You need to discipline yourself to devote time to critical activities that you do not enjoy and that may not come naturally. Beyond that, actively search out people in your organization whose skills are sharp in these areas, so that they can serve as a backstop for you and you can learn from them. A network of advisers and counselors can also help you move beyond your comfort zone.
- Watch out for your strengths
 - "To the person with a hammer, every problem looks like a nail." Abraham Maslow
 - Relearn how to learn.
- Rework your network
 - As you advance, the advice you need changes. Get the right people to give you advice.
- Watch out for people who want to hold you back
 - Old boss...wants to hold on.
 - Colleagues who are now subordinates.

2: ACCELERATE YOUR LEARNING

- General
 - What did Chris do wrong? Like many new leaders, he failed to focus on learning about his new organization and so made some bad decisions that undercut his credibility. The first task in making a successful transition is to accelerate your learning. Effective learning gives you the foundational



insights you need as you build your plan for the next 90 days. So, it is essential to figure out what you need to know about your new organization and then to learn it as rapidly as you can. The more efficiently and effectively you learn, the more quickly you will close your window of vulnerability.

- Overcoming Learning Roadblocks
 - Must learn to do well.
 - Yes, it feels like drinking from a firehose, but you have to do it.
 - A baseline question you always should ask is, "How did we get to this point?" Otherwise, you risk tearing down existing structures or processes without knowing why they were put there in the first place. Armed with insight into the organization's history, you may indeed decide that things need to change. Or you may find there is a good reason to leave it exactly where it is.
 - Who has been at the company the longest in the highest position, other than owners? Then go to owners.
 - Effective leaders strike the right balance between doing (making things happen) and being (observing and reflecting).
 - Remember: simply displaying a genuine desire to learn and understand translates into increased credibility and influence.
 - So if you habitually find yourself too anxious or too busy to devote time to learning, you may suffer from the action imperative.
 - Don't arrive with "the" answer.
- Managing Learning as an Investment Process
 - If you approach your efforts to get up to speed as an investment process—and your scarce time and energy as resources that deserve careful management—you will realize returns in the form of actionable insights. An actionable insight is knowledge that enables you to make better decisions earlier and so helps you quickly reach the break-even point in personal value creation.
- Defining Your Learning Agenda
 - The starting point is to begin to define your learning agenda, ideally before you formally enter the organization. A learning agenda crystallizes your learning priorities: what do you most need to learn? It consists of a focused set of questions to guide your inquiry or the hypotheses you want to explore and test, or both. Of course, learning during a transition is iterative: at first, your learning agenda will consist mostly of questions, but as you learn more, you will hypothesize about what is going on and why. Increasingly, your learning will shift toward fleshing out and testing those hypotheses.



- Must understand the “shadow organization”, the informal set of processes that govern how things actually get done and work at the organization. Only see it through spending time.
- Identifying the best sources of insight
 - Find key people that have institutional knowledge and spend time with them.
 - People to talk to:
 - Customers
 - Suppliers
 - Distributors
 - Outside Analysts
 - Frontline R&D and Operations
 - Sales and Procurement
 - Team Members
 - Integrators
 - Natural Historians
- Adopting Structured Learning Methods
 - Reports
 - Conversations
 - Pick up soft information, but not efficient.
 - Tough to know how much weight to place on opinions.
 - Suppose you decide to meet with your direct reports one-on-one. In what order will you meet with them? And how will you avoid being excessively influenced by what the first couple of people say? One approach is to keep to the same script in all your meetings. You might start with brief opening remarks about yourself and your approach, followed by questions about the other person (background, family, and interests) and then a standard set of questions about the business.
 - This approach is powerful, because the responses you get are comparable. You can line them up side by side and analyze what is consistent and inconsistent about the responses. This comparison helps you gain insight into which people are being more or less open.
- Creating a learning plan
 - Your learning agenda defines what you want to learn. Your learning plan defines how you will go about learning it.
- Getting Help
 - Critically, you need to be willing to ask in the first place and not feel that you should know everything and be in complete control from the moment you walk through the door.
- Closing the Loop



- Have to revisit this concept often to course correct.

3: MATCH STRATEGY TO SITUATION

- General
 - To take charge successfully, you must have a clear understanding of the situation you are facing and the implications for what you need to do and how you need to do it. From the outset, leaders like Karl need to focus on answering two fundamental questions. The first question is, What kind of change am I being called upon to lead? Only by answering this question will you know how to match your strategy to the situation. The second question is, What kind of change leader am I? Here the answer has implications for how you should adjust your leadership style. Careful diagnosis of the business situation will clarify the challenges, opportunities, and resources available to you.
- Using the STARS Model
 - STARS is an acronym for five common business situations leaders may find themselves moving into: start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success.
 - In all five of the STARS situations, the eventual goal is the same: a successful and growing business. However, the challenges and opportunities, summarized in table 3-1, vary in predictable ways depending on which situation you are experiencing.
 - Start Up
 - What are the defining features of the five STARS situations? In a start-up, you are charged with assembling the capabilities (people, funding, and technology) to get a new business, product, project, or relationship off the ground. This means you can shape the organization from the outset by recruiting your team, playing a major role in defining the agenda, and building the architecture of the business. Participants in a start-up are likely to be more excited and hopeful than members of a troubled group facing failure. But at the same time, employees of a start-up are typically much less focused on key issues than those in a turnaround, simply because the vision, strategy, structures, and systems that channel organizational energy are not yet in place.
- Turnaround
 - In a turnaround, you take on a unit or group that is recognized to be in deep trouble and work to get it back on track. A turnaround is the classic burning platform, demanding rapid, decisive action. Most people understand that substantial change is necessary, although they may be in disarray and in significant disagreement about what



needs to be done. Turnarounds are ready-fire-aim situations: you need to make the tough calls with less than full knowledge and then adjust as you learn more.

- Realignments/Sustaining Success
 - In contrast, realignments (and sustaining-success assignments) are more ready-aim-fire situations. Turning around a failing business requires the new leader to cut it down to a defensible core fast and then begin to build it back up. This painful process, if successful, leaves the business in a sustaining-success situation. If efforts to turn around the business fail, the result often is shutdown or divestiture.
- Accelerated Growth
 - In an accelerated-growth situation, the organization has begun to hit its stride, and the hard work of scaling up has begun. This typically means you're putting in the structures, processes, and systems necessary to rapidly expand the business (or project, product, or relationship). You also likely need to hire and onboard a lot of people while making sure they become part of the culture that has made the organization successful thus far. The risks, of course, lie in expanding too much too fast.
 - Start-ups, turnarounds, and accelerated-growth situations involve much resource-intensive construction work; there isn't much existing infrastructure and capacity for you to build on. To a significant degree, you get to start fresh or, in the case of accelerated growth, to build on a strong foundation. In realignments and sustaining-success situations, in contrast, you enter organizations that have significant strengths but also serious constraints on what you can and cannot do. Fortunately, in these two situations you typically have some time before you need to make major calls. This is good, because you must learn a lot about the culture and politics and begin building supportive coalitions.
 - In sustaining success
 - Often have to invent the challenge.
- Diagnosing your STARS Portfolio
 - The truth...the organization rarely fits into these clear definitions. Typically managing a portfolio of products, projects, processes, people that are in various STARS situations.
 - Figure out which parts of your organization belong in these categories.
- Leading Change
- Managing Yourself
 - Are you going to be a hero (turnaround, startup) or a steward (Realignment/Sustaining Success)



- This is not to say that people who are natural heroes cannot get in touch with their inner stewards and vice versa. Good leaders can succeed in all five of the STARS situations, although no one is equally good at all of them. It is essential to make a hardheaded assessment of which of your skills and inclinations will serve you well in your particular situation and which are likely to get you into trouble. Don't arrive ready for war if what you need is to build alliances.
- Rewarding Success
 - The most challenging situation was assessed to be realignment, followed by sustaining success and turnaround. Start-up and accelerated growth were assessed as being significantly easier. However, when it came to preferences, the pattern reversed, with start-up being (by far) the most popular, followed by turnaround and accelerated growth. This is not a surprising finding, and the underlying reasons are revealing. It is not the case that people are drawn to the easy situations. Rather, they are drawn to situations that are (1) more fun and (2) get more recognition.
 - A successful start-up is a visible and easily measurable individual accomplishment, as is a successful turnaround. In a realignment, in contrast, success consists of avoiding disaster. It is hard to measure results in a realignment when success means that nothing much happens; it's the dog that doesn't bark. Also, success in realignment requires painstakingly building awareness of the need for change, and that often means giving credit to the group rather than taking it yourself. As for rewarding sustaining success, people seldom call their local power company to say, "Thanks for keeping the lights on today." But if the power goes off, the screaming is immediate and loud.
- Closing the Loop

4: NEGOTIATE SUCCESS

- General
 - Forewarned, Michael laid the groundwork with Vaughan to gain time for diagnosis and planning. "I want to operate on a 90-day time frame, starting with 30 days to get on top of things," he told her. "Then I will bring you a detailed assessment and plan with goals and actions for the next 60 days." Michael updated her regularly on his progress. Pressed by her to make a call on a major systems purchase after three weeks, Michael held firm to his schedule. At the end of 30 days, he delivered a strong plan that pleased his new boss. A month later, Michael returned to report some early wins and to ask Vaughan for more head count to advance a key project.



- To succeed as Michael did with a new boss, it's wise to negotiate success. It's well worth investing time in this critical relationship up front, because your new boss sets your benchmarks, interprets your actions for other key players, and controls access to resources you need. He will have more impact than any other individual on how quickly you reach the break-even point, and on your eventual success or failure. Negotiating success means proactively engaging with your new boss to shape the game so that you have a fighting chance of achieving desired goals. Many new leaders just play the game, reactively taking their situation as given—and failing as a result. The alternative is to shape the game by negotiating with your boss to establish realistic expectations, reach consensus, and secure sufficient resources. By negotiating effectively with Vaughan, Michael laid the foundation for his success.
- Different situations require different relationships with supervisor
 - Higher you are in the organization, the more autonomy you have.
 - Good in some situations... free to do what you need.
 - Other situations, might be enough rope to hang yourself.
- Focusing on the fundamentals
 - Don't stay away.
 - Take the initiative.
 - Reach out, don't wait for them to reach out or initiate interactions.
 - Don't surprise your boss
 - Give them information, don't keep things from them.
 - Don't approach your boss with only problems
 - Bring solutions as well.
 - Don't run down your checklist
 - Focus on the most important.
 - Don't expect your boss to change
 - Your responsibility to adapt to your boss's style.
 - Clarify expectations early and often.
 - Take 100% responsibility for making the relationship work.
 - Negotiate time lines for diagnosis and action planning.
 - Aim for early wins in areas important to the boss.
 - Pursue good marks from those whose opinions your boss respects
- Planning for five conversations
 - #1: The situational diagnosis conversation
 - In this conversation, you seek to understand how your new boss sees the STARS portfolio you have inherited. Are there elements of start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success? How did the organization reach this point? What factors—both soft and hard—make this situation a challenge? What resources within the organization can you draw on?



- #2: The expectations conversation
 - Understand and negotiate expectations.
- #3: The resource conversation
 - Negotiation for critical resources.
- #4: The style conversation
 - This conversation is about how you and your new boss can best interact on an ongoing basis. What forms of communication does he prefer, and for what? Face-to-face? Voice, electronic? How often? What kinds of decisions does he want to be consulted on, and when can you make the call on your own? How do your styles differ, and what are the implications for the ways you should interact?
- #5: The personal development conversation
 - What areas should you develop?
- Planning the situation conversation
 - Thus, your first discussion should center on clearly defining your new situation using the STARS model as a shared language. (The same is true, as I discuss later, with your team.)
 - Match your support to your situation
- Planning the expectations conversation
 - Match expectations to the situation.
 - Aim for early wins important to your boss.
 - Identify the untouchables
 - Educate your boss on what you can and should achieve.
 - Under promise and overdeliver
 - Clarify, clarify, clarify
- Planning the resource conversation
 - Again, this will depend on the state of the company.
 - The first step is to decide what resources—tangible and intangible—you must have to succeed. Identify the resources already available to you, such as experienced people or new products ready to be launched. Then identify the resources you will need help in obtaining. Ask yourself, “What exactly do I need from my boss?” The sooner you can articulate the resources you need, the sooner you can broach these requests. It’s best to put as much as possible on the table as early as possible. Try using the menu approach: lay out the costs and benefits of different levels of resource commitment.
- How to negotiate for resources
 - #1: Focus on underlying interests
 - #2: Look for mutually beneficial exchanges
 - #3: Link resources to results.



- Planning the Style Conversation
 - Diagnose your Boss's Style
 - What modes of communication?
 - What types of decisions do they want to be involved in?
 - Do they arrive early and work late? Or something else?
 - Where do you differ?
 - Talk to others who have worked for the boss.
 - Scope out the dimensions of your box
 - What are the parameters of your decision authority.
 - Initially, expect to be confined to a small box.
 - Adapt to your boss's style
 - Surface the difficult issues
 - When serious style differences arise, it is best to address them directly.
 - If you don't, your boss will interpret your style differences as disrespect or even incompetence on your part. Address before it is a source of irritation.
- Planning the personal development conversation
 - At 90 days, begin to discuss how you are doing.
 - Get feedback on hard skills and soft skills.
- Working with multiple bosses
 - Even more difficult.
 - Must balance perceived wins and losses among them.
- Working at a distance
 - If you are not in the same location as boss, even more challenging.
 - Need to communicate more.
- Putting it all together, negotiating your 90-day plan
 - Should be written, even if only bullet points.
 - Specify priorities, goals, and milestones.
 - Sort of a contract of how you are going to spend your time.
 - Divide the 90 days into blocks of 30 days.
 - Flag key outputs.
- Planning the five conversations with your team
 - Think about how to apply this advice to the people that report to you.
 - The golden rule of transitions is to transition others as you would wish to be transitioned yourself (see "The Golden Rule of Transitions").



5: SECURE EARLY WINS

- General
 - Elena succeeded in quickly creating momentum and building personal credibility by securing early wins.¹ By the end of the first few months, you want your boss, your peers, and your subordinates to feel that something new, something good, is happening. Early wins excite and energize people and build your personal credibility. Done well, they help you create value for your new organization earlier and reach the break-even point much more quickly.
- Making Waves
 - Make changes in distinct waves.
 - Focus on early wins, but they should align with longer term goals.
 - The distinct waves
 - Learning
 - Designing the changes
 - Building the support
 - Implementing the changes
 - Observing the results
 - Interview people when learning and find opportunities for early wins.
- Starting with the Goal
 - The early wins need to contribute to long term goals.
 - There may be low hanging fruit but focus on those that contribute to big goals.
- Focus on business priorities
 - Define your goals so that you have a distinct end point in mind.
- Identify and support behavioral changes
- Adopting basic principles
 - Focus on a few promising opportunities.
 - Get wins that matter to your boss.
 - Get wins in the right ways.
 - Follow core values, yours and the company's
 - Take your STARS portfolio into account
 - Wins mean different things for different departments.
 - Adjust for the culture
 - What does a win look like for the organization, not for you.
- Identifying your early wins
 - Understand your reputation
 - What do people think they know about you when you start?
 - The problem, people will focus on information that confirms their beliefs. "Confirmation bias"



- Leading former peers
 - Accept the fact that relationships must change
 - Focus on early rites of passage.
 - Having the boss introduce you in your new role to the team.
 - Reenlist your (good) former peers
 - Establish your authority deftly
 - Focus on what is good for the organization
 - Common goal.
- Build credibility
 - Do you have the insight and steadiness to make tough decisions?
 - Do you have values that they relate to, admire, and want to emulate?
 - Do you have the right kind of energy?
 - Do you demand high levels of performance from yourself and others?
 - Be demanding, but able to be satisfied.
 - Be accessible, but not too familiar
 - Be decisive, but judicious.
 - Be focused, but flexible.
 - Be active without causing commotion.
 - Be willing to make tough calls but humane.
- Plan to engage
 - Because your earliest actions will have a disproportionate influence on how you're perceived, think through how you will get connected to your new organization in the first few days in your new role. What messages do you want to get across about who you are and what you represent as a leader? What are the best ways to convey those messages? Identify your key audiences—direct reports, other employees, key outside constituencies—and craft a few messages tailored to each. These need not be about what you plan to do; that's premature. They should focus instead on who you are, the values and goals you represent, your style, and how you plan to conduct business.
 - Think about modes of engagement, too. How will you introduce yourself? Should your first meetings with direct reports be one-on-one or in a group? Will these meetings be informal get-to-know-you sessions, or will they immediately focus on business issues and assessment? What other channels, such as e-mail and video, will you use to introduce yourself more widely? Will you have early meetings at other locations where your organization has facilities? As you make progress in getting connected, identify and act as quickly as you can to remove minor but persistent irritants. Focus



on strained external relationships and begin to repair them. Cut out redundant meetings, shorten excessively long ones, or improve problems with physical workspaces. All this helps you build personal credibility early on. Finally, keep in mind that effective learning builds personal credibility. It's never a bad thing to be seen as genuinely committed to understanding your new organization. It helps immunize you against the perception that you have come in with your mind made up about the organization's problems and have "the" answer. An early, visible focus on learning signals to the organization that you understand it has a unique history and dynamics. Of course, it's important that you also be seen as a quick study and not, as was said of one president, that you have "a learning curve as flat as Kansas."⁴ Know, too, when to shift the emphasis from learning to decision and action.

- Write your own story
 - Look for and leverage teachable moments.
 - They model the behavior you want to encourage.
- Launch early win projects
 - Keep your long-term goals in mind.
 - Identify a few promising focal points
 - Elevate change agents
 - Leverage early wins to introduce new behaviors
- Leading change
 - Always be aware of what STARS stage the department and company are in.
- Planning versus learning
 - After finding the problem you need to address, do you engage in planned change or collective learning?
 - Plan then implement
 - Works well when:
 - Awareness
 - Critical mass of people are aware of the need for change.
 - Diagnosis
 - You know what needs to be changed and why
 - Vision
 - You have a compelling vision of where you want to go and strategy to get there.
 - Plan
 - You have the expertise to put together a detailed plan



- Support
 - You have sufficiently powerful alliances to support implementation.
 - If these are not present, need more time before action.
- Get started on behavior change
 - To change the organization, you will likely have to change the culture.
 - Can't blow up the existing culture and start over.
 - People and organizations have limits to the amount of change they can absorb at once.
 - There are sources of pride in the existing culture, have to respect that.
 - Identify the good and bad elements of the existing culture.
 - Match the strategy to the STARS situation.
 - Are there ticking time bombs?
 - Are there information silos?
 - Factors
 - External factors...government, economic conditions?
 - Customers
 - Markets
 - Competitors
 - Internal capabilities
 - Organizational politics

6: ACHIEVE ALIGNMENT

- General
 - The higher you climb in organizations, the more you take on the role of organizational architect, architect, creating and aligning the key elements of the organizational system: the strategic direction, structure, core processes, and skill bases that provide the foundation for superior performance. No matter how charismatic you are as a leader, you cannot hope to do much if your organization is fundamentally out of alignment. You will feel as if you're pushing a boulder uphill every day.
- Avoiding Common Traps
 - Making change for change's sake
 - Not adjusting for the STARS situation
 - Trying to restructure your way out of deeper problems
 - Overhauling your organization's structure when the real issues lie in the processes, skill bases, and culture can amount to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Resist doing so until you understand whether restructuring will address the root causes of the problems. Otherwise, you may create new misalignments and have to



- backtrack, disrupting your organization and damaging your credibility.
 - Creating structures that are too complex.
 - Don't diffuse decision making.
 - Don't make things complex.
 - Don't overestimate your organization's capacity to absorb change.
- Designing organizational architecture
 - To design (or redesign) your organization, start by thinking of it as an open system. This is illustrated for an entire business in figure 6-1; you may need to focus on only your piece. The "open" part refers to the reality that organizations are open to (that is, those elements they influence and are influenced by). This reality comprises (1) key players in the external environment, including customers, distributors, suppliers, competitors, governments, NGOs, investors, and the media, and (2) the internal environment: climate, morale, and culture. So leaders' architectural choices must position the organization to respond to, as well as shape, the realities of the external and internal environments.
 - Strategic direction. The organization's mission, vision, and strategy
 - Structure. How people are organized in units and how their work is coordinated, measured, and incentivized
 - Core processes. The systems used to add value through the processing of information and materials
 - Skill bases. The capabilities of key groups of people in the organization
- Diagnosing Misalignments
 - Between strategic direction and skill bases.
 - Between strategic direction and core processes
 - Between structure and processes
 - Create silos of knowledge
 - Between structure and skills
 - Doesn't harness the skills of the team.
- Getting started
 - #1: Be clear on destination. (Goals)
 - #2: Pick a route. (Strategy)
 - #3: What boat you need (Structure)
 - #4: How to outfit the boat (Processes)
 - #5: Which mix of crew members. (Skill bases)
- Defining strategic direction
 - Which set of existing customers will we serve?
 - What is our value proposition?
 - Which markets?
 - What are we good at and not good at?
 - What do we need to build up?
 - Which resources do we need to commit?



- Assess coherence
 - Is there a clear logic to the choices that have been made about customers, products, technologies, plans, and resource commitments? To assess whether the elements of strategic direction fit together, you need to look at the logic behind the strategy to ensure that it makes sense overall. Have the people who defined it thought through all its ramifications and the practical aspects of implementing it? How do you evaluate the logic of the organization's strategic direction? Start by looking at documents that describe your group's mission, vision, and strategy. Then disassemble them into their components: markets, products, technologies, functional plans, and goals. Ask yourself, Do the various dimensions support one another? Is there a logical thread connecting the various parts? To be more specific, is there an obvious connection between market analysis and the group's objectives? Does the product development budget jibe with the capital investments projected in the operations part of the strategy? Are plans in place to train salespeople for new products in the pipeline?
- Assess adequacy
 - Ask probing questions
 - How did direction get defined?
 - From SWOT to TOWS
 - Supposed to implement in TOWS style.
 - Got named in reverse.
- Assess implementation
 - Have your mission, vision and strategy been pursued energetically?
 - Is the problem with the formulation of the plan or implementation?
 - What are people actually pursuing?
- Modify strategic direction
 - If needed, course correct.
- Shaping your group's structure
 - One caution: much of an organization's power gets allocated via its structure, because it defines who has the authority to do what. So take care not to take on structural change unless it is obvious that it's needed—for example, in turnaround or rapid-growth scenarios. Tackling structural change early on can be particularly perilous in realignments, where there isn't a burning platform to drive the change process. What is structure exactly? Most simply, your group's structure is the way it organizes people and technology to support the mission, vision, and strategy.
 - Consists of the following elements
 - #1: Units
 - How grouped by function, product, or geographical area.
 - #2: Reporting relationships and integration mechanisms



- #3: Decision rights and rules
 - #4: Performance measurement and incentive systems
- Assess structure
 - Before rebuilding, look at the interaction of the four structural elements.
 - Are the groupings of team members correct?
 - Do reporting relationships help align effort?
 - Are we rewarding and measuring the kinds of achievements that matter most to our strategic aims?
 - In startups, no structure, you are building it.
 - There is no perfect structure. Need to have trade offs and find the one that fits right for you.
 - A good general rule is that decisions should be made by the people who have the most relevant knowledge, as long as their incentives encourage them to do what is best for the organization.
 - The best predictor of what people will do is what they are incentivized to do. Effective leaders seek to align the interests of individual decision makers with the interests of the group as a whole. This is why placing more emphasis on group incentives is effective in some organizations: they focus everyone's attention on the ability to work together. Problems arise when measurement and compensation schemes fail to reward employees for either their individual or their collective efforts. Problems also arise when rewards advance employees' individual interests at the expense of the group's broader goals—for example, when multiple employees who could serve the same set of customers lack incentives to cooperate.
- Aligning Core Processes
 - Referred to as "systems"
 - What is your primary goal? Innovation or flawless execution? Tough to have both and may need to make tradeoffs.
 - Core processes must align with structure.
 - Asses the effectiveness of processes:
 - Productive?
 - Timeliness
 - Reliability
 - Quality
 - How do you improve a core process?
 - Make a process or workflow map.
 - What are bottlenecks?
- Developing your group's skills bases
 - Skill base is made up of this:
 - Individual expertise
 - Relational knowledge



- How to work together
 - Embedded knowledge
 - Customer databases, etc.
 - Metaknowledge
 - Where to get critical information.
- Identify gaps and resources
- Changing architecture to change culture
 - What are goals and objectives you use to motivate people?
 - Group versus individual incentives.

7: BUILD YOUR TEAM

- General
 - The most important decisions you make in your first 90 days will probably be about people. If you succeed in creating a high-performance team, you can exert tremendous leverage in value creation. If not, you will face severe difficulties, for no leader can hope to achieve much alone. Bad early personnel choices will almost certainly haunt you.
- Avoiding Common Traps
 - Don't criticize the leadership before you.
 - Don't keep the existing team too long.
 - If they are not working, don't be too proud--"I can lead them to greatness!". Make changes.
 - Not balancing stability and change
 - Only make truly high priority personnel changes early on.
 - Not working on organizational alignment and team development in parallel.
 - Have clarity on where you want to go and who you need to get there.
 - Not holding onto the good people.
 - Undertaking team building before the core is in place
 - Making implementation dependent decisions too early.
 - Trying to do it all yourself.
- Assessing your team
 - What are you working with?
 - 5: SuperSTARS
 - 4: High performer
 - 3: Average
 - 2: Below Average
 - 1: Poor
 - Establish other criteria
 - Competence
 - Judgment



- Energy
 - Focus
 - Relationships
 - Trust
 - Initiative
- Assess what you can change/improve.
 - Factor in functional expertise.
 - Factor in the extent of teamwork
 - Factor in the STARS mix
 - Factor in the criticality of positions
 - Assess your people
 - Meet with them one on one.
 - Prepare for each meeting
 - Their performance
 - Personnel history
 - Technical and professional skills
 - Create an interview template
 - Biggest challenges
 - What resources are needed or could be used better?
 - How can we improve how we work together?
 - What are your priorities?
 - What should I know?
 - Look for verbal and non-verbal clues.
 - Test their judgment
 - Can they make sound predictions?
 - Good strategies for avoiding problems?
 - Assess the team as a whole
- Evolving your team
 - Make these choices:
 - Keep in place
 - Keep and develop
 - Move to another position
 - Replace (low priority)
 - Replace (high priority)
 - Observe for a while.
 - Should feel 90% confident in whatever you decide.
 - Always consider alternatives to turnover--that is costly and time consuming.
 - Tough time in the organization. Treat everyone with respect--ALWAYS.
- Aligning your team.
 - Push tools
 - Goals



- Performance measurement systems
 - Incentives
- Pull tools
 - Compelling vision
 - Inspire people
- Fit to the STARS situation
- Define goals and performance metrics
 - Must be clear.
 - Align incentives
 - Incentive Equation
 - Total Reward = monetary reward + nonmonetary reward
 - Nonmonetary rewards.
 - How available are they? Advancement and recognition.
 - Perceived importance?
 - If you cannot tell how much each person contributed and there is a lag between performance and results...fixed compensation is better.
 - More cooperation needed, more group-based rewards.
 - Designing compensation plans are a challenge, but the cost of getting them wrong can be great.
 - Articulate your vision
 - It is a key reason people come to work every day.
 - It taps into sources of inspiration.
 - It becomes part of "the story".
 - It contains powerful language.
 - What parts are non-negotiable?
 - What parts can be flexible?
 - Need channels to communicate our vision.
- Offsite planning checklist
 - Reasons to have one
 - To gain a shared understanding of the business (diagnostic focus)
 - To define the vision and create a strategy (strategy focus)
 - To change the way the team works together (team-process focus)
 - To build or alter relationships in the group (relationship focus)
 - To develop a plan and commit to achieving it (planning focus)
 - To address conflicts and negotiate agreements (conflict-resolution focus)
 - Getting down to details
 - When and where
 - Issues to deal with and in what order?
 - Who should facilitate?
 - Don't try to do too much.



- Leading your team.
 - Assess your team's existing processes
 - Who exerts the most influence on key issues?
 - Who innovates? Who plays devil's advocate? Who avoids risk? Who takes risks? Who does everyone listen to the most?
 - What kind of decisions were made?
 - What is everyone's leadership style?
- Target team processes for change
 - Are the meetings too inclusive or too exclusive?
 - Who is making decisions?
 - How were they made?
 - Consult and decide?
 - Build consensus?
 - Who made them?
 - Decision diffusion...decision making goes on forever, and then settle on the lowest common denominator.
 - Separate information gathering process from decision making process.
- Jump starting the team
 - These decisions regarding building your team are some of the most important decisions you will make.

8: CREATE ALLIANCES

- General
 - To succeed in your new role, you will need the support of people over whom you have no direct authority. You may have little or no relationship capital at the outset, especially if you're onboarding into a new organization. So you will need to invest energy in building new networks. Start early. Discipline yourself to invest in building up "relationship bank accounts" with people you anticipate needing to work with later.
- Define your influence objectives
 - Be clear about why you need the support of others.
 - What alliances do you need for early wins?
- Understanding the influence landscape
 - Who are key decision makers?
 - Who do you need to do what and by when?
 - Create a chart to map this out.
 - What are winning in alliances? What are potential blocking alliances?
 - Map influence networks. For the issues that concern you.
 - Watch who defers to who on important issues.
 - Draw influence diagrams.
- Identify supporters, opponents, and persuadables



- Do not take supporters for granted.
- Understand the opponents
 - What are their reasons?
 - Comfort with status quo
 - Fear of looking incompetent
 - Threats to core values
 - Threats to power
 - Negative consequences for their allies
- Don't assume people are adversaries.
- Understanding pivotal people.
 - Understand people's motivations and their situational pressures.
- Crafting influence strategies
 - Consultation, framing, choice-shaping, social influence, incrementalisms, sequencing, and action forcing events.

9: MANAGE YOURSELF

- General
- Taking Stock
 - Where are you with everyone? Be honest.
 - What has bothered you so far?
 - What has gone well? Gone poorly?
- Understanding the three pillars of self-management
 - #1: Adopt 90 Day Strategies
 - #2: Develop Personal Disciplines
 - Regular routines you enforce on yourself ruthlessly
 - Which ones are the most important?
 - Watch commitments
 - Focus on the important
 - Plan to plan.
 - #3: Build your support systems
 - Assert control locally
 - Stabilize the home front
 - Build your advice and counsel network
- Staying on track

10: ACCELERATE EVERYONE

- General
- Identify the critical transitions



- The starting point is to understand how many transitions are occurring in your organization and to focus first on accelerating the most important of them. It's surprising how many companies are unable to answer basic questions about the number of people who are being hired, getting promoted, moving between units, and making lateral moves. Without good data on the frequency of transitions—and, critically, without awareness of when they are occurring—it's difficult to design acceleration systems.