

Onboarding New Leaders

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Think about your first promotion to a leadership role – did you get any official prep or mentoring to ensure your success? Probably not. I know I didn't! I was moved laterally from one department as a “worker bee” to another department as the manager with a staff of eight. Other than being shown how to run payroll, no one higher-up in the organization did anything to ensure I was prepared to assume the management of others. In fact, I don't remember anyone checking in with me at all, to see how things were going.

This is a giant missed opportunity in business! We have new-hire onboarding procedures... why not new-leader onboarding as well? Better bosses create better results according to a 2016 Harvard Business [Working Knowledge article](#). So, if you'd like better outcomes from both newly promoted (or hired) leaders and the people who work for them, here are some easy to implement suggestions to help them assimilate to their new roles faster and to become a more proficient contributing member of your team.

In the first 60 days:

- » Take control during the first 60 days – don't leave a new leader to flounder.
- » Clearly communicate the expectations and objectives/deliverables of the new role. Discuss key performance indicators if you have them established.
- » Share the organization chart. Surprisingly, a construction management firm recently discovered that very few of their field supervisors could name all the principals of the company. In addition to the official organization chart, be



sure to help new leaders to understand their stakeholders and the stakeholder's concerns or influence. If the person is new to the organization, it is critical to make introductions to leaders in other departments so that they can begin fostering relationships.

- » Daily check-ins will go a long way to help the new leader feel supported. The check-ins don't have to be long. Knowing that they will have your full attention for 15 minutes every day to ask questions and double check their decisions alleviates a lot of stress and indecision.
- » If you've identified tasks (such as running payroll) or skills that the new leader will need to learn, create a schedule for them to achieve those things in the first 30 – 60-days. For instance, if you want them to visit all your jobsites or meet all your clients, set a once-a-week schedule so that they

have time to plan and also time to process what they've learned. Sending a peer with them to make introductions or point out critical items also goes a long way in helping them to become competent faster.

- » Suggest that they have a 1 - 1 with each of their direct reports to learn what they are doing and how they can help. Just as the new leader needs to assimilate to the organization and their role, their employees also need to assimilate to the new leader.
- » Ensure the new leader has the resources they need - tools, technology, budget, etc. and that they know how to allocate or how to request those items as needed.

Beyond 60 days:

- » Keep up with the regular check-ins but now they should be once a week and last up to an hour. By this point your new leader should have bigger and less transactional questions that they will need more guidance on. They need to know there is "safe space" to air their challenges and seek guidance. End every check-in with the question - what can I do to help?
- » Take the initiative to provide regular feedback; you don't have to wait for the scheduled check-in. If an issue comes up – address it immediately. Likewise, if you hear good things, pass it along quickly. A new leader is often overwhelmed and unsure of themselves for up to a year, so commit to their success.


After 120 days:

- » Ask them about improvements or goals they have come to recognize for the department. This not only demonstrates that you value their contribution, but often gives you a new perspective because you've got a fresh set of eyes in the role.

Make it easy on yourself:

Just as I was putting together this article, [Trainual](#) released a new-leader onboarding checklist. It is free and available whether you are a Trainual client or not. The checklist includes

many of the things listed above: what development or skills might be needed, how to meet with your new team, and more.

Since the pandemic a lot of our more experienced leaders have left the workforce and companies are promoting younger generations who have had less time to ramp up their leadership skills. You can ensure their success (and yours!) by following this 120-day plan to onboard new leaders. 



About the Author

Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for Chief Learning Office magazine, Forbes, and MBA World and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as Inc. Radio and America's Workforce Radio.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is Future-Proofing Your Organization.

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