

# The countdown begins

The first 101 days in a new role are critical. **Alan Denton** explains how to give yourself the best chance of flourishing.

IT'S A NEW YEAR, and for many it will mean they are starting a new job or role, as January is a peak time for staff movement. But behind the excitement and anticipation of a new challenge lies a harsh reality: evidence suggests that the first three months in a position are directly relevant to long-term performance. This is when many people fail: a recent study of 20,000 executive searches by global company Heidrick & Struggles found that 40% of executives hired at senior level were no longer in post 18 months later – indicating serious flaws in the induction process.

So if you are sitting in your new executive office, or have been freshly promoted to a senior position, how can you make a positive difference to your organisation within 101 days or less and ensure your move is a success?

As part of our business coaching, we work with newly appointed executives on a 10-point template which encompasses a range of areas to help them to hit the ground running.

The first step is to set your "results stall" out. Decide what your bottom line results are: for example, which KPIs are absolutely crucial to your success. Get them communicated and agreed. This isn't about quantity – new executives often make the mistake of running around appearing to make changes. Go for quality, and communicate to your new boss and organisation what these results will deliver, such as more sales, increased productivity, improved efficiency. Actively look out for the triggers that bring your boss on board.

## Gathering the key facts

What do you need to know about the role and, particularly, your new business? Some businesses rely heavily on process, that is, their way of doing things; others are more open to change. If you start working for the former, but act as if you are in the latter, you'll soon find yourself in trouble. Draw on your interview interactions and early experiences of your

new environment. Use this to help you be specific about what you should be doing on a day-to-day basis and use this as a daily reinforcement exercise. Aim to enrol and engage at all levels of the business – put simply, this means building productive relationships even with people you may not like.

Draw on your career experiences so far of different business cultures. Ask yourself after interview, at the end of the first day, week and month "how would I describe the culture here?" Write your answers down and start to build up a picture to act upon. Think about the new culture you have entered: is it hierarchical or egalitarian, task focused or people focused? Adapt your approach to suit the cultural climate.

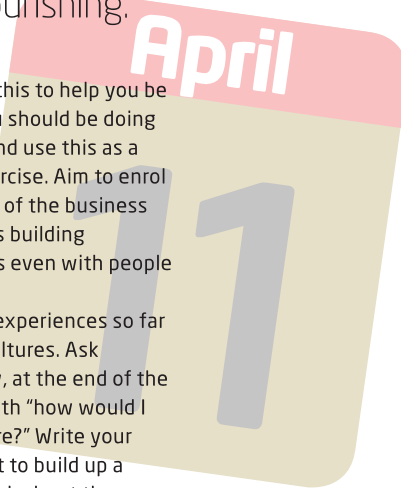
## Bring something unique

It's useful to form the beginnings of an action plan before starting the job – what have you done in the past that was extraordinary, what have you seen other bosses do? What would make a massive difference to your boss, your new business and you? Use your career successes so far: what did you do? How can you implement or adapt them to your new role for even greater success?

One of our coaches worked with a newly appointed executive with an idea, formed pre-commencement, for an entirely new product in his building materials business. Despite resistance at every level, he persisted. It's now a multi-million profit line for the company – and he is seen as a superstar!

By actively working on these areas, as well as other significant issues such as team working, stakeholder engagement, relationship building, communication skills and market impact, you will be taking positive steps to delivering exceptional results – and both personal and professional fulfilment.

**Alan Denton is MD of The Results Centre and coaches newly appointed senior executives. [www.resultscentre.com](http://www.resultscentre.com)**



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## Five things to know about...

### ... attending a job interview

#### 01 Be well prepared

Preparation for any interview is absolutely vital – you need to know the job description and your own CV inside out. We recently carried out a survey in which 64% of professionals said their biggest fear before a job interview was not knowing the answer to questions they might be asked, even though 42% spent up to an hour researching or practicing interview techniques. Despite preparing for interviews, those surveyed still struggled with answering questions about their weaknesses.

Preparation not only means paying close attention to the job description but to your personal qualities too. Personality traits are often as important as the skills and experience employees can bring to a new role.

#### 02 Research the company

To show your commercial acumen, look at the company's website to make yourself aware of any recent announcements, the type of projects they work on, who their clients are and the locations they work in. Use this to show how your experience would bring added value to the organisation.

#### 03 Brush up on your competencies

Many employers now use competency-based interviewing techniques to test whether your past performance is an accurate indication that you match the job criteria. Revisit the job description and person specification before your interview and ensure that you can provide an example for each competency. Think of your examples in four stages: describe the situation; the task; the actions you took; and the results, which should show the positive impact this had on the business.

For operational staff, focus on providing evidence of projects worked on and clearly state the key competencies. For commercial staff, be prepared to give specific examples with monetary figures where you have either reduced costs or brought in revenue.

#### 04 Watch the body language

How you communicate is as important as what you say. Even if you are nervous, smile and use open body language and eye contact to show your enthusiasm for the subject matter and the role you are being interviewed for.

#### 05 Have questions at the ready

Lastly, prepare some questions to ask at the end of the interview that demonstrate that you have done your research and are genuinely interested in the organisation and the direction they are looking to take the business.

**By Lynne Crowe, director of Hays Construction. For more information and interview tips visit:**