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## Can you deliver great results in 101 days – or less?

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Are you fully prepared for the challenge of promotion or a new job? Alan Denton, MD of executive coaching company The Results Centre has advice to help you achieve great results in 101 days (or less).



Alan Denton

The law attracts some of the most ambitious, assured and driven people. However, even those with bags of confidence and years of experience can struggle when promoted to a new role, particularly in a new firm. You may thrive on challenge, but in a high-pressure industry you will be expected to get great results fast. Even the most spily qualified can fall – as a wealth of well researched reports prove. For example, an internal study of 20,000 executive searches performed by global executive search company Heidrick & Struggles found that 40 per cent of senior executives fail or leave within 18 months of starting in a new position.

### Counting the real cost

With the cost of an unsuccessful appointment estimated at around 2.5 times the individual's annual salary, these statistics, and many others like them, highlight an expensive problem for the legal industry.

My job, working with senior executives and partners in law, finance and property, is to ensure that they are effective in their new role within 101 days or less (evidence suggests that the first three months are directly indicative of long-term performance). In order to achieve this, these highly experienced people focus on certain key areas, defining specific objectives that are directly relevant to their role and organisation.

### What's the bottom line?

Whether you are a lawyer, partner, associate or executive, you need to deliver bottom-line results fast. Identify these from day one, in what are the critical KPIs: what results do you expect from your team? Communicate and agree them so you ensure the engagement of staff around, above and below you. Make sure you enrol your new boss and/or senior/lead partner and the wider organisation in what these results will deliver: lower costs, more clients, higher billings or whatever the key deliverables are in your new environment.

### Stretch yourself

To get where you are now, you have already achieved a great deal. Think about how you have delivered real stretch results in the past. What have you seen others deliver, either directly from your own experience or from afar? What set apart the great leaders from your previous firms? How did they sustain their peers? There's a good chance that they created great relationships, had a vision of where they wanted to go (even without the knowledge of how to get there) and that they made stretch requests of themselves and others around them.

Most senior lawyers enter a firm on the back of an agreed business plan. Call this the cake, and then create for yourself a picture of what the icing might look and taste like. Enrol your team in achieving stretch goals from day one – ask them what the icing looks like, and you'll be amazed at what they come up with.

### The need to know

It's a cliché, but knowledge is power, and the acquisition of the right knowledge is even more powerful. So, what do you need to know about the role and the business to enable you to achieve great results? Some firms are process-driven with a set way of doing things, whilst 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 become frustrated. Draw on your interview interactions and early experiences to help you be specific about what you actually need to do on a day to day basis and use this as a daily reinforcement exercise. Enrol and engage at all levels building great relationships - even with people that you may not like.

### Adapt to the culture

Each firm is different. How would you describe your new organisation's culture at the end of the first day, first week, first month? Write down your impressions. Is it hierarchical or more egalitarian - task focused versus people focused? Adapt your leadership approach to suit the cultural climate.

### Be unique

In such a competitive arena, you have to offer something that no one else does. Use past successes to create an action plan before you start.

- » What have I done in the past that was extraordinary?
- » What have I seen other bosses do?
- » What scares me when I think about delivering it, but if delivered would make a massive difference to my boss, to the business, to me?

Don't be afraid to innovate: for example, suggest a new service that your firm doesn't currently offer. When we suggest this to clients, they often assert that 'there is nothing new'. Whilst there is truth in this, they may be ignoring the comfort context. All organisations, including law firms, get into the comfort groove and your task as the new person in the team is to bring something fresh. If you have a plan that is well thought out, this isn't as difficult as it may first appear.

### Communicate, engage, enrol

You have established a clear vision - now communicate it to your department, division and where appropriate, across your firm. Define what enrolment and engagement means to you and think about how to engage your new team. Consider teams that you have worked in – what made them successful, what did they achieve and how were they well led? Define your key milestones for success and communicate them. Relationships are crucial and need to be consciously created through effective communication – not all of which will be verbal.

### Make an impact

Results are everything in law – inevitably you will be judged on those results. How do your actions impact on external and internal stakeholders? As a director or partner, how will you impact partner, shareholder and company value? As an executive how will you build strategic growth and alliance opportunities? As a senior manager, how will you develop new, more profitable and dynamic external relationships? All of these will create long-term growth and sustainability within your firm.

You may think that you are more than ready for the next challenge – but the reality can sometimes prove a little different. However, investing your time in structured planning and preparation will go a long way to ensuring that you are able to deliver amazing results in 101 days – or less.

The Results Centre uses a ten point template with executive clients in a new role. For a copy of the template, or more information on the First 101 Days programme, visit [www.resultscentre.com](http://www.resultscentre.com)

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