



Executive
Transitions – Slow
down to speed up

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We have facilitated many executive transitions in recent years and are privileged to have worked with some of the most talented senior executives across the continent. Being a facilitator on a highly successful transition programme has provided us with unique insights into executive effectiveness and placed us in a unique position where we can guide executives to unlock exponential effectiveness. What we have found is that taking time to slow down, allows leaders to speed up. Never has this been more relevant than during the current Covid-19 crisis.

Often the transition is a paradox for the incoming executive. They were promoted as a result of previous success or skills, but once promoted to the c-suite, the realisation is that many of the rules have changed. They are faced with a steep learning curve in the art and science of leadership and the daunting reality that they either; must unlearn some past ways of working or stop doing things the way they did in the past. What this crisis has demonstrated, is a fundamental shift to new ways of working.

All too often executives' transition into new roles without taking the time to step back and plan effectively for what is most likely a more senior and complex role. There tends to be a mindset that executives don't have the time to pause and reflect on how their future role might be different to their present role. In the hectic corporate world, taking time out would appear to be a luxury few can afford. Failure to slow down and plan during the transition often limits executive effectiveness into the future, because there is a failure to truly

appreciate the change required of the individual to function at the new level, which is what is required to deliver the greatest impact.

A role transition represents a unique opportunity for an executive to take quality time out and set themselves up for success. Taking the time to step back and plan is a necessity not a luxury. Discussions with executives during the Covid-19 crisis has often centred on even further time pressures. We have observed how, with countless transitions, taking the time out to plan has been profound in terms of setting them up for future success. A constant feedback is, "this was life changing".

Our selected observations in working with executives reflect several lessons that exponentially improve the likelihood of executive effectiveness:

- What made you successful in the past, will make you successful in the future: Many executives fall into the assumption that what made them successful in the past and often enabled them to be considered for the new role will be the key to their future success. The levels of work and operating context are vastly different. All too often executives enter a highly stressful transition and don't have the cognitive capacity to think creatively, and end-up reverting to their old ways of working. During a crisis this is exacerbated, and executives constantly need to adapt to new emerging realities.
- Leadership behaviours: The most critical ingredient for exponential success is often the leadership

behaviours of the executive. Being aware of how they show up in each moment and addressing blind spots, can substantially change the impact they have. Taking the time to define an evolving value proposition and how one needs to align one's behaviour is a crucial value moment.

- Time, talent & relationships: These three key ingredients of executive transition success allow the executive to reflect on how they spend their time, who their key talent is and how they manage the expectations of key stakeholders. Each of these require deliberate choices and new ways of working compared to their previous role. The most insightful realisation is often in what executives should stop doing.
- Creating a 180 day plan: Investing time to step back and take a full day to think and plan significantly increases the probability of future success. In most spheres of life, recognising the value of thinking ahead and defining some key objectives and action steps to get there is critical. More importantly in a new role the plan needs to prepare individuals to navigate what will be an intense and stressful initial three months as they deal with the change. It is even more critical during a time of crisis, when individuals need to look beyond the current turmoil and pave the way for thriving and future success. Why not invest a day in planning for your successful transition?



In conclusion, the evidence is overwhelming that slowing down early in your transition to plan the road ahead, ultimately creates greater momentum through the early phases of the transition. What stands out for us is that executive effectiveness improves exponentially when an executive spends quality thinking time focusing on the business. This critical thinking needs to be directed to working on the business versus working in the business. Executives are easily caught up in the day-to-day chaos, noise and stress of a new role. It is critical to deliberately think about the building blocks that move the business forward, and incidentally the executive as well. Can you afford not to take time to slow down and think carefully about planning your transition?

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