

How to Handle a New Boss



Studies show that the average job lasts no more than 3.7 years. That means the average employee must make the transition to a new boss roughly every year and a half. (The formula recognizes that it could be either the employee or the boss that's new to the organization). Here's some advice to help you break in the new boss.

Boss Transitioning Words of Wisdom

Some general principles to keep in mind when dealing with a new boss:

- When your boss succeeds, you succeed;
- The 2,000 lb. elephant can sit wherever it wants to;
- If one of you has to change to make things work, that somebody is in all likelihood going to be you;
- The day that new boss steps through the door, it's a whole new world;
- Be sure you understand the question before you provide the answer;
- The boss is your most important customer and it's essential to research his or her needs; and,
- You only have one chance to make a good first impression.

Okay – so some of these ideas have the ring of cliché. But clichés only get to be clichés because they're true.

Learn Your New Boss's Style

In those first days, it should become pretty evident how your boss wants to give and receive information. Is the boss's primary focus on facts, ideas, concepts or people? Does he like long explanations or is he a cut-to-the-chase kind of guy (or gal).

Then, there's the issue of authority vs. autonomy. Are you going to be expected to take charge and make decisions or do you have to check in with the boss each step along the way?

As you're getting the style thing down, determine which projects, issues and goals are most important to your boss. Is the primary interest in broad areas such as cultural change or more specific and mundane matters? Set up a meeting early on to give the boss an overview of the current status of each project within your portfolio and point out what's on the radar.

Take nothing for granted. Don't assume the boss knows your skills, experience and

reputation. Keep in mind that new bosses often have preconceived perceptions that aren't on target.

Conclusion

One final caveat: Be mindful that new bosses are genetically inclined to discredit members of the previous regime and harbor the desire to build their "own team." So there's no assurance that you'll get a "fair trial" from your new boss. That's why any time a new boss enters the scene, you should hedge your bets and update your résumé.