



Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the October edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

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Coaching New Employees to Success

Everyone knows the first few months in a job are a critical period for the ongoing success of a new employee. The first impressions created in that important time can weigh heavily on the long-term impact of the employees and their overall success in the position. It is commonly said that political leaders have 100 days to make their mark when they first take office and I would argue this holds for most other employees as well.

There are legendary stories of top CEOs coming into organizations and making radical shifts and visible changes to show the new direction they want to take the company. However, it is not just the top leaders that must 'prove themselves' in these early days – it is wise for *all* new employees to think about the impact they want to have in their organization and to map out their plan for achieving these goals.

Although we realize the importance of this transitional period, most new employees receive very little guidance during this time. Occasionally, this lack of support is intentional, stemming from a 'sink or swim' mentality. More often however, the negligence is unintended – a result of the manager not having enough time (or perhaps knowledge) to properly mentor the new employee and ease him/her into the role. In some organizations new employees are lucky to receive any formal training about their position, let alone a well-designed plan to help them succeed over the long term.

In the next few newsletters, we will focus on how to take a *coach approach* to successfully navigating these transition periods. These tips are not about providing 'training' to new employees. While training is obviously essential, those tangible, on-the-job skills are specific to each different job. Instead, taking a coach approach to the transition is about guiding the new employee through the intangibles: Why is the position important to the company? How does the new employee shape the role to best fit their own strengths? What are the goals the employee wants to achieve in the short and long term?

If you are a manager or business owner, the coach approach will help you bring new employees on board more easily. Likewise, if you are in the position of starting a new job (or wanting to steer your current position in a new direction) you can also apply these tips yourself – don't sit back and simply hope that your manager will take the lead.

The first place to start in this process is to think about the position itself; often, the cause of many problems for new employees is a lack of clarity about the real purpose of why the position exists. This exercise is not about making a list of every specific role or duty the position entails (although this may be a helpful place to start). Rather, think about how the position is important to the overall team in the department or organization as a whole: if the position didn't exist, how would the organization be different?

By providing a clear purpose and definition for the role, the new employee can avoid some of the potential political and territorial issues that can arise in their relations with other employees and have a structure within which to shape the position to increase the likelihood of success in the role. Are you ready to begin this clarification process? Take part in this month's *Live Your Strengths Challenge*!

News from In Search of Excellence

Speaking of new roles and transition periods... if you haven't yet heard the news, we had a baby girl on August 30. Maggie Faith weighed 8 lb 3oz at birth and is doing very well – getting bigger every day!

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Clarify the Position

When thinking about hiring for (or starting) a new job, consider the following questions:

- What is the real purpose this position serves within the department/organization? What would be missing if this position did not exist?
- How does this position connect with the overall mission and vision of the organization? Are you able to clearly communicate (in a few sentences) how the new person's job tangibly contributes to the bigger picture of success for the organization?
- If there are other similar positions within your organization (for example, front line service providers in a retail or administrative support context), what makes each position unique? Does each person have certain functions or projects that are specific to him/her?
- Although you will work with the new employee to help him/her set goals for their future in this new position, as the manager you should have some idea about goals and overall direction for the role. What specific goals would you like to see the new employee achieve by the end of his/her first month on the job? By the end of three months? Within the first year?

While these questions may appear simple at first, you may need to think about them for a while to be able to communicate them clearly and succinctly to your new employee. By providing this structure for the new employee, you are setting the stage for greater long-term success for both the employee and your organization as a whole!

Cheers,

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