

On-Boarding and Induction: Reducing the Risk of External Hires

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While it might appear an unusual statement for an executive search consultant to make, there is little doubt that for organizations an internal appointment is usually the lower risk option when compared with an external hire. However, this is not always possible. Growth and expansion may mean that the skills are not available internally, an untimely departure may mean that succession plans have not had time to be implemented, or specialist knowledge is required that can only be brought in from outside. As such, there are times when an external appointment is necessary to ensure continued organizational success.

External hires face four fundamental challenges that they must overcome which are not normally encountered by an internal appointee. They must:

1. Understand and adapt to the culture of the new organization.
2. Learn the unique way, that making decision is executed within the organization.
3. Learn the internal jargon.
4. Gain an understanding of the internal relationships and build trust.

Regardless of whether the appointee joins the organization in a junior position or at the 'C suite' level, the induction process can be critical to overcoming these challenges. A positive induction process can increase the speed at which the appointee becomes effective, while a poor initial experience can potentially result in a failure to integrate and an untimely departure. While many organizations have well developed programs for junior staff, experienced/senior hires are more often than not left to their own devices.

Effective '*on-boarding*' of new executives can be one of the most important contributions, any hiring manager, direct supervisor, human resources or executive search professional

can make to long-term organizational success. Executive on-boarding done well can improve productivity and executive retention and build shared corporate culture.

In planning an on-boarding and induction program, the following points should be considered. How can an appointee be assisted to:

- Build relationships – up, down and across the organization (as well as externally).
- Build performance – setting clear guidelines to ensure appointees become productive quickly.
- Understand the business and how it really works.
- Remove the barriers that stand in the way of achieving each of the above.

If an organization does not have an induction strategy for all levels it should move quickly to address this weakness. A carefully implemented on-boarding program can be a strategic advantage for an organization as it seeks to strengthen its leadership team.