

# The First 90 Days

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Strategies to Help You Succeed  
in Your New Role

# The First 90 Days: Strategies to Help You Succeed in Your New Role

The first 90 days of your new job – whether you’ve joined a new company or been promoted — are critical. The first impressions you make matter. The process you use to collect information, assess the business, and build relationships with new colleagues can help you hit the ground running or create a hole that you will spend your first year trying to climb out of.

## Starts with You

Ahead of starting your new job, ask yourself some important questions, and dig in to find the real answers.

- What worked well during your entry process into your last job?
- What do you want to do differently this time around?
- What did you do well as a leader in your last job?
- What were your biggest failures?
- What kind of talent do you need to surround yourself with to balance you as a leader and allow you to focus where you most need to?
- What unique value will you bring to this role and to your company?

## Build an Entry Plan

Layout the calendar for your first 90 days before you “walk in the door” on day one.

- Treat the first 90 days as a period of assessment – learn the business, begin to understand the people around you and the culture of the organization.
- Attend the meetings that have been used to run the business – observe and ask questions for the first few weeks – resist the pressure to dive in and start running things.
- Map out who you want to meet with internally and which locations you want to see first-hand – visit your top two locations and the bottom two.
- Spend three or four days in the field in the first month. You’ll learn a lot and gain credibility with the organization.

## Create a Structured Diagnostic Process

In the first 90 days, you'll be meeting with lots of people – executives, direct reports, key suppliers, and others across the organization. Ask everyone the same few questions – it will not only help you learn the business, but it will teach you a lot about what is shared doctrine and what is in dispute. These are questions that can work well:

- What have been the key drivers of our success?
- What are the biggest challenges we're facing? Why are we facing them?
- What is the strategy of our company? (don't utter a word after these seven – you'll be shocked at how much you learn by how they respond)
- What are the best opportunities for growth that haven't yet been fully realized? What would we have to do to go after them?
- Tell me about the culture of our company. What should I know to help me succeed? What behaviors should I avoid?
- What would you focus your attention on if you were me?

Start every single meeting with "Tell me about you. How long have you been here, what's your role, and what did you do prior to being on this team?" Make sure they take five minutes to answer. And prepare your two-minute version of who you are – start with the non-work stuff (family, growing up, etc.) and then talk about your career.

## Take Your Time Getting to Know the Political System

Every organization has a different political system that governs how power is distributed, how it is accumulated, and how it is used. Get to know the culture and power players in the organization. When you're meeting with folks one-on-one, go to their offices – it shows respect and sometimes people's workspaces can tell you a lot about them. Keep your cards close in terms of how you think about the business and your eyes/ears open for the first 90 days. If you assert your authority too quickly you lose the opportunity to understand how things run. You'll have plenty of time to drive change in due course.

## Assess Your Team

On day one, you'll begin assessing the individuals in your new organization. But you need to assess your senior team as a team as well. Don't dive into running the business during your first few meetings with them – use the time to introduce yourself and ask them questions about how they see the business. They have been running the business without you until now – ask them to keep running their meetings as they have while you observe, ask questions, and learn. Watching and listening will teach you a lot about the business and the team.

## Align Your Team

Give yourself 90 days to learn about the business, the leadership team, the organization, and the people. By the end of the second or third week, schedule time with your senior team. Seeing it on the calendar will signal to your direct reports that you'll move from assessment to action in a reasonable timeframe. It will also build the kind of anticipation within your team that will help create momentum when the time comes to drive change.

Whether you meet with your team in-person or virtually, use the time to develop your team and set a course for the business. Develop a process to align your team around a shared view of the external market realities and internal capabilities. Next, take them through a process to review and refine the strategy for the next 12 months. If you do it right, the process should align the team around a direction you're initially comfortable with and tell you all you need to know about who you want on the team and who you want to quickly move out. Let them know that you'll take a bigger whack at a long-term strategy in four to six months.

## About Brimstone

Brimstone is a global leader in business consulting. We work side by side with our clients, moving from strategy to execution and uncovering the pivot points for true business growth and transformation. Our straightforward methodology simultaneously aligns the organization and develops leaders while accelerating growth, performance, and profitability.



48 WASHINGTON STREET  
CAMDEN, ME 04843

+1 207 230 0979

[BRIMSTONECONSULTING.COM](http://BRIMSTONECONSULTING.COM)

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This guide contains recommendations for helping you articulate your new role, build the leadership capabilities required, and establish a plan that will help you accelerate effectiveness. The information is based on best practices, but you should customize and modify the topics and questions to ensure they are relevant to your unique situation.

# Alignment

Involving key stakeholders such as your boss and direct reports in working through the topics in this guide will also help you communicate with, engage, and get aligned with the individuals that will most help you be successful.



# The Role

## Role

Write a summary of your role List key challenges

## Mission

State your mission

## Goals / Deliverables

List the goals/deliverables for which you will be held accountable

## Challenges

List key challenges

## Opportunities

List key opportunities

## Stakeholders

List stakeholders including your boss, direct reports, others

# You

Assess and build your capabilities relative to your new role

## Key Strengths

List key strengths that will continue to serve you and which you can leverage in your new role

## Areas for Improvement

List capabilities you will need to strengthen/develop in order to be successful in your new role

## Actions

List the actions you will need to take to strengthen the capabilities you need for your new role

# Sample Plan

# Days 0-30

## Assess and Learn

### GOALS

- Learn about key stakeholders (direct reports, skip levels, boss, peers, others)
- Learn about current “state of the business” (strategy, goals and objectives, financial situation, issues and challenges)
- Understand external clients/customers needs, expectations, issues, etc.
- Observe and ask questions about day-to-day functioning of the team and business

### Key Insights

- Leadership talent varies
- Front line team engagement is mixed
- Silos exist within and across enterprise
- Service model is inconsistent
- Client engagement and relationships vary
- Roles/responsibilities overlap or are unclear
- Lack of technology tools is a chief complaint
- Direct report team wants something “new”
- Gaps in budgeting process

# Days 31-60

## Diagnose and Plan

### GOALS

- Identify key learnings from first 30 days:
  - Business situation
  - Customer/client expectations
  - Key drivers of success
  - Direct report team
  - Political landscape
  - Budget situation
  - Biggest challenges and opportunities
  - Top priorities from leadership
- Draft a prioritized set of actions for both short-term and long-term

### Short Term Actions

- Engage in top customer-facing activities
- Deep-dive comparison of products
- Talent assessment and strategy sessions
- Challenge current roles and alignment
- Key stakeholder collaborative discussions
- Create cross-functional steering team

### Long Term Actions

- Infuse leadership talent
- Create client profiles and roles
- Revise incentive model
- Build long-term business plan
- Engage in reporting improvement plan

# Days 61-90

## Execute

### GOALS

- Involve and align direct report team and other key stakeholders in short-and long.term action refinement
- Establish communications cadence for engaging the broader organization
- Establish operating mechanisms to ensure execution of key priorities
- Identify, deliver, and communicate early / quick wins to create momentum

### Key Outcomes

- Defined communication and meeting plan
- Implemented organization changes
- Exceed annual revenue targets
- Exceed annual customer retention targets
- Elevate client connections
- Implement new budgeting process
- Implement refined reporting mechanisms

# Your Plan

*Click to type in box*

# Days 0-30: Assess and Learn

Goals

Key Insights

*Click to type in box*



# Days 31-60: Diagnose and plan

Goals

Short Term Actions

Long Term Actions

*Click to type in box*

# Days 61-90: Execute

Goals

Key Outcomes

*Click to type in box*

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