

TAKING CHARGE

The Three Waves of Change™ Quarterly Newsletter

Q3: July 2016

By Gary Myszkowski, Ph.D.

For Senior Executives Transitioning into A New Role, Navigating the First 90 to 100 Days is Necessary But Not Sufficient for Success

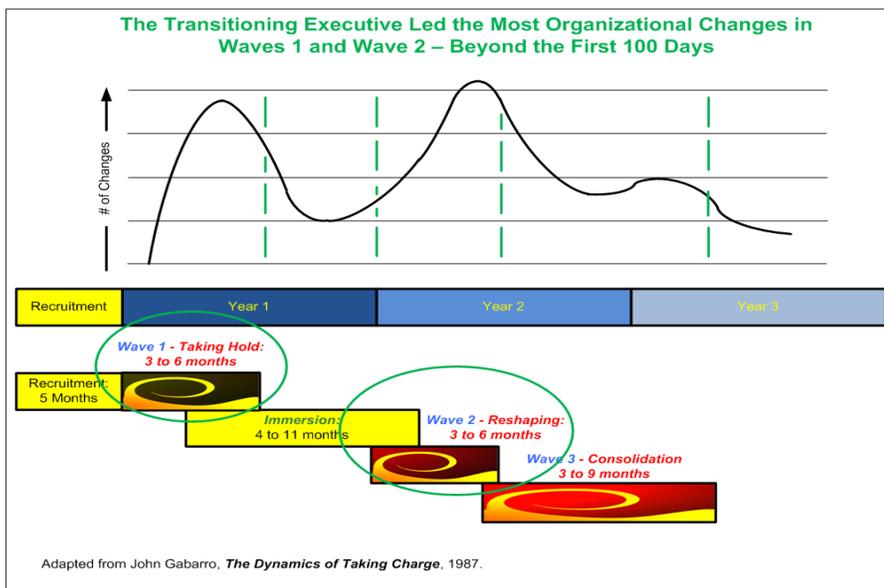
Senior Executive Transitions are Very Different than Middle Management and Supervisory Transitions

Whether by external recruitment or internal promotion, senior executive transitions are distinguished by two characteristics:

1. The expectation that the executive will change their inherited organization to significantly improve its performance, and
2. The legitimate authority to lead those changes.

In his longitudinal study and retrospective studies of 17 senior executives, John Gabarro of Harvard University discovered that “taking charge” and achieving sustainable consistent improved results often took 2, 2 1/2 or 3 years or more. He discovered the “three wave phenomena” of iterative discovery and learning by the transitioning executive and her team, where one of the larger periods of change are in Wave 1, often after the first 90 to 100 days, followed by a period of “Immersion” involving little change and an emphasis on further “deeper dive” diagnostics of the organization’s inability to change, The Second and often largest period of change occurs in Wave 2, typically after Immersion, often starting somewhere around the 1 year mark.

Thus, it often takes senior executives four to five quarters to complete the transition discovery, assessment, and testing journey to develop a defensible point of view about the fewest changes that will make the greatest difference in organizational performance improvement. The transitioning executive’s team is often not “finalized” until after five quarters.

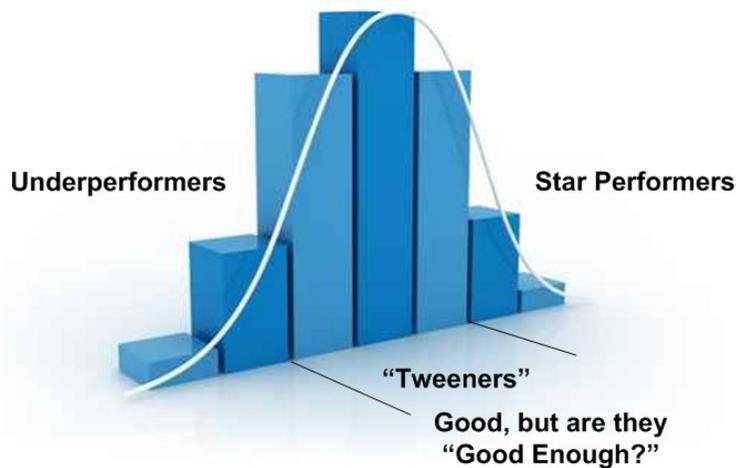


In This Issue

- Beyond the First 90 to 100 Days
- The Trouble with “Tweeners”
- When “Momentum” Clashes with the Presenting Situation
- Coming Products

Guiding Senior Executives to Effectively Take Charge in New Leadership Roles

Making Tough People Decisions



Aligning Key Incumbent Capabilities with the New Requirements of the Job

The Dilemmas of Replacing Loyal, Good Performers With Great Performers

One of the challenges facing all senior executives transitioning into a new role is to objectively assess the capabilities of the individuals on her extended team.

The Team May Not Be Finalized for Four to Five Quarters

The Three Waves of Change model of senior executive transitions shows that Wave 1 (first 3 to 6 months) is a test of the team members’ abilities to take a fresh and objective view of the capabilities of the organization based largely on past learning and improve the business’ performance.

When Wave 1 efforts result in incomplete intended results and propels the team into the Immersion Phase, they are tested in their ability to adapt, include new diagnostic processes, and attempt to collaborate with more stakeholders to take a more systemic view of the sources of organizational resistance.

Agreeing on the root causes and the primary levers of change, the team moves into Wave 2 where they are now tested in their abilities to lead the implementation of the required changes.

Conflicted Choices

During these transition phases, it becomes apparent that certain roles will require world class players, and the current incumbents will not likely rise to those performance standards. If we replace the loyal “good” performer with someone else, often from outside the company, what unintended, undesirable messages does that send to others on the team?

How a Three Waves of Change® Consultant Can Help

An objective consultant can provide the framework for defining the competencies that are required in the redefined role, facilitate your and your HR Partners’ assessment of the current incumbent against that profile, and help you select the right words and message to communicate to other stakeholders.

“Gary supported the Battelle Executive Committee during our early formative stages under a new CEO to establish alignment across the team and to assess and catalyze a new strategic direction. I served as the President of one of the business divisions and a member of the newly formed leadership team. Gary enabled a reinvigorated sense of clarity on priorities while helping us to make personal connections with each other that enabled unity toward our common goals. Gary is a true facilitator, creatively guiding a team through a series of discoveries so that outcomes and decisions are shared and owned. He does so in a highly refined manner that brings forward both individual and collective strengths and opportunities. With his guidance, the business leaders at Battelle improved their effectiveness. I found Gary’s supportive approach extremely insightful during these formative stages.”

Barbara Lopez Kunz
Global Chief Executive at
Drug Information Association

(formerly a key executive at Battelle)



Barbara Lopez Kunz

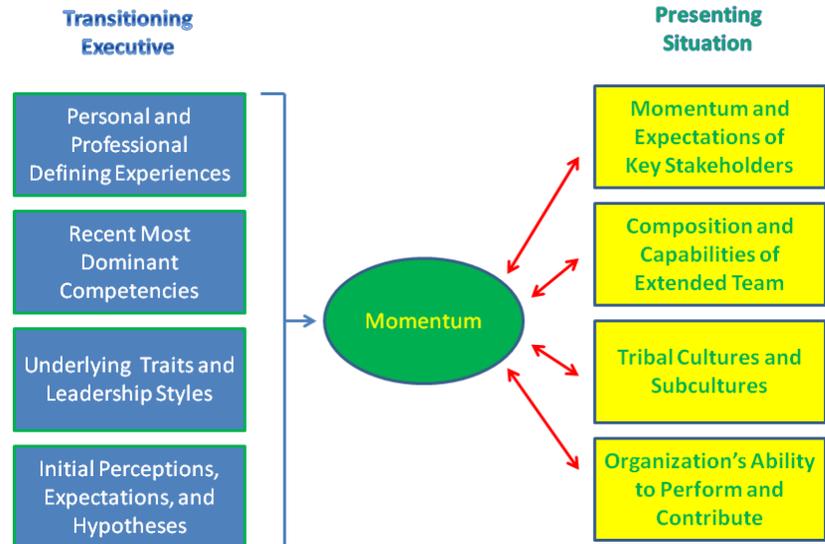
Contributing Factors to the Disturbing, Persistent, Failure Rate of Senior Executive Transitions



Gary Myszkowski, Ph.D. publishes articles, ebooks, and blog entries that may be of interest to senior executives entering a new role. Whether by internal promotion or by entry from the outside, many of the transition challenges facing new senior executives are similar when it comes to managing the expected changes necessary to improve business performance.

You can find links at the Wiznami.com website for these and other Three Waves of Change™ downloadable ebooks, videos, and audio files.

The Initial Adaptation of Momentum



The Clash of the Executive's "Momentum" with the Presenting Situation

Most senior executives approach their new role with increased awareness of the situation and restraint as they discover what they have truly "gotten themselves into." Their initial adaptation to the business realities, key stakeholders' perceptions and biases, and the predominant cultures however can be derailed by a lack of self-awareness of their own strong assumptions, preferred frameworks for evaluating the business, influence styles, and "watch outs" or "personal demons."

Examples of otherwise avoidable clashes we have observed in our consulting include:

"Bull in a China Shop"

A new key executive was perceived quickly as a "bull in a china shop" by other key stakeholders as she rapidly introduced significant changes. Through independent 360° interviews we discovered that only she and her boss had determined that the goal of her transition was a "turn around" when everyone else thought only incremental changes were necessary.

"Leading Change as a 'Lone Wolf' "

The new executive's past experiences were in roles in sophisticated organizations surrounded by well-trained supporting stakeholders. Without assessing where he was starting with the current stakeholders involved in his building a common operations performance metric system, he quickly circulated through field operations trying to deploy a process which was transplanted from previous experiences. The recently acquired small company field operations professionals resisted and he reacted by dialing up influence of each individual through forcefulness and borderline intimidation. After repeated complaints from the field, he was fired by the CEO.

Both clashes could have been avoided if each transitioning executive had experienced a Three Waves of ChangeSM Momentum assessment and were aware of how to adapt their strong preferences and approaches to the realities of the presenting situation.



Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our Three Waves of Change services and products

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Visit us on the web at
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Or search for the key words:

Three Waves of Change

The Three Waves of Change™ Downloadable Toolbox is Coming

Ask Your Three Waves of Change® Executive Coach Services Provider

To complement the senior executive onboarding and transition coaching and consulting services, Wiznami Inc. will soon be offering an online toolbox of processes, practices, and frameworks to assist the executive in specific transition challenges.

Example: What are my assumptions about the presenting situation?

This tool provides a framework and process for mapping out your assumptions about why they selected you and the implications for your approach to entry, the current condition of the organization, the characteristics of the predominant cultures, and how your entry may disrupt the current power, political, influence, and social networks in key parts of the organization.

The tool allows the transitioning executive to work more closely with the Three Waves of Change® consultant to assess his current "Momentum."

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