



The "ART" of War for Talent

SATTAR BAWANY gives an insight to Accelerating Role Transitions (ART) with Transition Coaching





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— PROF SATTAR BAWANY

The New Reality

As CEO tenure continues to shrink, with two out of every five new CEOs failing in their first 18 months, it has become absolutely critical for companies to cultivate internal candidates for top positions. Yet corporations are beginning to realise that once executive succession pipelines are broken it will adversely affect their ability to identify and nurture future leaders.

This can be alleviated however by establishing on-going programmes that correctly ascertain the highest potential executives and provide them with meaningful and measurable development.

Having enough capable leaders to execute corporate strategy is a growing concern, one heightened by demographic trends that promise a continuing shortage of leaders in coming years.

Organisations move their leaders through positions of responsibility and challenges to develop talent and ensure capability for the future. We call these transitions 'role-to-role' transitions, i.e. a leader who is successfully performing in one role takes on another role with different responsibilities.

Successfully assuming a new leadership role is almost never easy. It is more often challenging and daunting — regardless of the amount of experience a leader may have.

Actions taken in the first few months of a leadership transition directly impact a leader's chances of success. Transitions can be times of both great opportunity and great risk. Transitioning leaders often find the eyes of superiors, colleagues, direct reports and even shareholders firmly fixed on their first moves. Expectations are high. So what are the secrets of succeeding and thriving in times of role transition, with so much at stake?

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES LEADERS IN TRANSITION FACE?

The specific challenges facing new leaders depend on the types of

transitions they are experiencing. Leaders who have been hired from the outside (on-boarding) confront the need to adapt to new business models and organisational cultures, and to build supportive networks of relationships. For those who have been promoted (role-to-role transitions), the challenges lie in understanding and developing the competencies required to be successful at the new level. So, it is essential to carefully diagnose the situation and craft transition strategies accordingly.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR TRANSITION PITFALLS?

The biggest trap new leaders fall into is to believe they will continue to be successful by doing what has made them successful in the past. There is an old saying, "To a person who has a hammer, everything looks like a nail." New leaders should focus first on discovering what it will take to be successful in the new role, then discipline themselves to do the things that don't come naturally if the situation demands it.

New leaders are expected to 'hit the ground running'. They must produce results quickly while simultaneously assimilating into the organisation. The result is that a large number of newly recruited or promoted managers fail within the first year of starting new jobs.

With over 40 years of experience working with individuals and organisations in transition, DBM's executive coaching experience and research indicates three areas where role-to-role transitions derail (see Figure 1):

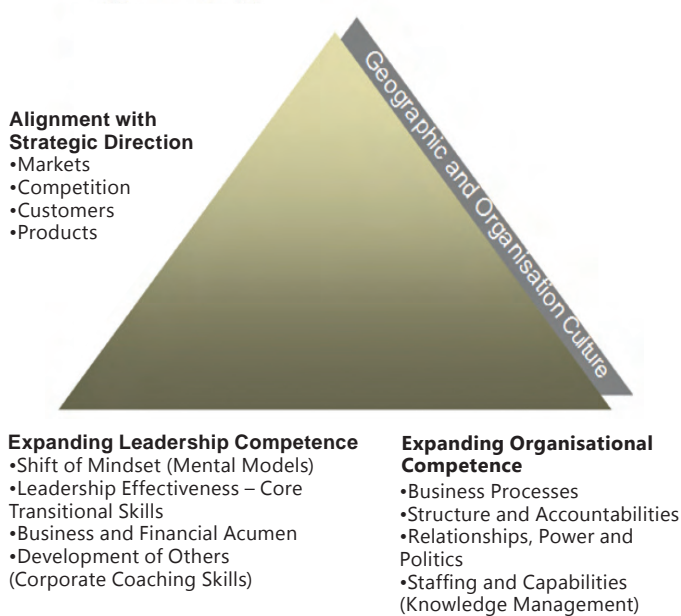
- Individual expectations are not aligned with organisation goals and strategic direction; more importantly, there is no dialogue to create alignment. Aligning their functions with the overall business by understanding markets, customers, competition and the organisation's products or services.

- The organisation lacks clarity on requirements of the role and what leadership capabilities, competencies and values are best suited for the role. Building their own leadership expertise includes learning to build an effective leadership team, to manage the performance of others and to effectively delegate and develop others (corporate coaching skills).
- Organisational competence, for example, leaders have to understand the business processes that create economic value for the organisation. Higher levels of leadership have to understand when and how to redesign these processes to accomplish the strategy. They must also understand what capabilities are needed to operate these processes.

In times of transition there is a very short window in which a leader has to learn about the business, the function or divisions, his team and employee capabilities, etc.

This learning is more complicated when the leader encounters a geographic or organisation culture different from past experience.

Figure 1: Avoiding Transition Pitfalls



WHAT ARE THE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR LEADERS IN TRANSITION (CORE TRANSITIONAL SKILLS)?

Leaders must identify the right goals, develop a supporting strategy, align the architecture of the organisation and figure out what projects to pursue to secure early wins.

Leaders at all levels of the organisation must demonstrate a high degree of emotional intelligence in their leadership role. Emotionally intelligent leaders create an environment of positive morale and higher productivity.

From DBM’s research, the critical or core transitional skill sets for leaders in transition include having skills in effective relationship management, cross-cultural communication, effective negotiation and conflict resolution.

The reality for leaders in transition is that relationships are great sources of leverage. By building credibility with influential players, you are better able to gain agreement on goals, and commitment to

achieving those goals.

In the leader’s new situation, relationship management skills are critical as they aren’t the only one going through a transition. To varying degrees, many different people, both inside and outside the leader’s direct line of command, are affected by the way he or she handles his or her new role. Putting it in another way, leaders negotiate their way to success in their new roles.

HOW DOES EXECUTIVE COACHING WORK?

A concept that has moved from the world of sports to the executive suite, executive coaching is a means to help senior executives manage a constantly changing business environment and refine their leadership skills.

Coaching isn’t only limited to senior levels though, as we see people all over the world, at all levels, utilise executive coaches to help them achieve their full potential. The process focuses on the participant’s goals, reinforces learning and change and increases self-empowerment.

Savvy organisations understand that the development of high-potentials and the continuous development of current executives’ leadership skills are critical to company-wide success.

Executives who receive coaching have improved working relationships with their direct reports, peers, and immediate supervisors. In addition, coached executives experience increases in job satisfaction, team performance, and organisational commitment. These benefits help to create bottomline results and improve operational achievements.

Executive coaching is typically seen as an ongoing relationship with no set time frame or definitive ending point. For example, the leader may have poor communication skills and is unintentionally undermining direct reports, which can lead to a loss of morale and retention issues. In corrective situations, the executive coach begins by completing a full diagnosis of the situation, through the identification of undesirable behaviours, such as berating or blaming others, and will then demonstrate the consequences these behaviours will have on the individual and organisation. The coach then helps the executive identify practical ways to strengthen his leadership impact, provides direct and objective feedback, and ensures the executive gets back on track and stays on track.

Whether the relationship starts with a derailment situation or as part of a corporate-wide initiative, executive coaching covers a wide range of situations with one common goal: the personal development of a leader through the support of a professional relationship.

On the organisational level, executive coaches help companies avoid costly management turnover, develop their most talented people and ensure that leaders perform at their maximum potential. Recent research suggests that leaders and executives who receive coaching are more likely to be promoted than those who have not had one-on-one coaching.

Executive Coaching versus Transition Coaching

While many executives are familiar with executive coaching, and may have even enlisted the help of external coaches, how do organisations determine who needs which type and when?

What if there was a proven process to support new leaders in their role, while significantly increasing return on investment and ensuring a positive economic impact for the organisation?

One such process is Transition Coaching®; a proven, integrated and systematic process by DBM, which engages new leaders in the

company's corporate strategy and culture to accelerate productivity.

Transition coaching encompasses the goals of executive coaching, but focuses on a specific niche — the newly appointed leader. Leadership transitions are among the most challenging and difficult situations executives face. Take the case of a leader who might enter a new position thinking he or she already has all the answers or, just the opposite; the leader might lack a clear understanding of the role's expectations. The goal of transition coaching is to reduce the time it takes for new leaders to make a net contribution to the organisation and establish a framework for ongoing success.

A smooth role-to-role transition is critical to company performance. The company depends on leaders to execute and meet objectives and believes that internal candidates are better value at less risk. Organisations understand that successful transitions ensure future capability. Transition coaching is the key to achieving this.

Many newly placed executives fail within their first two years in the position for reasons ranging from their inability to adjust to a new role and develop strong relationships to a lack of understanding of the business imperatives. What new leaders do during their first months in a new role greatly determines the extent of their success for the next several years.

An unsuccessful transition can negatively impact an organisation through poor financial results, decreased employee morale and costly turnovers. So rather than risk this sink-or-swim gamble, organisations can improve the process with transition coaching.

If organisations use the right transition strategies when on-boarding a leader, they will not only help prevent failure, but will also create additional value by accelerating the new leader's effectiveness. Transition coaching engages the new leader in the company's corporate strategy and culture to accelerate performance.

DBM Transition Coaching Approach

Transition coaching has three overall goals: to accelerate the transition process by providing just-in-time advice and counsel to prevent mistakes that may harm the business and the leader's career, and to assist the leader in developing and implementing a targeted, actionable

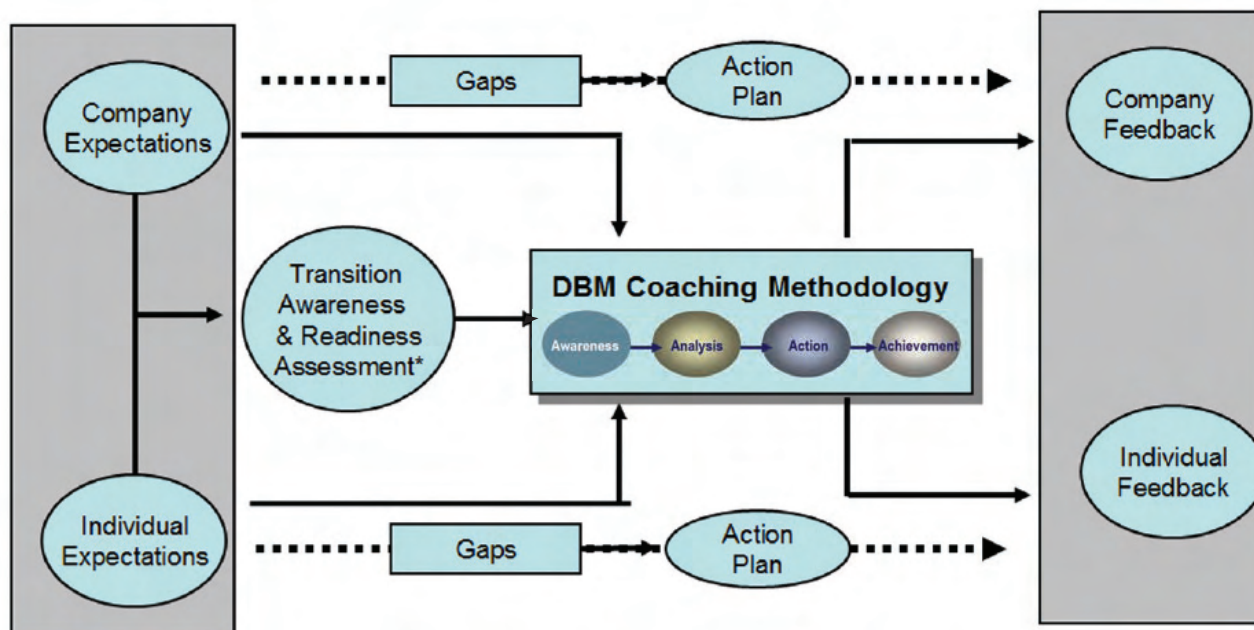


transition plan that delivers business results.

While many of the issues covered by transition coaching are similar to those included in executive coaching, such as sorting through short and long-term goals, and managing relationships upwards as well as with team members, transition coaching is focused specifically on the transition and designed to educate and challenge new leaders. The new leader and coach will work together to develop a transition plan, a road map that will define critical actions that must take place during the first 90 days to establish credibility, secure early wins and position the leader and team for long-term success.

The transition coaching relationship also includes regular meetings with the new leader as well as ongoing feedback. Frequently, the coach conducts a 'pulse check' of the key players, including the boss, direct reports, peers and other stakeholders, after four to six weeks to gather early impressions so that the new leader can make a course correction if needed.

Figure 2: DBM Transition Coaching Approach 'ART' (Accelerating Role Transitions) Model



* Assessment of the Core Transitional Skills includes Relationship Management; Cross Cultural Communication; Effective Negotiation and Managing Conflict

The entire transition coaching process (see Figure 2) provides new leaders with the guidance to take charge of their new situation, achieve alignment with the team, and ultimately to move the business forward. Organisations make a significant investment when they recruit and hire new leaders, and they have much to lose if a new hire does not succeed, possibly several times the hire's base compensation.

DBM Executive Coaching Methodology

DBM utilises a proven four-step process (see Figure 3) that is firmly grounded in leadership development best practices:

Figure 3: DBM Coaching Methodology



AWARENESS: Through assessment and information gathering, leaders determine how their performance links to current business goals.

ANALYSIS: Feedback and planning enable executives to determine what to do to close the gaps in their leadership capability.

ACTION: Taking well-defined action steps informed by regular feedback enables leaders to move toward measurable goals.

ACHIEVEMENT: A full evaluation of the coaching process yields objective measures of business results and professional outcomes.

Our consistent delivery methodology ensures that every executive receives the same degree of insightful business analysis, personalised consideration and performance-driven priority.

Conclusion

Whether an executive is moving into a new position or looking to get back on the road to success, executive and transition coaching work to bring out the best in people through the support of a professional relationship. Both relationships are built on a foundation of trust and confidentiality. The ability of coaches to provide leaders with an outside resource that can also act as a sounding board helps them become the successful leaders they were meant to be.

Organisations must clearly define the purpose of coaching, gauge the process, and evaluate results. Coaching is not just about providing support. Ultimately, coaching should deliver what any business needs – real results.

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