

READY SET START

NINE USEFUL HABITS FOR NEW CHROs

HOW TO MASTER YOUR CHRO TRANSITION

The transition to CHRO is always an unique experience. Some candidates spend time in their company's HR teams before ascending to the position of CHRO, whereas others are promoted internally from teams outside HR, or are hired externally. Regardless of their provenance, when asked what one can do to be successful both during transition and beyond, highly-regarded CHROs listed myriad habits and behaviors.

We can now reveal the **nine key lessons** which will allow a new CHRO to capitalize on the fluidity of the transition period, master their first hundred days in the role, and ultimately become a valuable (and valued) asset to the company. To do so, we have condensed both intelligence gathered from discussions with numerous CHROs in various industries who have successfully made this transition, and our own observations drawn from vast experience of these processes. Not every point will be of equal relevance, depending on your particular situation and background - but all of them are worth consideration.

At undconsorten, we believe that a successful, sustainable transformation requires a thorough understanding of your organization and its strategic direction; structural and process change; and the right mix of people with the right skills. Board-level transitions in particular are ripe opportunities - often not fully exploited - to bring about significant organizational change.

Call us to discuss how you can seize this opportunity!

GET THE BALL ROLLING



EMPHASIZE ON WHAT DRIVES YOUR BUSINESS

When you start collaborating with other departments within your organization you should have already developed a deep understanding of what drives revenue, costs and growth. You must be clear about how HR can influence the key value drivers.

Aside from pure facts and figures, you should also understand the company's power structure and its informal communication channels, as early as possible. How are decisions made? Where are the real centers of power? Which are the scarce resources people struggle to get hold of? Where can HR really add value to the business?

„It took me several weeks to find out that university relationships still play an important role for the collaboration of our engineers.“ – Tech industry



START WITH THE END IN MIND

Many CHROs wish they had started with a much clearer sense of where they wanted to end up. Thus, for a successful start, keep your eyes fixed on the finish line: "eyes on the prize!".

You should always have in mind a goal you want to achieve 2-3 years from now and therefore define early on the measures which will make a difference, both for HR and the entire organization. How to ensure the ideal fit between personal and company goals? What you have to safeguard in order to achieve your goals? What are the critical milestones you will need to achieve?

„I spent my first weeks on the road visiting all our sites and talking to managers and employees. While they were positively surprised, some HQ colleagues felt that they were being treated second best.“ – IT



STICK TO ONE COMPELLING STORY

Your personal story as a CHRO must fulfill three conditions: it must be relevant for the business; it must fit your background; and it must be compelling to each stakeholder group.

How to make sure that your story links HR closely to the value drivers of the organization? How to rely on dependable information and the validity of historical data? What are the right questions for your first meetings as a CHRO? How to transform your initial interactions into bona fide relationship building? From our experience, it is perfectly fine at the beginning to use more questions than statements and gradually shift the mix over time, especially when you are new to an organization.

„My story has always been the same for all stakeholders - but maybe this is a particular case.“ – Public sector

„Your story needs to convey content, but spicing it with emotions is equally important.“ – Media

KEEP YOUR HANDS ON THE WHEEL



IMPLEMENT VIGOROUSLY

Successful implementation of new ideas follows three simple rules: 1/ Have only one big topic to start with; 2/ Define measurable targets; and then 3/ Position HR so as to achieve them.

This also means that you need to promote your agenda, but avoid doing it all on your own. Delegate wisely, obtain sufficient resources to achieve your targets and put the people and funds in place before committing to specific goals. At the same time, ensure that the "must-do" activities in HR function properly from the start.

„Wondering what would happen when my primary goal failed, I realized that I needed a backup plan.“ – Tech industry

„I had to be resolute with my initiatives – which by the way is still necessary today.“ – Automotive



STRENGTHEN HR MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Whether you will be able to generate impact depends much on whether effective structures are in place. In order to improve the quality of existing HR decision-making procedures, you need to ask if your routine processes are dealing with the right issues in an appropriate format.

How thoroughly are HR committee meetings being prepared? Are the right topics on the agenda of these meetings? How to fully exploit the potential of the transition as the ideal moment to correct or eliminate inefficient routines and slow processes? How to best reset the rhythm of the workflow?

„HR is like soccer – everybody believes to be a great coach, but not everyone is. Clear routines and responsibilities help to get out of this trap.“ – BPO

*„It's a true quick win to unleash lots of energy and unused potential.“
– Professional services*



MANAGE EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS HR

Many CHROs regret not having stated clearly what they and their team can deliver – and what they cannot. As the new CHRO, every single stakeholder group has their own expectations of you. With all likelihood they may – at least partly – clash.

How to manage expectations wisely and avoid the temptation to please at any price? What is the best way to push back on inappropriate expectations directly – for the sake of your own success as the new CHRO and for the well-being of the organization?

„Expectations towards HR were inconsistent and extremely high at the beginning (...) I had to actively manage them in a road show during the first weeks.“ – Retail

*„Sometimes you have to endure a conflict before you earn some respect.“
– IT*

ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES



PICK THE BEST HR TEAM RIGHT FROM THE START!

It is mostly your HR agenda that influences how you should think about your team. As a rule of thumb, start with the key aspects of HR that best fit your agenda and then fill the positions with the strongest candidates.

Decisions involving people are often the most dramatic and there is never a right answer - especially in the HR department. These choices are full of difficult trade-offs and rife with emotions. You must decide: What are the tough calls you should make during transition when nothing has been fixed yet? Who are the inherited players you should stick with? Before changing team players hastily, could a simple swap be already an appropriate solution?

„What’s the best HR team? I was truly dependent on the functional experts I found in the HR team, but I had to motivate them. I could never have replaced a single one - even if I wanted to.“ – Professional services



TAKE TIME TO LEARN - AS A TEAM AND INDIVIDUALLY!

One of the challenges a newly appointed CHRO faces is to obtain a perspective on each of the key players, as well as to grasp of the overall dynamics in the HR leadership team. Beyond probing each person’s competence, aspirations, and credibility, consider how to best assess the individual impact each player has on the team and on the rest of the HR organization.

Make sure to include enough time for learning both individually, but also within the new team set-up. Must-dos include off-site meetings, a strategy work-out for the HR leadership team and a commitment to core goals.

„Sometimes you forget yourself, especially when you are new to your role and the to-do-list seems infinite.“ – BPO

„It is so important: We all have to learn - from each other, the industry, the business and our clients!“ – IT



EVEN THE BEST PLAYERS NEED COACHES!

Getting feedback from HR and the entire organization is crucial for the success of a CHRO. From day one, you will need someone whom you trust fully as your personal sounding board, coach or sparring partner for your first period as a CHRO.

It goes without saying that every start is different and both your transition journey and your story will vary depending on your personal background and style. undconsorten can help you define your agenda, align your leadership team behind a shared people strategy and - ultimately - create lasting change in your organization.

„It is rather difficult to find the right coach. In my case it was the head of marketing whom I knew very well from our company’s mentoring program.“

– Health care



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