



Effectively Managing Transitions

ENGAGE

Position Your Expertise to Contribute to Others' Goals

PRINCIPLE

Position your expertise to align with others' goals and objectives, rather than pushing your knowledge or experience out of context of their needs. Often, people do not care how smart you are but will engage if what you know can help them. Ask questions; morph what you know to their needs; give status, generate energy and help first.



"I was comfortable with the ambiguity; I didn't go in trying to prove myself or tell them how to fix their problems. I listened, so I could tell when people had resistance and learn what was going on. I shaped my expertise to their needs rather than over-selling myself."

MANAGING TRANSITIONS

Entry into a new organization, changing roles, new responsibilities and promotion all place demands on you that can most efficiently be met by leveraging networks. Make transitions successful by investing in networks in three ways:

Initiate

Jumpstart productivity and inclusion by cultivating essential connections broadly and before you need help from others.



Engage

Energize people in your network and pull colleagues to you and your ideas when engaging with new groups.



Refine

Re-calibrate networks and collaborative practices for long-term effectiveness and well-being.



A typical response when starting a new role is to immediately work to impress or show your worth to others—that is what is often rewarded in schools, recommended by career advisors and taught in onboarding. However, when people promote their knowledge, experience or brand too rapidly or forcefully, they often are rejected by established colleagues and undermine their ability to transition into the new role and accomplish work.

Our research shows that more successful people don't try to push their expertise or focus on their own needs early on in a new role. Rather, they prioritize what their new colleagues need to be successful and morph their abilities to align with these needs. As a result, they are pulled into conversations, networks and opportunities. As a newcomer, you will benefit by doing several specific things:

- **Be open, curious and ask a lot of questions.** *Being new* is a great excuse to learn. Set up many exploratory meetings to understand others' work and gain insight into how you can contribute to your new colleagues' efforts.
- **Slowly morph your expertise to others' goals and objectives.** Do not expect your skills to be used "as is," or for a prior solution to be viewed as what is best in your new context. By listening closely and tailoring your expertise to address established colleagues' problems or help with challenges, you will be drawn into collaborations rather than held at arm's length.
- **Give status, generate energy and help first.** Show respect and offer status to established coworkers. Create enthusiasm by being positive and talking about the benefits of working together. Then, follow-up without expectation. Pitch in with your time or resources, provide information, prep a colleague for a difficult conversation. Giving to others invokes a sense of reciprocity that often yields surprising benefits at a later point.

Barry took advantage of a new job to transition differently. "In the past, I ran straight into driving change. This time, I reached out to a lot of people. I asked questions and listened intently. *Why is that the way it is? What was the reason that was set up that way?* I was more successful in building relationships, and I was not stuck fighting battles I shouldn't have fought." Similarly, when Maya was assigned to work on a major product launch, she asked a lot of questions early on. She showed genuine interest, offered encouragement and helped wherever there was a need. When she made suggestions, she addressed the specific context and asked if her idea might fit the need.

By focusing on others first and being self-deprecating in gradually revealing your background and expertise, you will be pulled into networks and establish a reputation as someone who is credible. You will find that many of these early interactions lead to positive responses (*I know who else you should meet, or, Let's talk about this more next week*) and future opportunities (*We could use you on our project, or, I recommended you to another team*).

CREATE PULL (DON'T OVERSELL): ENGAGE WITH A FOCUS ON OTHERS

Newcomers become well-known and sought out by *how* they present themselves. Engaging with others' needs in mind is far more effective in role transitions than if you try to showcase your experience, tout your expertise or compare a current situation to one from a past organization too quickly.

Identify 3-5 key people/relationships in your current transition in the table below. Then reflect on how you have engaged with these people. Have you focused your interactions on their needs or context? Have you engaged in ways that energize them, and pull them to you and your ideas? **Using the ideas below as a starting point, identify behaviors or steps you could you take to engage each person most effectively.**

- Ask a lot of questions about others' work, goals and obstacles, with curiosity and without judging.
- Listen attentively to understand others' projects, interests and problems.
- Talk about past work or expertise in a humble way, not as an indication that you have all the answers.
- Explore options to spark others' interest in working together or prompt ideas for how you might contribute.
- Show respect and give status, regardless of your role or expertise.
- Be self-deprecating and able to laugh at yourself with others.
- Be positive and engaged around an idea or possibility.
- Follow-up a first meeting with a thank-you communication.
- Give without being asked (time, resources, information, a connection, etc.).
- Stay connected by setting a follow-up meeting and/or sending relevant articles, links or ideas.

WHO TO ENGAGE?	HOW TO ENGAGE?

NETWORK TIPS

- **Employ active listening on entry twice as much as you think you should.** Be sensitive to people's perspectives and concerns; don't try to solve problems immediately.
- **Use micro-behaviors that put people at ease.** 1) Mirror their intensity—be willing to connect on either a low-key or more expressive way, depending on how they show up; 2) Be empathetic (e.g., *I see what you mean*); 3) Offer others status rather than presenting yourself as the expert or someone who is smarter; 4) Be genuinely interested—people will know if you are faking it.
- **Look for ways your skill sets complement your peers then offer to help with their projects.** Reveal how your expertise, contacts or a past experience can address a need. Do so in a self-deprecating way and follow up where you see a need or a void to fill.