



Effectively  
Managing  
Transitions

INITIATE

# Seek Key Connections to Supplement Gaps in Awareness, Skill or Expertise

## PRINCIPLE

Build networks to address blind spots and supplement or acquire skill, expertise or perspective demanded by a new role. Think broadly about what is required, including technical/functional skill, cultural/political awareness and collaborative/leadership practices.



*“Nobody is expecting you to have all the answers, but they do want you to learn quickly. You succeed only if you identify skill gaps and build relationships with people who have done this in the past or who can steer you in the right direction.”*

## 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.



Transitions—into a new organization, a lateral transfer or a promotion— inherently demand new skills and capabilities. People often anticipate a steep learning curve but overlook the value of the network to help them address skill gaps and learn rapidly from experience. Failure happens when the newcomer does not develop connections to supplement skill gaps. Unfortunately, leaders often do not see this as a failure of network strategy; rather, they conclude the person could not handle the new role or responsibility.

You can gain needed capability early and effectively by initiating networks to supplement or acquire skills as you move into a new role or context. Take a holistic approach to building networks and strategically look to establish relationships with people who can provide:

- **Technical or functional expertise.** Find people who can help you supplement skill gaps and provide information needed to make decisions. Rely on these individuals to come up to speed quickly.
- **Cultural or political awareness.** Identify colleagues who can help you understand cultural norms and the network important to your role, interpret dynamics within the team and across silos and prioritize needs of stakeholders.
- **Insight to leadership and collaborative practices.** Seek out people who can help you navigate the network, offer insight into how to manage people and processes, and provide suggestions on how to work collaboratively within and across groups.

Brenda has navigated many role changes through her career and always made her first priority to seek out a person who excelled in the same or similar role. When she became a plant manager, she learned from another plant manager who had strong metrics and a solid reputation. In her current job, she found a peer who did different work, but faced similar challenges. She wanted to learn, *What is important to you? What enables your team to perform the way they do?*

After his most recent promotion to a role that included overseeing areas where he had no experience, Malik relied on his new network—other attorneys and subject experts on his teams—to fill in skill gaps and bring him up to speed. *“I’ve tried to be humble and self-deprecating ... I’ll say, I’m completely dumb on this. Tell me what I need to know.”* He also introduced himself to peers in other legal functions and to colleagues doing similar work in different countries. He identified stakeholders and leaders in other regions and functions to gain greater knowledge of the business context and political dynamics.

To gain benefits from this approach, first, refine your understanding of the capabilities needed in the role. Then, honestly assess yourself for technical, political and leadership gaps and build the network needed to address them.

## USE NETWORKS TO LEARN WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Your network is invaluable for navigating a role transition. Use this activity to find people who may help you identify knowledge, skill or perspective that you are missing—and help you acquire it or fill the gap through access to others in the network.

First, **think about your work in the next 3-6 months**: What are your goals and deliverables? What are your known challenges? What are your primary concerns or fears?

Next, **identify the network**. Who could help you address skill gaps and blind spots during this time of transition? Consider each of the categories below and write down names of people (or groups) you should initiate contact with. Talk to your manager and check in with colleagues to expand your list.

Then, for each person you listed, **write down a question you could ask or a topic you want to discuss**. Set up a time to meet, or ask someone for an introduction.

### Technical/Functional Skill

Consider people within your function and in related domains who have specific knowledge and skills.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

### Cultural/Political Awareness

Consider a person who held the role previously as well as your current manager and peers.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

## G A P S

### Collaborative/Leadership Practices

Consider people who have done similar work in a different group, function, geography, organization or industry. Also ask your team for thoughts.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ask \_\_\_\_\_

## NETWORK TIPS

- **Use newness to your advantage.** During the first 60 to 90 days in a new role, give yourself permission to ask questions, seek help or admit what you do not know. Don't try to hide things. Prudently discussing blind spots fosters trust and credibility that will have a bigger payoff over time.
- **Self-awareness is essential for understanding gaps in knowledge and behavior.** Pay close attention to your reactions—and the reactions of others—for insight into what is going well and what isn't.
- **Seek feedback from others to help you determine important skill or expertise that you are missing.** Invite peers, teammates, direct reports and customers to let you know how they thought you handled a meeting or decision, or to give you periodic feedback on how you are adapting to your new role.