



Five Mistakes Newly Promoted Leaders Make

by Michael Watkins

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1. DOING MORE OF WHAT THEY DO BEST

The most common mistake I see newly promoted leaders make is sticking with what they know how to do. “They put me in this job because I’m good at doing X,” the logic goes, “so I will be successful by doing more X.”

Maybe. But maybe you were selected because people thought you had the potential to take your game to a new level.

To paraphrase Mark Twain, “to a person with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” If you’ve been a manager for a while, you’ve probably developed a pretty big hammer. Perhaps you’re particularly good at the details or at driving operational excellence. Perhaps it’s your financial skills or your directive supervisory style that have got you to this point.

That’s great, but what if these very strengths turn out to be vulnerabilities in higher-level jobs? An intense focus on detail, for example, can prove crippling as you move to more senior management positions.

2. GETTING CAPTURED BY THE WRONG PEOPLE

Stay neutral in organizational politics until you get the lay of the land, and remember that perceptions of who is influencing you are as important as realities.

3. STICKING WITH THE EXISTING TEAM TOO LONG

Don’t fool yourself into believing that your leadership will be enough to turn around people with histories of under-performance.

4. RUNNING IN A MILLION DIRECTIONS AT ONCE

Be sure to define the vital few priorities you will pursue.

5. FAILING TO BUILD MOMENTUM

Identify a few areas in which you can score some early wins and build your personal credibility, then go after them. ♦

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