

Five Ways to Set Up Promotions for Success

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When high-potential promotions fail it costs time, money, and it may cost a company talent. Learning leaders can use five tactics to ensure top talent learns the business orientation, expectations, political connections and cultural adaptations needed to prosper after a promotion.

Create a clear job description: Ensure the executive understands not just the typical job description, but the unspoken expectations before he or she accepts the promotion. Michael Watkins, author of *The First 90 Days*, lays out four domains that newly promoted people need to master: business orientation, expectations alignment, political connection and cultural adaptation. A job description and interview should cover all of these areas to promote the best chance of success.

Provide mentorship: Make a company mentor program a strong priority and integrate it into the early orientation. Have the mentor introduce the newly promoted person to stakeholders and other valuable resources. It's critical the mentor understand and articulate the culture of the group, and groups within a company may have quite different cultures. Inability to grasp the culture is a key reason new promotions fail.

Provide frequent feedback: Best results come when newly promoted workers receive weekly feedback on their progress. Use this time to compliment successes and suggest course corrections. New workers should be encouraged to ask questions and resolve concerns. Regular, frequent feedback opens communications and resolves problems when they are small and easily managed.

Make realistic learning curve expectations: Failure happens when the new manager or his or her boss sees unfulfilled expectations. Cultivate success by communicating expectations on both sides. How long will it take for the new person to be up and running? To master the work, the politics and the culture? To make the needed changes he or she is being hired for? When both parties have realistic expectations, it reduces stress and disappointment.

Create specific training and coaching to build new strengths: New jobs call for different skills. See the broader picture and delegate more. Strengths may become weaknesses. Help newly promoted talent understand the new skills and master them.

Success may come more quickly with individualized training or coaching. The faster new skills and knowledge are achieved, the more high-potential promotions can contribute. Each company will benefit from reviewing its promotion procedures to ensure it consistently positions new hires and new promotions for success. Top talent can be nurtured and developed to return capital to the organization.

Companies will keep their best workers, resulting in less expense and wasted time. When newly promoted people quickly gain confidence and expertise in their positions, it leads to better team performance, a more vibrant workplace and a stronger bottom line.

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