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## COOL YOUR JETS

*Tips for a successful first 100 days in role*

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*Be proactive, engage widely and ... slow down! The first 100 days are a critical time to understand the culture, build credibility and drive impact. They are also a period of significant [change](#) and speed, causing a mix of emotions. Even with the best of intentions, when you start in a new role, the operational demands can immediately surface and pull you in all directions. So, landing with grace and impact when a barrage of priorities comes in is challenging.*

**Before you even start the new role**, you can be managing your reputation. It's highly likely your new colleagues will look you up, so agree when the announcement about your appointment will be made and ahead of this, ensure your [LinkedIn](#) profile is up-to-date and showcases you as you want it to. Consider writing a [post](#) about leaving your previous organisation, thanking your team and sharing your highlights. Visibly leaving on a high will positively influence your new colleagues before you even join.

What did you learn during the hiring process from your recruiter, interviewers and your own research? Why was the role vacant? Is it a new position or a replacement? Who was there before? Is there anything you need to know? Review the reviews, soak up the external perception through Glassdoor, industry award placement levels and similar platforms. Also reflect on the language used during interviews and in the job description, as this often signals priorities, pressures and cultural norms. Pay attention to what was emphasised and what was avoided. Think about the challenges you were hired to solve and how success might be measured in the first six to twelve months. Start forming hypotheses, not conclusions.

Identify key stakeholders you are likely to encounter early and consider their potential expectations. This preparation allows you to arrive informed, curious and intentional, rather than reactive. By building context in advance, you reduce uncertainty and give yourself a stronger platform to listen, learn and make thoughtful early choices.

Refer to any expectations you set as part of the selection process. If you presented your roadmap for the first three months in the role at interview, use it – evolve it as you learn – but factor in anything you said you would do.

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ACTIONS YOU TAKE. “WE DO NOT LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE WE  
LEARN FROM REFLECTING ON EXPERIENCE” – JOHN DEWEY

**From day one, consciously consider where you need to sit on these three spectrums:**

1. *Racing to action versus taking time to reflect:* One of the biggest mistakes new leaders make is to initiate significant changes too [quickly](#). Ensure that you take the right actions by building in time to reflect. Make this happen by scheduling some gaps in your calendar to read through your notes and the documents you have been given and think about everything you have seen and heard. Let the reflections on your experience inform the actions you take. “We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.” (John Dewey).

2. *Doing what has worked in the past versus evolving for your new stakeholders:* Avoid saying, “at my last company, we did X” too often. You might not even realise you are doing it and it can feel like a criticism of the new organisation. Use your past experience to inform the questions you ask as you learn about the new organisation. What worked there, might not be the right solution here in a different culture, with different people. Existing employees will be able to share contextual nuances you are yet to understand.

3. *Showcasing your expertise versus listening:* It’s natural to want to show what you can do and achieve some quick wins, but balance this with listening and learning. Trust that by being appointed, the organisation recognises your expertise and you don’t have to prove yourself in week one. Long term success will come from finding an appropriate balance of listening with sharing your views. Having said that, prepare a short introduction to yourself that you can use as you meet people as not everyone will have looked you up or read the announcement.

**Take ownership of your induction and make it 360-degree**, source a copy of the organisation charts and identify key stakeholders. Initiate meetings with them rather than waiting for someone else to do it. A new HR Director shared this tip, “network, network,

network. Speak to as many diverse stakeholders as possible. If you are in a support function role it is important to speak with clients both long standing and new.”

Be out in the operational area early on. Whatever your industry, the equivalent of going “back to the floor” and spend time with the grassroots workforce and with revenue generating colleagues. Be visible, ask questions, listen and learn. Early in my career in retail, I remember a remarkable store visit from our Head of HR, [Martyn Phillips](#), who walked the shopfloor with each team leader and asked them detailed commercial questions. He earned the utmost respect from that visit and retained it.

Seek a Board perspective early on by meeting a non-executive director or trustee. They will give you a broad sense of the company’s strategy and a different insight to your executive colleagues. Work out how things are done in the organisation – is it a formal organisation where change only happens via written papers or is it more relationship driven with lobbying vital for success?

As you talk to stakeholders and team members at all levels, identify where the power rests. Who is good at winning others over? Who can derail things if they aren’t onboard? Speak to other recent joiners about their experiences and learn from any mistakes they have made and don’t underestimate anyone.

**Be open about yourself and approach your first 100 days with authenticity.** A new People Director advises, “communicate clearly what you stand for and what you don’t. Share your values, what drives you and how you think – it will build trust and give your stakeholders a 101 on you.” The more you are willing to divulge about yourself, the stronger your relationships will be, and the wider your networks.

### “TAKE A COACHING APPROACH TO YOUR INITIAL MEETINGS BY USING QUESTIONS AND REALLY LISTENING TO WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING”

A helpful exercise is to create your personal [identity map](#), which helps you think broadly about the wide ranging elements of your identity for example a runner, a coach, a volunteer, a parent, a dog lover, an introvert or a musician. This can help you build relationships through connecting over shared experiences other than your role.

Agree what success looks like, for your first 100 days, through discussion. A C-suite Director of Change was asked by her CEO for a new strategy for her function within a fortnight. She pushed back, explaining that to create the most suitable strategy, she needed time to speak to

stakeholders and her team to learn about the context as well as planning for the future. By setting expectations from week one, she was able to invest time in learning before she recommended changes. Don't be afraid to negotiate and bring your perspective.

Reach out to your team, keep an open mind and don't make any assumptions about them or be swayed by what others have told you. A Chief Transformation Officer held one-to-ones with everyone in the department in her first month, starting with her direct reports and then their teams. She was consciously two-way and used the sessions to learn more about everyone in her function. She used a consistent set of starting questions for everyone including: What are your strengths? What would you like to do more of? If you could improve one thing here, what would it be? If the scale makes this unmanageable you might consider a series of informal coffee Q&A sessions open to all or a general invitation to book time with you for those who wish to. Take a [coaching approach](#) to your initial meetings by using questions and really listening to what people are saying.

As you hold your induction meetings, if you identify any low risk, low cost and high visibility 'quick wins', by all means make them happen as soon as possible. Not everyone is so fortunate to have lots of 'low hanging fruit' to pick!

As soon as you've accepted the offer, proactively plan your first 100 days. Engage as early as possible with a wide range of stakeholders in an authentic way. Be conscious about your balance of action vs reflection, the past vs the present and showcasing your expertise vs listening. Build in enough time for reflection and learning and to move through the change curve, create powerful impact so that you set yourself up for long term success.

*[Ellie Rich-Poole](#) is an Executive Career Development Coach. A [LinkedIn](#) Top Voice for Careers, she works with organisations to retain their top talent through coaching and workshops. She coaches senior leaders as they transition into new roles, exit organisations, and secure their first Non-Executive role. She previously worked as a Headhunter of HR leaders for a decade. Her earlier career was in HR in the retail industry.*

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