



Top Ten Recommendations for Leaders/Executives New to Their Role

- 1. Build relationships and networks.** Remember to build external networks outside of your immediate community with peers. Go to association meetings, attend business functions.
- 2. Listen, observe & ask questions.** Sometimes new leaders try to show their value by talking too much. Ask employees what they most enjoy about their work, ask them about their career plans and what they need to be successful in their job. Ask residents what they most love about the community. Be prepared to hear what they don't like, too! Avoid becoming defensive and don't make promises you can't keep.
- 3. Respect the existing culture.** Successful onboarding begins by not trying to change the culture – at least not too quickly. If the community has been doing well then don't try to shake things up immediately. Of course, if you observe dysfunctional behaviors then swift action must be taken.
- 4. Be visible & approach people.** Are you the type of leader who lives on the computer or who feels naked without your smart phone? Get out of your office and speak with the people who work for you or who live in your community. Become more than the photo posted on the website or in marketing collateral.
- 5. Get clarity on expectations (yours & others).** Even if you are the CEO of your community, you still need to ensure that your strategic plan is up to date. One resource we recommend is the One Page Business Plan for Non-Profits. If you report to someone be clear on your managers expectations.
- 6. Seek help (from an executive coach or a mentor) – don't be stoic.** You've heard the adage, "It's lonely at the top?" Self imposed isolation can be particularly true for new leaders who do not want to show anyone that they, too, are on a learning curve. But it doesn't have to be a time of isolation. Many organizations are now providing executives with an executive coach to help them avoid the pitfalls of the first six months. With the cost of replacement up to 10x the executive's salary, investing in coaching is a small percentage with a large ROI.
- 7. Develop your vision & convey your leadership point of view.** What is your vision for your community, for your leadership team? Spend time thinking about where you want your community to be in the next five, ten or more years. What do you stand for? What are your values? Ken Blanchard has spent a lifetime talking with leaders about sharing their leadership point of view and shares his insights via video <http://www.sageleaders.com/2010/12/lpov/>
- 8. Assess & build your team.** In step #2 we suggested that you ask questions and listen intently. We also recommend that you observe the interactions of your leadership team. Spend time with your team at an offsite retreat where you can share your vision and your leadership point of view. Find out about their ideas. Remember to really listen to what they have to say.
- 9. Make early decisions on small quick fixes.** We don't recommend making any major decisions merely for the sake of displaying your decision-making skills. We do recommend, though, that if you can have a big impact from making small changes, then don't wait! You'll earn the trust and respect from employees for making their lives easier.
- 10. Celebrate successes.** Successful leaders are focused and action oriented. Yet, sometimes they are so busy achieving success that they forget to celebrate what they have accomplished. Our recommendation? Every 30 days spend time reflecting upon what you and your team have accomplished. If there's the need for course correction that's okay. Just be sure to acknowledge those successes.

Permission is granted to share this resource with new leaders.

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