



## ***Leadership Onboarding: The Impact of Early Feedback***

### **Without early feedback how do new leaders know where they are hitting or missing the mark?**

Often times once a leadership position is filled (either internally or externally), both the hiring manager and human resources are relieved and excited. Each check this big “to-do” off of their lists and move on to the next big thing. More and more, however, the next big thing is taking the time to think through an onboarding plan for this new leader. However, the plan very rarely includes providing feedback to that new leader early in his/her tenure in the new role. Many human resources leaders and hiring managers agree that giving a new leader feedback about how they are doing is critical—however, most struggle with:

***Fast Fact:***

*Experts agree that giving new leaders feedback regarding how he/she is doing, before the 60 day mark makes a significant difference in allowing a leader to get up to speed as much as 25% faster.*

- ❖ What kind of feedback to collect
- ❖ How to gather the feedback
- ❖ How to deliver the early feedback

In our work with both human resources and new executives, we have seen the impact on both the organization and the new leader when early feedback

is provided, as well as, the negative impact when it is not provided.

When a new leader receives early feedback the impact can be:

- Decreased time to performance
- Ability to build key relationships sooner
- Understanding how to be successful in the new culture faster

Let's break down each of the three areas that human resources leaders struggle with in providing early feedback to new leaders.

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## Three Challenges:

### 1. What kind of feedback to collect

Our work and research has surfaced **7 key indicators of leader onboarding success**. New leaders who receive positive and constructive feedback, both quantitative and qualitative, from key stakeholders in these core areas are more likely to succeed.

The **7 Indicators** are—

- Cultural Fit
- Peer Relationships
- Team Assessment
- Organizational knowledge
- Business/market knowledge
- Stakeholder perceptions
- Personal transition

Collecting feedback from key stakeholders regarding their experiences with and their impressions of new leaders related to these indicators will give new leaders and their managers a “snap shot” of where they hitting or missing the mark.

### 2. How to gather the feedback

It is important to collect feedback via both formal and informal channels. What we have seen work best is to include both formal and informal collections tools into your onboarding process. The formal tools are usually surveys that ask specific questions about each of the 7 indicators. The surveys are distributed to key stakeholders such as, the boss, peers, direct reports, human resources partner, and any other relevant participants. A self-assessment is also critical to be able to measure perceptions against what the new leader is thinking. Next, it is also important to collect data through conversations and observations. The boss, human resources partner, and the new leader, himself, can solicit feedback from several sources to get a good picture of what that new leader needs to start doing, stop doing and/or continue doing in his onboarding.

### 3. How to deliver the feedback

Once the feedback data has been collected, it is important to have it reviewed by an experienced and qualified participant in the process. This could be the boss, the human resources partner or an external coach. It is important to extrapolate themes and help the leader understand both how to leverage strengths as well as how to bridge gaps and make adjustments. Timing is also critical in the delivery of the feedback. There should be no big gaps in time between when the feedback is collected and when it is delivered. If there is, the feedback loses its relevance and the new leader may disregard it.

## Today's Employment Market

***The current employment market can cause individuals to take jobs that they may not have accepted in a healthier job market.*** This fact brings with it a whole set of factors that can make it difficult for new leaders to successfully onboard and engage in a new company or role. This is a challenge for both the individuals and the organizations.

**These factors include:**

- Wanting to go too fast too soon,
- “Settling” for a job to pay the bills,
- Long-term employees lack the skills and experience to transition to a new role/organization,

By gathering early feedback you can surface these types of issues and quickly address them before they result in the derailment of the new leader or damage to the team and organization. Our work with new leaders tells us that if these issues are not surfaced and addressed, the new leaders are less likely to be highly engaged in their work and their new organizations. A new leader who is not engaged will continue to pursue other employment options they he/she perceives as more rewarding and as a result perform in his/her current role at a lower-than-expected level.

**Summary**

Organizations that take the time to gather and deliver early feedback to onboarding new leaders have experienced amazing results. New leaders are given the opportunity to adjust their behaviors that better align them with the organization’s culture and position them to meet and exceed expectations. Without critical early feedback, new leaders are left to “stumble in the dark” and organizations risk losing the significant investments that they have made in those new leaders.

**About Connect the Dots Consulting**

Connect the Dots is a management consulting firm dedicated to creating solutions focused on leadership onboarding and high-performing teams. Connecting your organization’s leaders and their teams to measurable objectives is our purpose and passion.

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