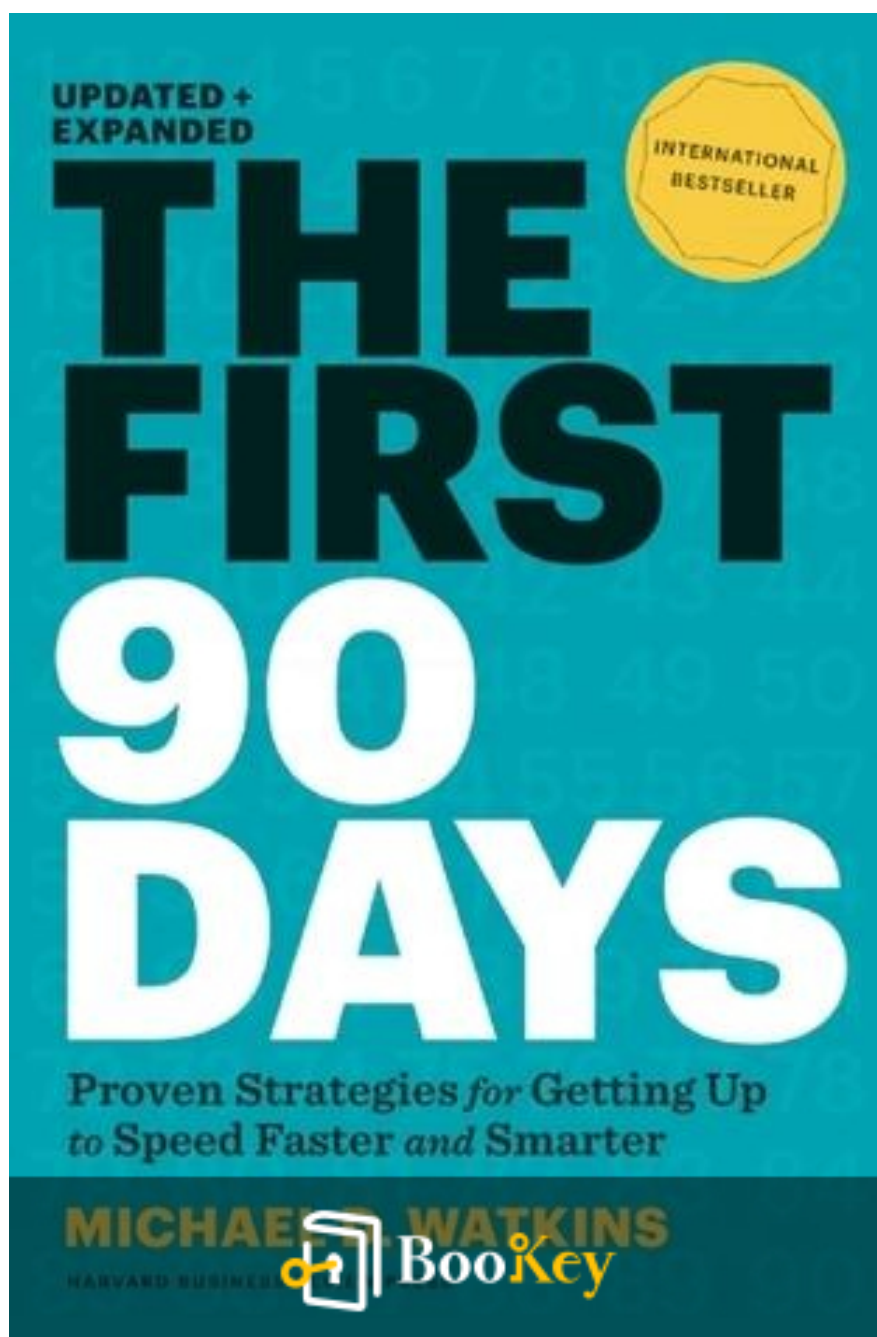


# The First 90 Days PDF (Limited Copy)

Michael D. Watkins



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# **The First 90 Days Summary**

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"Master Rapid Transition for Success in Any Role."

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## About the book

In the intricate landscape of career transitions, navigating a new leadership position is akin to stepping onto uncharted territory—it's a critical juncture that determines your momentum and success. "The First 90 Days" by Michael D. Watkins emerges as an indispensable compass in this journey, offering a structured roadmap to guide you through the pivotal first three months in a new role. Whether you're venturing into a fresh opportunity, assuming a significant promotion, or seeking revitalization in a current position, this book illuminates the strategies that can bolster immediate impact and enduring influence. Watkins distills decades of research and experience, equipping you with actionable advice and insightful frameworks to secure quick wins, align expectations, and galvanize your team's potential. Embark on this journey with Watkins, and transform what can often feel like a daunting challenge into a dynamic, effective, and confident launchpad toward thriving leadership.

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## About the author

Michael D. Watkins is a renowned expert in leadership transitions and a pioneer in the field of career management. With a diverse academic background, including a Ph.D. from Harvard University and a distinguished tenure as a professor at the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Switzerland, Watkins has dedicated his career to understanding the dynamics of successful leadership shifts. His extensive research and groundbreaking work have made him a sought-after advisor for leaders across various sectors. Through his bestselling book, "The First 90 Days," Watkins provides invaluable insights and strategies to help leaders navigate the critical first three months in new roles, cementing his reputation as a thought leader and transformative figure in leadership development.

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## Chapter1 Summary: Prepare Yourself

The narrative explores the challenges and dynamics faced by individuals transitioning into new leadership roles, using the experiences of Julia Gould and David Jones as illustrative cases.

Julia Gould, with a successful eight-year track record in marketing at a prominent consumer electronics company, is promoted to lead a high-stakes product development project. However, her habitual attention to detail and micromanagement, keys to her past successes, become liabilities. Julia struggles to adapt to the cross-functional demands of her new role, failing to delegate effectively and alienating team members. Her inability to transition from a functional expert to a collaborative leader results in her reassignment back to marketing. This scenario illustrates the pitfalls of relying too heavily on past strengths without adapting to new situational demands.

Julia's experience is used to highlight the necessity of preparing for career transitions by embracing new imperatives. Leaders must acknowledge that each new role, especially promotions, brings unique challenges requiring a broader perspective, revised delegation strategies, and effective influence without direct authority. Promotions demand balancing wider organizational insights while retaining necessary detail-oriented skills, altering traditional views of delegation, and navigating more politicized decision-making environments.

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David Jones, a seasoned R&D professional, transitions into Energix, a rapidly growing wind energy company. Unlike Julia's internal promotion, David faces the challenges of onboarding into a new organization. Despite his systematic approach to process improvement, David encounters a culture resistant to change and unaccustomed to his structured methods. The company's informal processes clash with David's disciplined style, leading to conflict and strained relationships with senior management.

David's story emphasizes the complexity of external transitions, or onboarding, where leaders must adapt to different political structures and corporate cultures. Successfully navigating such transitions involves understanding the broader business environment, forging strategic stakeholder connections, aligning expectations, and adapting to organizational culture. New leaders face hurdles like unfamiliar networks and cultural nuances, necessitating a thoughtful approach akin to an organ transplant — integrating into the existing culture without rejection.

To prepare for transitions, be it promotions or joining new organizations, leaders must introspect on potential vulnerabilities and strengths. They should learn to compensate for weaknesses, rekindle learning agility, and rebuild networks to include political and personal advisers who can provide essential insights into organizational dynamics. Leaders must be wary of relying solely on past success factors and instead work actively to develop

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new competencies crucial for their new roles.

In conclusion, establishing a clear mental breakpoint, assessing personal and organizational challenges, and leveraging organizational support mechanisms are critical strategies for successful transitions. Ongoing self-assessment and adaptation are necessary as one navigates new roles, ensuring the journey leads to effective leadership and organizational success.

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## Chapter2 Summary: Accelerate Your Learning

Chris Hadley was a quality assurance leader at Dura Corporation, a top-tier software services firm. He was given an exciting opportunity for a lateral move as head of the product quality and testing unit at Phoenix Systems, a software developer in need of turnaround. Dura was known for its advanced technology and motivated workforce, but Phoenix was lacking in both aspects. Chris, eager to implement a transformation, relied heavily on Dura's successful methods.

Upon his arrival at Phoenix, Chris quickly criticized their outdated processes and declared a need for change. He brought in consultants who deemed Phoenix's technology as "antiquated" and its workforce skills as "inadequate." Chris planned to reorganize the product testing teams based on Dura's models. However, after launching the new structure, productivity sharply declined, affecting the timeline of a crucial product launch.

Chris's boss criticized him for alienating the team, questioning how well he understood the organization's past accomplishments despite poor resources. Chris realized he hadn't listened enough or appreciated the team's creativity under constraints. He adjusted his approach to include worker feedback, promising improvements in technology and training first.

Chris's experience highlights common pitfalls new leaders face by acting

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decisively without learning about the new organization's history and culture first. Effective transition involves a swift learning process to gather critical insights, closing windows of vulnerability, and making informed business decisions.

Leaders who fail to learn effectively may focus too much on technical aspects, ignoring cultural and political influences. Moreover, few are trained to diagnose organizations systematically or create learning plans upon entering new roles. Internal barriers, like the action imperative, drive leaders to act rather than observe, leading to poor decisions and diminished credibility.

New leaders sometimes come with pre-conceived solutions, unaware that successful strategies in one environment might fail in another. Leaders should instead focus on learning the new company's culture and adapt strategies accordingly. Structured learning methods like SWOT analysis or new leader assimilation processes can help leaders understand organizational dynamics and avoid mistakes.

Crafting a learning agenda is essential; it should include questions about past performance, strategic vision, talent, processes, and future opportunities. Effective learning involves identifying and efficiently extracting insights from available information, both hard data and "soft" intelligence from personal interactions. Leaders should also measure political influences and

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cultural norms to develop informed strategies.

Using systematic methods to learn, such as structured interviews with direct reports, helps identify consistent and divergent views within the organization. Engaging in one-on-one meetings with team members can offer deep insights into the organization's strengths and challenges. Leaders achieving early wins can build momentum and credibility.

Overall, a structured learning plan is vital in a leader's first 90 days, facilitating a deeper understanding of the organization. The process involves analyzing data, formulating hypotheses, and engaging with internal and external stakeholders to gather actionable insights. Maintaining an adaptable learning agenda and plan facilitates successful transitions, enabling leaders to make timely, effective decisions.

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## Chapter3 Summary: Match Strategy to Situation

The chapter revolves around Karl Lewin, a seasoned executive familiar with crisis management. Karl recently led a successful restructuring of European manufacturing operations for Global Foods, a multinational consumer products company. There, he centralized key functions, closed inefficient plants, and moved production to Eastern Europe. His decisive actions paid off, resulting in significantly improved operational efficiency. This success led to his new assignment as executive vice president of supply chain for Global Foods' North American operations, which presented him with a different challenge.

Unlike Europe, the North American operations were not in an immediate crisis. However, Karl perceived potential issues, such as a tendency among managers to react well in crises without focusing on prevention, and executives relying too heavily on intuition for decision-making. Recognizing the difference between his past turnaround and current realignment situation was crucial. In North America, his challenge was to create a sense of urgency, breaking through complacency and unfounded optimism to implement necessary changes.

To address such situations, the STARS model is introduced as a framework for leaders transitioning into new roles. STARS stands for start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success, each

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representing a unique business situation with specific challenges and strategies. Karl's role in Europe was a classic turnaround, demanding rapid action, whereas the North American challenge was a realignment, requiring a nuanced approach to reinvigorate an organization slowly drifting toward problems.

Karl needed to adapt his leadership style—shifting from a heroic, decisive leader in turnarounds to a more diplomatic, steward-like approach for the realignment. Successful navigation through these varying scenarios involves evaluating and managing a "portfolio" of situations, acknowledging that businesses may simultaneously exhibit characteristics of different STARS categories. The chapter emphasizes the importance of tailoring strategies to the specific business context and understanding both the technical and cultural dynamics of the organization.

Furthermore, the role of psychological and organizational transformation is highlighted, addressing the need for leaders to adapt and modify their methods to effectively manage their team. Leaders must leverage both heroes and stewards within their team to balance between decisive action and inclusive consensus-building, depending on the situation.

Ultimately, the chapter suggests that evaluating performance and rewarding success should consider the context of the situation. Success in start-ups or turnarounds might be quantified by measurable outcomes, whereas

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realignments and sustaining success require a deeper understanding, as they often prevent crises that might not be immediately visible. Karl’s journey and the application of the STARS framework underscore the multifaceted nature of leadership in varied organizational scenarios.

Concept	Description
Karl Lewin	Experienced executive excelling in crisis management; led successful European restructuring for Global Foods, resulting in improved efficiency and a new assignment in North America.
North American Challenge	New role as executive VP of supply chain, facing non-crisis operations; requires addressing managerial complacency and over-reliance on intuition.
STARS Model	Framework for transitioning leaders: start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, sustaining success; Karl's past in turnaround, current in realignment.
Leadership Style Shift	From decisive leadership in turnarounds to diplomatic stewardship in realignment; adapting style to fit organizational needs and dynamics.
Portfolio Management	Understanding and managing various business situations under the STARS categories; recognizing the multifaceted nature of organizations.
Transformation and Adaptation	Leaders must evolve strategies, balancing decisive action with consensus-building; leveraging team dynamics for success.
Success Evaluation	Evaluate and reward performance contextually; appreciating visible outcomes in turnarounds versus prevention in realignments and sustaining success.
Karl's Journey	Application of the STARS framework; demonstrates complex leadership needs in diverse organizational circumstances.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Adapt your leadership style to the situation at hand

**Critical Interpretation:** Learning from Karl Lewin's journey in your professional life, you grasp that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach in leadership. Transitioning into different challenges—be it a turnaround or a realignment—requires you to adjust your leadership style like a chameleon adapts its colors. In some situations, you may need to be the decisive hero stepping in with bold actions, while in others, adopting a diplomatic, steward-like approach could be more effective. Imagine a maestro directing an orchestra; knowing when to emphasize the strings or percussion relies on your keen understanding of the context and dynamics present. As you hone your versatility in leadership, you'll find yourself more attuned to the nuances of your team and workplace, fostering an environment where both crisis and complacency are managed expertly.

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## Chapter4: Negotiate Success

The chapter revolves around the strategic transition of Michael Chen, the newly appointed Chief Information Officer (CIO) of a mid-sized oil company's business unit. Michael's journey unfolds against the backdrop of navigating the demands of a high-pressure job and forming a productive relationship with his formidable new boss, Vaughan Cates. Known for her tough managerial style and high expectations, Vaughan's arrival is met with apprehension by Michael's colleagues, who warn him of the challenges ahead.

Understanding the need for a strategic approach, Michael proposes a 90-day plan to Vaughan, seeking an initial 30-day period for diagnosis and planning. This structured approach allows him to familiarize himself with the organization's dynamics and challenges, and to align his strategy with Vaughan's objectives. Despite early pressure from Vaughan to make swift decisions, Michael remains steadfast in his plan, ensuring that he provides well-thought-out assessments and action plans. Through regular updates and adherence to his timeline, Michael gains Vaughan's approval with a comprehensive plan after the first 30 days.

As Michael secures early wins and advocates for additional resources for critical projects, he faces intense scrutiny from Vaughan, who questions his business case rigorously. When Michael successfully justifies his needs,

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Vaughan grants the necessary support but imposes strict deadlines. Through these efforts, Michael demonstrates his capability and begins to build a relationship based on trust and results with Vaughan. Over time, this leads to an understanding that while their styles may differ, Michael's focus on outcomes aligns with Vaughan's results-oriented leadership.

The chapter further provides a framework for negotiating success with a new boss, emphasizing the importance of proactive engagement. It advises on the critical steps of building a relationship based on mutual understanding and strategic alignment. This includes defining clear expectations, securing necessary resources, and adjusting one's style to suit the boss's preferences. The chapter underscores that in any organizational transition, the new boss sets the benchmarks for success, interprets actions, and controls the resources essential for achieving goals.

The narrative introduces the STARS (Startup, Turnaround, Accelerated growth, Realignment, Sustaining success) framework, guiding new leaders in identifying the situational context they are entering and aligning their strategies accordingly. In start-ups, the focus is on acquiring resources; in turnarounds, quick decisive actions are crucial; and in accelerated growth, securing investments is vital. Realignment demands help in advocating for change, while sustaining success emphasizes understanding and protecting core assets.

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To foster a successful relationship, the chapter outlines key conversations with the boss: situational diagnosis, expectations, resource allocation, interaction style, and personal development. These dialogues are integral for clarifying roles, aligning objectives, and ensuring mutual support in pursuing shared goals.

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## Chapter5 Summary: Secure Early Wins

In the journey of transforming a struggling customer service department at a major retailer, Elena Lee exemplified effective leadership transition. Upon her promotion to head customer service, she faced two critical tasks: enhancing customer satisfaction and overturning a punitive leadership culture set by her predecessor. Elena's prior experience as a successful call center manager provided her with intricate insights into the quality of service issues within the organization. She was committed to fostering a participative, problem-solving culture as a priority.

Elena began her tenure by engaging directly with her former peers, now her direct reports, who managed the company's global call centers. Through team calls and one-on-one meetings, she communicated her vision and goals emphasizing a cultural shift away from punitive approaches towards coaching and mentorship. Despite initially seeing little response, she persisted by conducting weekly performance review meetings with center managers, reinforcing her expectations for a non-punitive approach to discipline and employee development.

Her strategy quickly identified managers resistant to the change, leading her to implement performance improvement plans for the worst offenders. This resulted in a turnover where one manager was replaced with a promising supervisor from Elena's former center—an approach that gradually

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cultivated change. Additionally, Elena focused on the critical task of customer satisfaction and service quality evaluation. She established a team led by her best unit leader to develop new metrics and feedback processes. A consultant was brought in to guide this effort, ensuring the team stayed on track. The pilot program was successfully launched in a center that had been under poor management.

By her first year's end, customer service metrics had markedly improved, and surveys showed enhanced employee morale and satisfaction. Elena's leadership style created early wins, building momentum and credibility early in her tenure. These early successes excited stakeholders and set the stage for more profound changes in the organization.

Elena's approach aligns with strategic frameworks for managing transitions in leadership roles, involving successive waves of change. Initial efforts should secure early wins, which serve the dual purpose of energizing the team and laying the groundwork for later, deeper organizational transformations. Leaders must be wary of focusing solely on low-hanging fruit, ensuring early wins align with longer-term business goals and stakeholder expectations.

Building credibility in the early days of a new role is critical. Elena's case illustrates that while early actions may not immediately impact performance metrics, they send powerful signals and shape perceptions, thereby building

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a reputation for decisiveness and fairness. Balancing relationships, establishing authority, and aligning early projects with business priorities are essential for immediate and long-term success.

The path to change involves a blend of planning and learning. Depending on organizational readiness, leaders might need to build awareness and diagnosis through a collective learning process before implementing changes. Elena's careful structuring of project teams and leveraging new behaviors aligned with broader organizational changes highlight the need for strategic foresight and adaptability.

Avoiding predictable surprises is also key. Leaders must diligently seek out potential issues in external trends, market developments, internal capacities, and organizational politics to avoid crises that derail momentum. Elena's experience underscores the need for continuous vigilance and strategic adaptability, ensuring that the path to early wins contributes to sustainable success and long-term organizational transformation.

In essence, Elena's successful transition and effective leadership reflect the importance of securing early wins, shaping culture within the organization, and maintaining a strategic alignment with long-term goals for sustained improvement—a roadmap for leaders in transition aiming to achieve meaningful change.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Build Credibility Early with Strategic Wins

**Critical Interpretation:** In your new leadership role, it's crucial to establish credibility by securing early successes that pave the way for deeper transformational changes. Elena's journey reminds you that initial triumphs are more than just victories; they signal commitment, foster enthusiasm, and generate momentum that will be vital for long-term success. Embrace early wins that align with your overarching goals, as these victories build a foundation of trust and authority. When you tactfully balance immediate projects with broader strategic objectives, you create a reputation for decisiveness and fairness, which not only energizes your team but also positions you as a credible leader poised to drive significant, lasting improvements.

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# Chapter6 Summary: Achieve Alignment

## Chapter Summary: Navigating Organizational Change

The chapter centers on Hannah Jaffey, an adept human resource consultant brought in as the corporate vice president of human resources for a company besieged by executive-level conflict and structural disarray. Tasked with supporting the CEO in making personnel changes and rebuilding the executive team, Hannah identifies the company's structural and incentive misalignments as the roots of the turmoil, which had manifested in stalled growth and customer dissatisfaction.

A year prior, the company had reorganized into product-focused business units, inadvertently creating overlapping customer bases and disincentives for cross-unit cooperation. This misalignment led to internal conflicts and confusion, affecting the company's financial performance. Despite the CEO's belief that the misaligned personnel were the primary issue, Hannah advocated for another structural change. Her persistent efforts culminated in implementing a hybrid structure, aligning marketing and sales with customer segments while organizing operations and R&D by product line, supported by a shared-services organization. This realignment revitalized the company, improved customer satisfaction, and clarified which executives were underperforming.

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The narrative underscores the critical role of an "organizational architect" in ensuring strategic alignment among an organization's key elements: strategic direction, structure, core processes, and skill bases. This elevation in understanding becomes essential as one climbs the organizational ladder, underpinning effective leadership and performance.

Common pitfalls in organizational change are highlighted, such as making superficial changes, applying a one-size-fits-all approach, and overcomplicating structures. Leaders must recognize the specific context—whether it's a turnaround, realignment, or growth situation—before deciding on structural changes.

The chapter suggests viewing the organization as an open system influenced by both external players (customers, competitors, governments, etc.) and internal factors (culture, morale). Strategic direction, structure, core processes, and skill bases should collectively support organizational goals.

### **Diagnosing Misalignments:**

Leaders should identify misalignments, such as mismatches between strategic direction and skill bases or inappropriate structures that impede processes. The first 90 days should focus on diagnosing misalignments and planning for corrective actions, akin to preparing for a long journey by

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aligning the strategic direction, structure, processes, and skill bases.

### **Defining Strategic Direction:**

Strategic direction encompasses mission, vision, and strategy, centering on customer focus, capital allocation, capabilities, and commitments. Strategic coherence, adequacy, and implementation are vital, guiding groups in aligning actions with strategic objectives.

### **Assessing and Shaping Structure:**

Structure involves unit organization, reporting relationships, decision rights, and performance incentives. It should evolve thoughtfully to align with strategic goals, avoiding pitfalls like decision-making diffusion or inadequate incentives that encourage undesired behaviors.

### **Aligning Core Processes:**

Core processes transform resources into value and must align with the strategic vision. Misaligned processes and structures can obstruct strategic initiatives. Leaders should map and analyze processes to identify bottlenecks and improve productivity, timeliness, reliability, and quality.

### **Developing Skills:**

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Skill bases comprising individual expertise, relational knowledge, embedded knowledge, and metaknowledge are crucial for executing strategy. Leaders must identify skill gaps and underutilized resources to enhance performance.

### **Changing Culture Through Architecture:**

Organizational culture can be reshaped by altering structural elements and reinforcing desired behaviors through leadership. Changes to incentives, metrics, and reward systems can foster the desired culture.

The chapter concludes with a checklist for achieving organizational alignment, encouraging leaders to assess misalignments, make strategic decisions, and align structure, processes, and skills with overarching goals. The chapter serves as a comprehensive guide for leaders to navigate complex organizational changes effectively.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Diagnosing Misalignments

**Critical Interpretation:** In your personal and professional life, understanding and diagnosing misalignments is pivotal. Just as Hannah Jaffey did in determining the root cause of her company's internal conflicts, you too can apply this principle to identify areas where your goals, skills, and resources might be out of sync. Embrace the mindset of an organizational architect, analyzing the facets of your life as parts of a cohesive system. By pinpointing and addressing these misalignments early, you create a roadmap for progress and fulfillment, ensuring that every step you take aligns with your overarching ambitions. This deep introspection and strategic adjustment can profoundly impact your trajectory, enabling you to transform challenges into stepping stones for success.

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## Chapter7 Summary: Build Your Team

The chapter begins with Liam Geffen taking on the challenging role of leading a troubled business unit within a process automation company. He quickly realizes the extent of the dysfunction when examining past performance evaluations, revealing favoritism from his predecessor and a skewed assessment of team capabilities. Liam identifies key issues with his senior staff, particularly the VPs of marketing and sales, and devises a plan to revamp the leadership team, aligning it with business goals.

Understanding the critical importance of team building in leadership roles, Liam prioritizes assessing both direct and indirect reports. Early personnel decisions are crucial; the wrong choices can significantly hinder progress. Thus, finding the right people and aligning them with business objectives becomes a priority. Liam embarks on a systematic evaluation of his team, considering competence, judgment, energy, focus, relationships, and trust.

As he navigates the complexities of transforming the team, Liam avoids common traps faced by new leaders, such as excessive criticism of past leadership, retaining poor-performing team members for too long, and failing to align the team with organizational goals. Instead, he balances the need for stability with the urgency of change, focusing on high-priority personnel changes while fostering team alignment and development.

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Liam also employs strategic decision-making frameworks. Depending on the situation, he chooses between consult-and-decide and build-consensus approaches, ensuring that team dynamics and input are adequately considered without compromising on leadership authority. This flexibility in decision-making, combined with clear communication, helps in avoiding decision diffusion or inadequate implementation.

The chapter highlights the significance of understanding team dynamics and leveraging functional expertise. Liam navigates team politics and dynamics by setting clear evaluative criteria and alignment strategies. He avoids hasty decisions and instead patiently assesses team members over 30 to 60 days, categorizing them into those to keep, develop, move, or replace.

Liam's leadership involves constructive one-on-one evaluations and careful observation of team interactions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of both individual and collective team capabilities. He aligns incentives appropriately, balancing individual excellence with the need for teamwork based on situational requirements.

To build a cohesive team, Liam creates a compelling vision that taps into intrinsic motivations, making team members feel part of a larger narrative. Communication of this vision is achieved through consultation, stories, and repetition, ensuring alignment with organizational objectives.

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The chapter concludes with practical advice on handling virtual teams, emphasizing the importance of establishing clear communication norms, defining team roles, and maintaining team rhythm. Celebrating success and sustaining momentum are critical to overcoming the challenges of virtual teamwork.

In summary, Liam Geffen's experience in rebuilding a team highlights the intricate balance between evaluating individual performance, making strategic personnel changes, and aligning team goals with organizational objectives. His approach emphasizes respect, clear communication, and strategic decision-making to create a high-performance team capable of achieving superior results.

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## Chapter8: Create Alliances

In this narrative, Alexia Belenko, a proficient sales and marketing executive, embarks on a challenging journey in her new role as the regional vice president of marketing for the Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) region at MedDev, a global medical devices company. Despite her proven expertise, Alexia quickly finds herself frustrated by the bureaucratic hurdles at corporate headquarters, which stifle necessary changes and innovation. Her initial task is to balance the centralization and decentralization of marketing decisions to effectively launch new products.

Upon taking the role, Alexia conducts a comprehensive review, engaging with managing directors across the EMEA and her former boss, Harald Jaeger, the vice president for EMEA operations. Despite identifying key areas for improvement and devising a strategic plan emphasizing increased standardization alongside localized flexibility, she encounters resistance. Both her superiors, Marjorie Aaron, the senior vice president of marketing based in the U.S., and Harald, recognize the potential in her plan but remain non-committal, asking her to garner stakeholder support.

However, as Alexia attempts to present her proposals to the corporate marketing team and EMEA country managers, she faces significant opposition. The U.S. team leans towards more central control, while the EMEA managers, protective of their autonomy, are skeptical of any

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encroachments, fearing unkept promises from corporate. Notably, Rolf Eiklid, a respected managing director, voices concerns regarding corporate's commitment to flexibility. This resistance leaves Alexia disoriented, confronting the deeper intricacies of influence and politics in a regional role.

The narrative underscores critical lessons in organizational politics and influence. In facing her difficulties, Alexia learns the importance of building alliances and securing support from individuals over whom she lacks direct authority. The text outlines strategies for navigating these dynamics: identifying key decision-makers, understanding their motivations, and constructing influence strategies tailored to leverage both formal and informal power structures. Alexia's situation exemplifies how success in such roles often hinges on strategic influence rather than positional authority.

Establishing effective alliances involves recognizing potential supporters, opponents, and persuadable individuals within the organization. Alexia's mission is to negotiate a "grand bargain" for marketing decision-making in EMEA, a process requiring support from both her new and former bosses. Understanding the political landscape and identifying pivotal individuals like David Wallace, involved in global branding, and influential EMEA directors such as Rolf is crucial.

Ultimately, effective influence strategies can include consultation,

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incremental tactics for gradual buy-in, smart sequencing of alliances, and the use of action-forcing events to spur decision-making and commitment.

Alexia needs to engage in framing her arguments persuasively, aligning them with the values and incentives of key stakeholders while anticipating and overcoming opposition.

Through this journey, the narrative advises on the importance of mapping influence networks and relationships to navigate organizational politics successfully. For individuals like Alexia, mastering this political terrain can transform initial challenges into successful outcomes, paving the way for impactful leadership in complex corporate environments.

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## Chapter9 Summary: Manage Yourself

In the story of Stephen Erikson's career transition, we encounter a classic case of the challenges faced during a professional relocation. Stephen, a successful executive, embarks on a seemingly straightforward move from New York to Toronto after being promoted to a senior position in a media company's Canadian unit. Optimistic about the transition, Stephen anticipates minimal disruption, assuming that cultural similarities between Canadians and Americans will ensure a smooth shift. However, the reality proves otherwise.

Initially, Stephen approaches his new role with enthusiasm, temporarily settling in downtown Toronto while his wife Irene prepares for the family's eventual relocation from New York. Irene, a skilled freelance interior designer, is tasked with selling their co-op apartment and preparing their daughters, Katherine and Elizabeth, for mid-year school transitions. Despite considering the benefits of waiting until the school year ends, Stephen and Irene decide that keeping the family apart for an extended period is impractical.

Stephen's optimism is soon tested by subtle warning signs at work. His colleagues' polite and indirect communication style contrasts sharply with his New York experience, where directness was valued. He finds it difficult to engage in productive debates and misses the decisive colleagues he relied

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on in his previous role. Meanwhile, Irene's visits to Toronto reveal her discontent, as she struggles to find suitable schools akin to those in New York, exacerbating her daughters' dissatisfaction with the move.

The family's division between two cities creates a strain. Stephen's commutes leave him fatigued and distract him from his efforts to assimilate into his new work environment, impacting his effectiveness and increasing his stress. When he pushes Irene to expedite their relocation, the ensuing argument risks their marriage, prompting Stephen to consider a drastic change—returning to New York or leaving the company.

Stephen's ordeal underscores the multifaceted challenges leaders face during transitions. It's not just about professional adaptation but also about managing personal and familial upheavals. Transitions amplify existing vulnerabilities, demanding self-management and adaptability. To navigate such challenges, leaders must reflect on their experiences, adopt effective transition strategies, and maintain personal and professional support systems.

Successful transitions rely on three pillars of self-management. The first pillar focuses on adopting structured strategies for preparation, learning, prioritization, and execution. By following a 90-day plan, leaders gain confidence from early successes, foster momentum, and align their actions with long-term goals.

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The second pillar, personal disciplines, involves enforcing regular routines to enhance productivity and decision-making. Leaders must plan, focus on priorities, judiciously manage commitments, maintain perspective, engage in self-reflection, and recognize when to take breaks to prevent burnout.

The third pillar involves building robust support systems. This includes stabilizing one's immediate environment, ensuring family stability, and constructing a network of trusted advisers. Balancing technical expertise, cultural insights, and political counsel is crucial for informed decision-making. Leaders are encouraged to analyze and enhance their internal and external networks to address evolving needs.

Stephen's story highlights the complexity of leadership transitions and the importance of self-awareness and proactive management. By focusing on self-management, leaders can turn challenges into opportunities for personal growth and success.

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## Chapter10 Summary: Accelerate Everyone

"The First 90 Days" addresses the challenges leaders face during transitions and offers a framework for accelerating their integration and performance in new roles. The book is designed for leaders to diagnose their situations, define core challenges, and design strategies to create positive momentum. Research indicates that following this approach can reduce the time to reach break-even performance by up to 40%.

The impact of leadership transitions isn't limited to the leaders themselves; organizations also incur significant costs due to failed transitions, which can include expense, lost opportunities, and talent loss. Therefore, an effective transition acceleration system can mitigate enterprise risk, enhance competitive advantage, and expedite change implementation. These systems are crucial for managing senior executive transitions, where failures can have substantial financial implications, and are a cornerstone of effective enterprise risk management.

The significance of timely and successful transitions is amplified when considering the frequency of leadership changes within corporations. In fortune 500 companies, a high percentage of leaders undergo transitions yearly, affecting their teams and broader organizational performance. Speeding up these transitions even by a modest percentage can have a noticeable impact on company responsiveness and performance,

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representing a potential competitive advantage.

During major organizational changes such as restructuring, rapid growth, or acquisitions, the focus shifts to accelerating both individual and team transitions. The "90-day framework" is instrumental in these scenarios, helping leaders and their teams quickly adapt and realign their goals and strategies. This approach emphasizes team acceleration and builds on common methodologies and tools, thereby enhancing the likelihood of successful change management.

Key principles for designing and implementing an acceleration system include:

- 1. Identifying Critical Transitions:** Understand the frequency and type of transitions across the organization to prioritize resources effectively. For rapid-growth scenarios, focus initially on accelerating onboarding.
- 2. Set-Up-to-Fail Dynamics:** Recognize and counteract common hurdles such as unclear expectations or excessive leap sizing that set leaders up for underperformance. This may require addressing cultural factors and employing systematic risk assessments.
- 3. Existing Transition Support:** Evaluate current support systems, identifying gaps or redundancies, and aim for a cohesive, standardized

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framework that aligns with organizational goals.

4. **Common Core Model:** Employ a unified language and toolkit to streamline transition discussions, facilitating effective engagement between leaders, peers, and teams.

5. **Just-in-Time Support Delivery:** Tailor support to transition phases, capitalizing on pre-entry opportunities for learning and preparing leaders in advance of their start dates.

6. **Structured Processes:** Employ structured, action-oriented sessions to ensure leaders prioritize their transitions amidst competing demands.

7. **Support Matching to Transition Types and Levels** Customize resources based on transition types (e.g., promotions, onboarding) and align resource allocation to maximize ROI across leader levels.

8. **Integrated Talent Management** Ensure alignment with recruiting and leadership development, utilizing insights from recruitment to inform onboarding and continuing evaluation.

9. **Role Clarification and Incentive Alignment:** Clearly define and integrate supportive roles across stakeholders, providing incentives to bolster transition efforts.

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Designing these systems demands careful consideration of the organizational landscape, aligning them with broader talent management strategies to harness full potential. By deploying a cohesive transition acceleration system, companies can significantly enhance their resilience and agility, contributing to sustained competitive advantage.

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