

Succeeding at the Next Level

Learn what it takes to excel.



by Scott Eblin

DO YOU HAVE WHAT it takes to be a successful leader? Possibly

not. Forty percent of all new executives don't last 18 months. The problem? Nine out of ten new leaders say they arrive at the top feeling they lack the know-how and tools to succeed. And most don't get the support they need—starting with the boss.

These new leaders also discover that what got them there—from working non-stop to sweating the small stuff—isn't enough to keep them there. Their companies pay the price, too—upwards of \$2.5 million for every failed senior-level hire.

The good news? What it takes to make it as an executive can be learned. It's a matter of picking up new skills and strengths and letting go of old ones—even if they've driven your career success up until now. Here's how to beat the odds as a rising leader.

- **Let go of self-doubt.** An insecure executive makes a lousy leader. Put confidence in your presence and purpose. Let go of running flat-out until you crash. Working 24/7 may have made you a superstar. Keep it up at the top—where the expectations are enormous—and you'll burn out. Break the cycle by scheduling regular time for recovery and renewal.

- **Let go of one-size-fits-all communication.** Customize every message for the group and goals at hand. Less is more. Become a master of the headline and need-to-know details.

- **Let go of self-reliance.** Replace "me" with "we." You may have advanced here on your own, but now you are only as good as your team.

- **Let go of the urge to tell "how."** Micromanaging is a sure way to fail. Set the agenda for what gets done and leave the how to your team.

- **Let go of responsibility.** Don't sweat the small stuff. Responsibility for a

few results belongs to your team. Accountability for many results belongs to you.

- **Let go of only looking up and down.** There's more to consider than what's up with the boss or what's going down with subordinates. Look left and right, too, since partnerships with peers provide valuable information.

- **Let go of an inside-out view.** An innermost perspective may have served you in the past, but it won't now. Lead with an outside-in view by knowing what else is happening in the internal and external environment.

- **Let go of the small footprint.** Your days of being "low-profile" are over. At the top, you act and speak on behalf of your entire company.

Executive Presence

Peak performers are often promoted and then left to sink or swim on their own. To stay at the top, you have to act like an executive—even when you feel like an imposter. Take charge of how you "show up"—for yourself, team, and organization.

- **Trust your gut.** Heed your instincts. When that inner voice sounds a warning signal, be sure to stop, look, and listen.

- **Take action.** Plan the work and work the plan—yet be willing to execute before you feel ready. Executives rarely have the time.

- **Get your ego out of the way.** It's not about you anymore. Spend time and energy boosting your team—not competing with them.

- **Address problems quickly.** Don't waffle. If someone or something isn't working, take action immediately—and respectfully.

- **Bond with the boss.** Talk early and often with your boss. Come up with a plan for ongoing communication that is easy and effective for both of you.

- **Mind your manners—and your messages.** Political savvy is a must. Be visible and accessible, but stay mindful of everything you say and do.

- **Repeat: "I am not my job."** Be true to you. You are an executive because of what you do—and who you are. Realize your potential at home and in your community. LE

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