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Working with your new boss Your new boss will have more impact than anyone else over whether you succeed or fail. Your boss establishes benchmarks for your success, interprets your actions for other key players, and controls resources you need. Building a productive working relationship with him or her while you establish your mandate and negotiate for resources is a clear early priority. Defining your goals When you think about working with your new boss, keep the following goals in mind:

- Clarify mutual expectations early. Begin managing expectations right away. You are in trouble if your boss expects you to fix things fast when you know that the business has serious structural problems. So it is wise to get bad news on the table early and to lower unrealistic expectations. Be careful to assess your new organization's capacity for change before making ironclad commitments to your new boss.
- Secure commitments for the resources you need. In conjunction with establishing goals, begin to negotiate for the key resources—people, funding, and knowledge—you need to succeed. Don't commit to goals without getting corresponding commitments on resources. Otherwise you won't have much bargaining power.
- Aim for early wins in areas important to the boss. Whatever your own priorities, identify what the boss cares about most and pursue results in those areas. That way, your boss will feel some ownership of your success. But don't make the mistake of doing things you consider misguided or trivial. In part, your job is to shape your boss's perceptions of what can and should be achieved.
- Aim for good marks from those whose opinions your boss respects. This is an aspect of building supportive internal coalitions. Your boss may have pre-existing relationships with people who are now your subordinates. If so, their

assessments of you will take on additional importance. Establishing how you will work together It's essential to figure out how you and your boss will work together. Your preferences may differ, such as over how much information the boss wants (and you want to give) and how involved the boss wants to be (and you want him or her to be) in the details of what you are doing. Rather than allowing misunderstandings to complicate your relationship, spend some time at the start discussing how you will work together. Even if you don't develop a close personal bond, doing so will help you create a productive working relationship. Matching your requests for support to your situation The type of support you need from your boss will vary depending on the business situation you are facing. The role of the boss in a startup is very different than in turnaround, realignment, or sustaining success situations. So you need to gain consensus on the type of situation. Then you have to think carefully about what role you would like your new boss to play and what kinds of support you will ask for. The table below summarizes typical roles that new bosses play in each of the four major types of transition situations.

Situation	Typical Roles for the New Boss
Startup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping to get critically important resources quickly.• Setting clear, measurable goals.• Lots of up-front attention, then get out of the way.• Guidance at key strategic breakpoints.• Help in staying focused.
Turnaround	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Same as startup plus:• More support for making and implementing the tough personnel calls.• Support for changing or correcting the external image of the organization and its people.• Helping the new leader cut deep enough early enough.
Realignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Same as startup plus:• Helping the new leader make the case for change to the organization, especially if he or

she is coming in from the outside. Sustaining Success • Constant reality testing: is this truly a sustaining success situation or a realignment? • Support for playing good defense, not making mistakes that damage the business. • Help in finding ways to take the business to a new level. Living by the golden rule Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. You will almost certainly hire new people as your subordinates. Just as you need to develop a productive relationship with your new boss, they need to work effectively with you. In the past, have you done a good job of helping subordinates make their own transitions? What might you do differently this time? Planning for five conversations Your relationship with your new boss will be built through a series of conversations These conversations begin before you accept the new position and continue through the time before entry and on into your transition. It is critically important that you cover certain fundamental subjects in these conversations. In fact, it is worth planning for five distinct conversations with your new boss: The situational diagnosis conversation. In this conversation you seek to understand how your new boss sees the business situation. Is it a turnaround or a startup or a realignment or a sustaining success situation? How did the organization get to this point? What are the relevant factors—both soft and hard—that make this a challenge? What resources within the organization do you have to draw upon? Naturally your view may be different than your boss's, but it is essential that you understand how he or she sees the situation. The expectations conversation. In this conversation you seek to understand and negotiate expectations. What are the few key things that your new boss needs you to accomplish in the short term and medium term? What will

constitute success? When? How will it be measured? Here again, you may come to believe that your boss's expectations are unrealistic and have to work to reset them. Also you should take care, as part of your broader effort to secure early wins, to under-promise and over-deliver. The style conversation. In this conversation you work to understand how you and your new boss can best interact on an ongoing basis. How does she prefer to be communicated with? Face-to-face? In writing? By voice mail or e-mail? How often? What kinds of decisions does he want to be involved in and where can you make the call on your own? How do your styles differ and what are the implications for how you should interact? The resources conversation. In this conversation you negotiate for critical resources. What is it that you need to be successful? What do you need your boss to do? The resources in question need not be funding or personnel. In a realignment situation, for example, your boss can play a critical role in helping you get the organization to confront the need for change. The personal development conversation. Finally, you need to discuss how your time in this job will contribute to your personal development. Are there projects or special assignments that you could get involved in (without sacrificing focus)? Are there courses or programs that would strengthen your capabilities? In practice, these five conversations are interwoven and take place over time. But there is a sequential logic. Early conversations should focus on situational diagnosis, expectations, and style. As you learn more, you can move to resources, revisiting situation and expectations as necessary. When you feel the relationship is reasonably well established, you can begin the personal development conversation.