



**Amrop**

# Context Matters



EXECUTIVE SEARCH

## Make or Break?

Why transition coaching is  
critical for incoming executives

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# Make or Break?

## Why transition coaching is critical for incoming executives

It was the first time that Juan had taken charge of the position of General Manager of an important and fast-growing family-owned company. Until that moment, he had forged an outstanding career directing different areas in large industrial corporations. He therefore had high expectations with respect to his new post and he was convinced that his competencies and experience would add substantial value to his new company.

Juan tried to achieve success rapidly in the organization. He was personable, fast, creative and had a good sense of humour, a broad view of the business panorama and a deep understanding of its specifics. He was capable of leaps of intuition, making complex associations and solving difficult problems. Yet only a few days after entering the organization he began to experience difficulties confronting his new challenges. The partners were constantly limiting his scope and he sensed a lack of coherence in their demands. A disorderly bureaucratic weight encumbered his actions and a heightened emotional tension hindered his working relationships. He was unable to comprehend why the very people who had hired him were opposed to carrying out the adjustments necessary to develop the company. "If things don't change soon, I'll quit," he thought.

Five months later, Juan is living the values of the organization as if they were his own. He has developed strong bonds of trust with the partners and his team, enjoys a high degree of autonomy, has driven change and is obtaining extraordinary results. The partners are enchanted with him.

What lies behind this shift? During these vital five months, Juan participated in a process of transition coaching.

Whether you are a senior executive facing your first months in a critical role, or a key internal stakeholder in an incoming leader's transition process, Amrop invites you to explore the emotional landscape facing every new entrant, and discover some keys to its successful navigation.

A transformational learning process is critical to enable executives to challenge the ways in which they traditionally proceeded

### Under the spotlight

The adaptation of a senior executive to a new job is a critical period. Expectations are being born, relationships established and trust must be swiftly built in circumstances that are unfamiliar and stressful, where tension is high and there is a perceived need for immediate results.

Accompanying the winning candidate in his or her integration through a transition coaching process can be the differentiation factor between success and disappointment for all concerned. Its objective is to achieve the best possible adaptation of a new executive to his or her new team and organization, facilitating his or her entry into the new work context and permitting optimum professional and personal development. Through in-depth and constructively confrontational conversations, the transition coach accompanies the new leader in learning the new abilities which will allow him or her to acquire the knowledge necessary to adapt to a new culture, facilitating the execution of new actions and the assumption of new responsibilities.

In the transition coaching of executives who move to other organizations we frequently encounter leaders who are highly competent with excellent technical skills and who are fully able to guarantee the success of these aspects of the position. They know how to make decisions and evaluate situations, applying the management competencies that were the basis of their selection. Nevertheless, technical ability alone is frequently insufficient for a successful adaptation. A transformational learning process is critical to enable senior executives to challenge the ways in which they traditionally proceeded (and which yielded excellent results), identifying and incorporating the modifications needed to obtain the same success in a new environment - with different organizational values and culture.



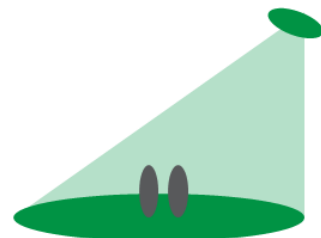
Over-eagerness to find answers is a natural response to the glare of the spotlight

### Lighting the path

Within this context an executive may encounter one or more of the following challenges – often unconsciously. How can coaching help?

**Understanding that other cultures and values also permit successful results.** We frequently tend to overrate our personal experience, based upon which we begin to pass judgment on the new culture we find ourselves confronting. This may lead to bias, impeding observation and learning in a new environment. The coach can help the coachee to identify his or her pre-conceptions and manage them.

**Active listening and observation during the first phase of integration.** Upon entering a new organization the new executive is the center of attention, especially that of the organization's upper management. He or she may attempt to alleviate the pressure by quickly seeking to establish the credibility of his or her knowledge. Compelling as this may seem, this can be a counter-productive response. The coach accompanies the coachee in this first phase of discomfort, helping him or her to replace early answers with leading questions. Diplomatic, incisive enquiry – and active listening to the answers – help the new entrant understand the organizational culture, identify the rules of the game and make a sound diagnosis of how things work. They can also help upper management see strategies in a new - and objective - light.



## The new executive risks becoming immersed in an emotional morass

### **Management of enthusiasm and the desire to rapidly change aspects of the organization.**

As we have seen, over-eagerness to find answers is a natural response to the glare of the spotlight. And the leap from answer to action can follow all too swiftly. This can be a risky strategy. Human resistance to change is inevitable and the enthusiasm of a new entrant may appear to stakeholders to be threatening rather than refreshing, generating objections rather than applause. The capacity to center oneself, having a wide range of emotions at hand but with none dominating - and being conscious of these - can help the newcomer step back before jumping forward.

**Management of the team's emotions.** The team that receives a new collaborator will also experience a variety of emotions regarding his or her arrival. Some members will be enthusiastic, others may fear the new leader and his or her expectations of them while others may be just plain angry at the "injustice" surrounding the election, including individuals who might resent not having been given the opportunity themselves. The new executive risks become immersed in an emotional morass. The Coach will accompany him or her in making sense of these emotional challenges, helping the new executive to earn the right to lead the new team.

**Having the right conversations at the right time - in the right way.** The preoccupation with being well received may predispose the incoming executive to avoid critical conversations, to have them but with a low level of assertiveness, or to fall into an opposite pitfall - that of over-directiveness. The coaching session provides a place for designing these conversations.

**Dealing with his or her own anxiety.** In the integration phase, the candidate may well face the fear of not being able to fulfill the expectations of the organization. Yet, these impossible expectations may only exist in the minds of new executives who tend to be unrealistically demanding of themselves. The ability to distinguish fact from phantoms,



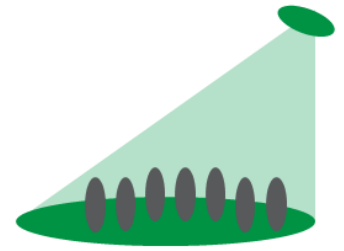
and take a helicopter view brings a sense of peace to the executive, permitting him or her to transform expectations into commitments that can be fulfilled, or into conversations enabling the definition of what is really expected of him and co-commitment to these objectives. In this process the anxiety is reduced.

### Summary

It is fundamental that an executive earn technical credibility, demonstrating the necessary competence for the position. It is also essential to develop the competencies of relating to others in order to create, in the shortest time possible, bonds of trust with team members, strengthening his or her connection to them and improving the coordination of the interaction among them. The coach will accompany the executive in earning this trust through the design of strategies and conversations. The coach offers the possibility of learning or reinforcing abilities such as the analysis of way commitments are arranged, time management, coordinating actions and long range planning among others.

The transition coach helps the executive become aware of his or habitual patterns of behavior and the results these produce. He or she proposes interventions and provides new interpretations of the challenges the executive faces. In the coaching process, the coach and the executive design and build the future together. The executive learns to face up to situations more effectively within a realm of trust which contributes to his or her empowerment and strength in his or her new position.

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## Management Benefits

### For the hiring organisation

**Profit:** Thanks to rapid and efficient integration the new executive begins to produce impactful and relevant results and even exceeds expectations. Team and organisational perceptions are transformed, creating a platform for sustained high performance.

**Alignment:** The new entrant quickly understands and adopts the hiring organisation's values and objectives while establishing quality relationships. He or she earns the trust of both top management peers and team, achieving support at an early stage.

**Commitment:** The hiring organisation perceives that the executive is able to permanently expand his or her awareness of his possibilities of action, resolving conflicts and behaving proactively in favor of the company. Thanks to preparing and conducting the right conversations with the right stakeholders, the hiring organisation and new executive are able to swiftly identify efficient ways of giving him support and constructing a robust and trust-based relationship.

### Benchmarking criteria

- ✓ The quality of the transition coaching process
- ✓ The practical usefulness for the executive
- ✓ Value added to the new executive in the company
- ✓ Improvement in the level of satisfaction of the executive in a new position
- ✓ Evaluation of the learning process and its sustainability
- ✓ Reduction of the time it takes for the new executive to adapt with respect to the company's expectations

### For the new executive

#### Objectivity:

- Can count on a safe and impartial place to reflect, decide and act free of anxiety and emotional tension.
- Is helped to clearly recognize challenges and obstacles and plan and prioritize actions.

#### Dynamism:

- Discovers and generates impactful actions and creates the new structure necessary to work efficiently.
- Gains self-assurance and develops an internal energy based on a personal learning process and the positive results that he or she begins to obtain.

#### Belonging:

- Rapidly creates bonds and a sense of continuity and commitment

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## About Amrop

With 91 offices in 57 countries, Amrop provides services in Executive Search, Leadership Assessment and Board Consulting. It is the largest partnership of its kind.

Amrop's Context Driven approach to executive search helps our clients find top talent, adept at working across borders in markets around the world.



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