



Reviewing Your Top Team as a New CEO

A new CEO will often enter a business with a 100-day plan, and this will include reviewing their top team. **Rob Walker**, CEO of BIE Executive, offers advice on how to go about this. **Emma Riddell** asks the questions



Where should changing their top team sit on a new CEO's list of priorities?

Coming in, a new CEO will have been given a remit from the board as to what they need to achieve in terms of the business plan and objectives. Normally they'll also have their own 100-day plan.

Within that 100 days, part of what they'll be doing is assessing their senior leadership team against that remit. They'll be looking at the roles and responsibilities of each individual, how they fit together, and whether they've got the right people in place to deliver.

How do you assess the incumbent top team?

One of the things you're looking for is whether they work well together. Are the members challenging, but supportive of each other? Are they effective as a team, or are they running individual fiefdoms?

It's not just about replacing people, it's about understanding how they operate, what makes them tick. It's about assessing what's the best way of developing somebody, and working with them, to make sure the team as a whole is effective.

Why else might you change your top team?

You might be looking to do a significant transformation, for example, if the technology hasn't been changed in the last ten years. The function may have stagnated, and you need different skills. You need someone, who's done it before, to come and put a new system in.

“Knee-jerk reactions are always dangerous”

Or, you might have a finance director who's very good at producing the monthly accounts, whereas what you need is more decision support. That axis of CEO and CFO is hugely important, and if it's not functioning in the right way then it needs to change.

Why is the relationship between a new CEO and CFO so critical?

Finance are being looked at more and more for decision support, and it's about the here and now. What are the trends within the business? Many of the decisions the CEO is making about changes in the business are based on financial information.

So, to be effective the CEO needs a really good relationship with their CFO. If that doesn't exist, then that's the role that would need to be checked.

Is the HRD a useful source of information?

Assuming you've got an effective HRD, this is where they really come into their own - helping with that assessment of the senior management team. You can take the business plan, and what you're meant to be delivering, and assess the roles and responsibilities of the

management team against them. That's where the HRD can give a lot of guidance.


Is continuity ever more important than getting a perfect team in place?

Yes, particularly if you're trying to get yourself out of a difficult situation: having some knowledge and continuity could be essential in those circumstances.

Are there any common mistakes people make when changing their top team?

CEOs need to be careful about making changes too quickly. Knee-jerk reactions are always dangerous when you don't know the business. You may have been given observations on the top team by say the chairman, but you've got to make your own assessment. You're working with those people day-to-day. ■

This article expands on [Changing Your Top Team](#), in which business leaders talked about addressing people issues during the first 100 days in a new role.



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