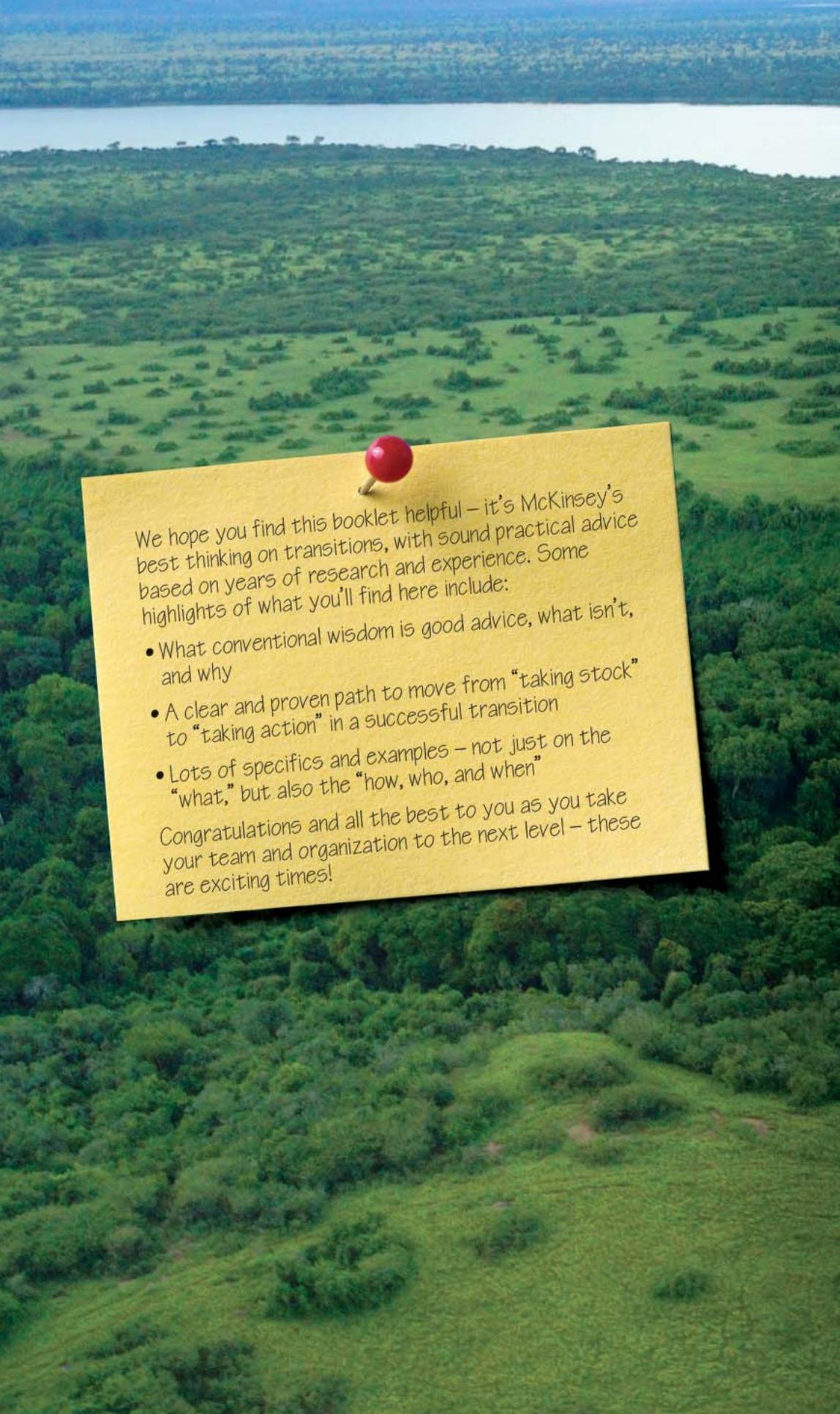




Breaking new ground

Making a successful transition
into your new executive role

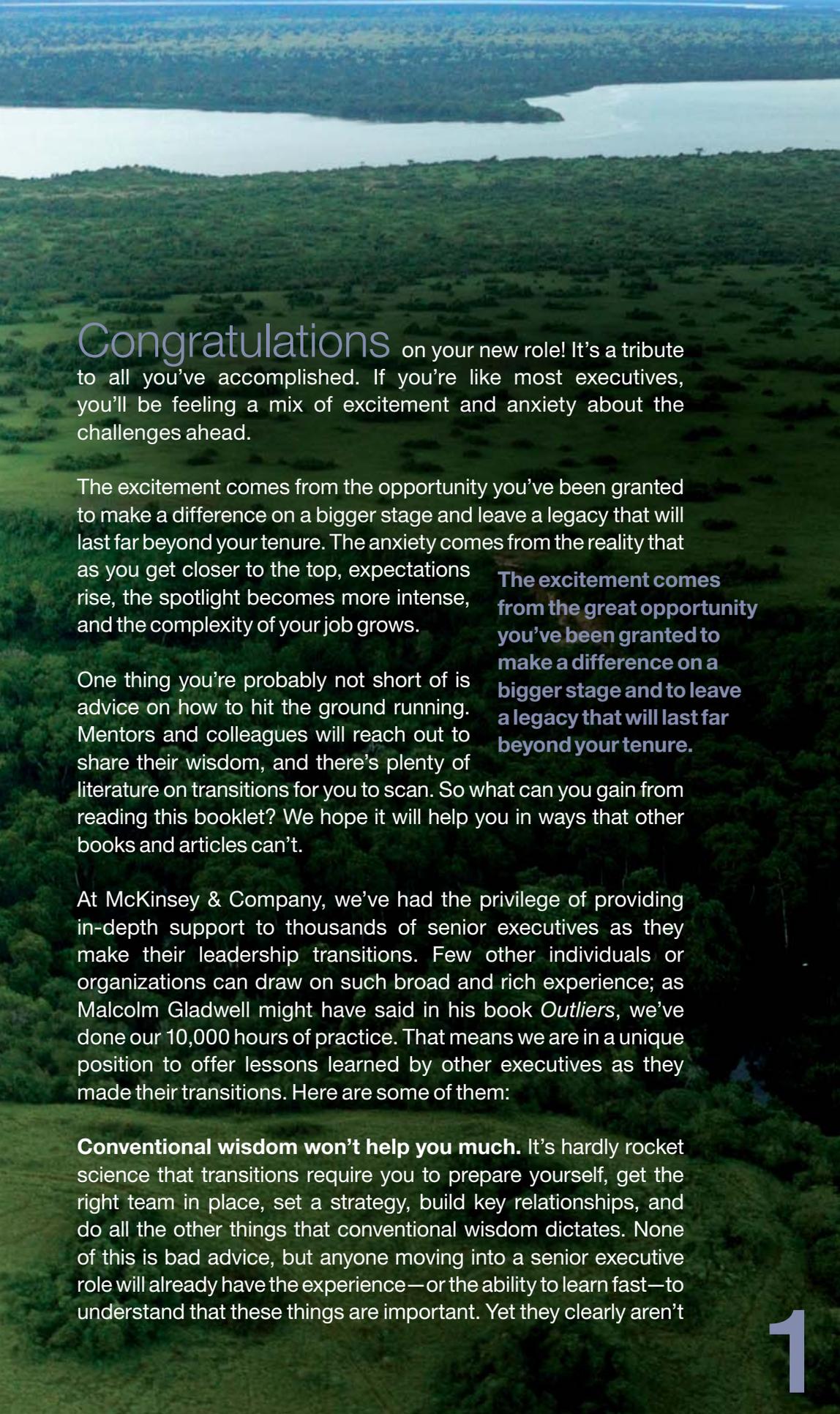
McKinsey & Company



We hope you find this booklet helpful – it's McKinsey's best thinking on transitions, with sound practical advice based on years of research and experience. Some highlights of what you'll find here include:

- What conventional wisdom is good advice, what isn't, and why
- A clear and proven path to move from "taking stock" to "taking action" in a successful transition
- Lots of specifics and examples – not just on the "what," but also the "how, who, and when"

Congratulations and all the best to you as you take your team and organization to the next level – these are exciting times!



Congratulations on your new role! It's a tribute to all you've accomplished. If you're like most executives, you'll be feeling a mix of excitement and anxiety about the challenges ahead.

The excitement comes from the opportunity you've been granted to make a difference on a bigger stage and leave a legacy that will last far beyond your tenure. The anxiety comes from the reality that as you get closer to the top, expectations rise, the spotlight becomes more intense, and the complexity of your job grows.

The excitement comes from the great opportunity you've been granted to make a difference on a bigger stage and to leave a legacy that will last far beyond your tenure.

One thing you're probably not short of is advice on how to hit the ground running. Mentors and colleagues will reach out to share their wisdom, and there's plenty of literature on transitions for you to scan. So what can you gain from reading this booklet? We hope it will help you in ways that other books and articles can't.

At McKinsey & Company, we've had the privilege of providing in-depth support to thousands of senior executives as they make their leadership transitions. Few other individuals or organizations can draw on such broad and rich experience; as Malcolm Gladwell might have said in his book *Outliers*, we've done our 10,000 hours of practice. That means we are in a unique position to offer lessons learned by other executives as they made their transitions. Here are some of them:

Conventional wisdom won't help you much. It's hardly rocket science that transitions require you to prepare yourself, get the right team in place, set a strategy, build key relationships, and do all the other things that conventional wisdom dictates. None of this is bad advice, but anyone moving into a senior executive role will already have the experience—or the ability to learn fast—to understand that these things are important. Yet they clearly aren't

enough: research shows that the failure rate among newly hired or promoted executives has stood at 40 percent for the past 15 years.¹

Knowing *how*, *when*, and *who* is as important as *what*. What goes wrong in the 40 percent of transitions that fail? It's not that executives don't appreciate what needs to be done; rather, the stumbling block lies in *how* and *when* and with *whom* they choose to act. The research is clear: 68 percent of transition failures happen because of the information new leaders use, the

sequence they follow, and the manner in which they engage others.

The failure rate among newly hired or promoted executives has stood at 40 percent for the past 15 years. Why is this?

Make your transition *impact-driven*, not *calendar-driven*. Type "executive transitions" into Amazon and you'll find a daunting

list of books offering 90-day and 100-day plans for success. They all offer much the same message: you have a limited period to get up to full productivity as a leader, and if you don't make it in time, you're doomed. Such an approach may make for good marketing, but it isn't supported by the evidence. In practice, most new leaders—92 percent of external hires and 72 percent of internal hires—take far more than 90 days to get up to full productivity. Many executives admit that it took them at least six months to achieve real impact. Instead of trying to meet arbitrary timelines, you will be far better served by taking the time you need to do the things that matter most.

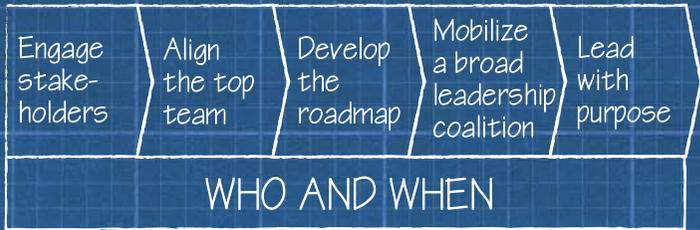
These lessons come together in the practical approach that we describe in this booklet: our high-impact transitions methodology. The key elements are outlined in Exhibit 1. Our research and experience indicate that all the elements that go to make up "how, what, who, and when" are necessary to a successful transition, though the relative emphasis you place on them will be dictated by your own specific circumstances. We would not consider any transition complete until a leader has acted on all these elements, and neither should you.

¹ The statistics on failure rates and their causes have been compiled from a number of landmark studies, including Bradford Smart, *Topgrading*, Prentice Hall, 1999; Mark Murphy, "Leadership IQ study: Why new hires fail," *Public Management*, volume 88, number 2, March 2005; "Executive transitions market study: Summary report 2008," Institute of Executive Development and Alexcel Group, 2008; George Bradt, Jayme Check, and Jorge Pedraza, *The New Leader's 100-Day Action Plan*, Wiley, 2009; and recent Gallup polls.

EXHIBIT 1

HIGH-IMPACT TRANSITIONS METHODOLOGY

		HOW	
		1. Take stock	2. Take action
WHAT	Business	1a. Identify high-impact opportunities	2a. Set strategy with execution in mind
	Culture	1b. Assess organizational dynamics	2b. Influence mindsets and behaviors
	Team	1c. Choose your team	2c. Build your team as a team
	Myself	1d. Personally get up to speed	2d. Play the role that only you can play





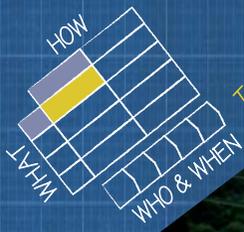
What and how

Transitions require you to come up to speed (or “take stock”) and drive impact (“take action”) in four areas: the business, the culture, your team, and you yourself in terms of how you will lead in your new role. In each of these areas there are clear best practices to help you in your transition.

1. Take stock

American football coach Vince Lombardi summed up the importance of “taking stock” when he said, “The will to win is not nearly so important as the will to prepare to win.” To prepare for success as you take up your new role, you should reflect deeply on four questions: Where are the highest-impact opportunities in my business? What are the cultural dynamics of the organization I will be leading? How strong is the team I am inheriting? What do I personally need to get smarter about in my new role? Let’s consider some practical advice on how to answer these questions.

The will to win is not nearly so important as the will to prepare to win.



Take stock:
Business

1a. Where are the highest-impact opportunities?

If you don't have them already, you will soon be handed stacks of financial information and key performance indicators that show how your business or function is doing. Approach them with skepticism! As a new leader, it's vital that you don't take for granted that these numbers a) are the right indicators of performance, b) are the set of numbers everyone agrees are

Make sure you establish one set of baseline numbers that a) are true indicators of performance, b) are agreed upon by your stakeholders, c) give you strategic insight into trends affecting future performance.

accurate and representative, and c) provide strategic insight into trends that will affect future performance. Instead, we suggest that you recast this information from the point of view of value drivers to give you the best possible insight into current performance and gaps.

How does this look in practice? Consider the experience of a new chief information officer who was handed a hefty binder detailing thousands of technical and operational metrics that were religiously tracked each month and led to the happy headline of "we are a top-quartile performer." One of the first tasks the CIO sanctioned was to recast the numbers to reflect value added to the customer and the company in terms of information security, availability, service quality, cost, and other criteria, and to include feedback from internal customers. Seen through this lens, performance was revealed as far from top quartile. Acting quickly, the CIO replaced the binder with a three-page scorecard that focused the organization on a shortlist of key performance indicators and freed up massive amounts of employee time and energy.

In another case, the incoming leader of a business unit was given a set of reports that showed the company was growing, customer retention was among the best in the industry, and the unit was earning a respectable operating income. However, once performance was seen from a value-driver view, the positive spin turned out to be a mirage. Recent growth was fueled by acquisitions in non-core markets that would dilute value in the long term, the customer base had a long unprofitable tail, and operating income was calculated through a unique algorithm that added back internal transfers for services provided by other areas. Only after the organization agreed on one set of numbers that represented the true performance of the unit could real progress be made.

In addition to taking a value-driver view of the numbers, you would be well advised to ensure you have a grip on the external trends that could affect future performance. That will enable you to adjust trend lines and market forecasts to changing contexts. As a cautionary tale, consider the new leader of a retail division who based its growth plan on an analysis of historic results and decided to ramp up the number of new store openings. Meanwhile, more nimble competitors had started to invest in developing their online offerings, picking up on trends in adjacent industries that were shifting from analog to digital channels in response to widespread customer adoption of tablets and smartphones. Before long it became clear that the new leader had missed the emerging trend and invested too heavily in a store network that was rapidly becoming unprofitable.

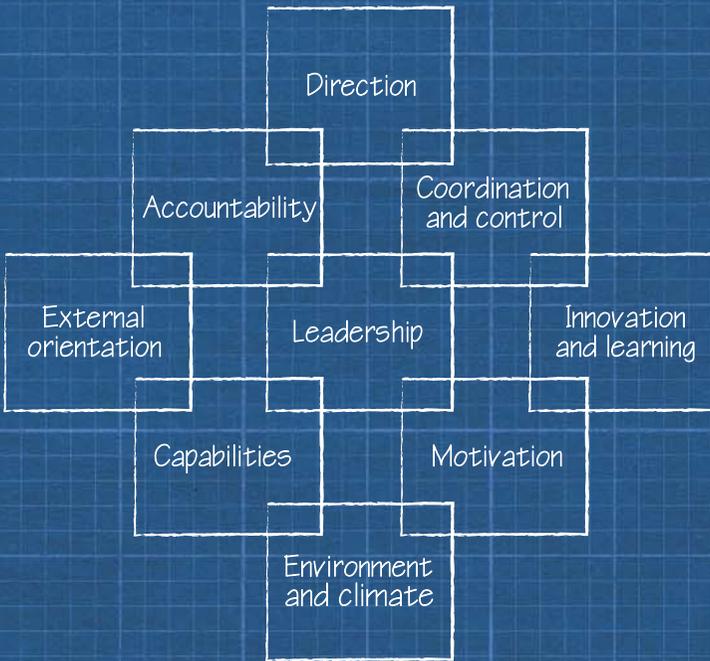
How to find high-impact opportunities

- Cast performance information from a value-driver perspective to get a true reading of performance
- Identify the external trends and competitive positions that will affect performance in the next three to five years
- Align your team and organization on how the business is performing and where the high-impact opportunities lie.

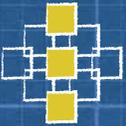
EXHIBIT 2

THE OHI IS A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY THAT MEASURES ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

NINE DIMENSIONS UNDERPIN ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH...

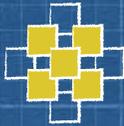


...AND MEASURE THE ABILITY TO ALIGN, EXECUTE AND RENEW



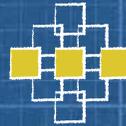
ALIGNMENT

Are people at all levels aligned around the organization's vision, strategy, culture, and values?



EXECUTION

How does the organization execute in accordance with its strategy? Can it perform essential tasks with its current capabilities and motivation level?



RENEWAL

How does the organization understand, interact with, and adapt to its situation and external environment?

1b. What are the cultural dynamics of the organization I will be leading?

Research has established that 70 percent of change efforts fail, and that most of these failures are due to cultural factors. New leaders should put just as much rigor and discipline into understanding their cultural starting point as they do into understanding their business performance.

New leaders should put just as much rigor and discipline into understanding their cultural starting point as they do into understanding their business performance.

There is more to this than just asking around and looking at annual employee engagement or satisfaction surveys, since these have little to do with the aspects of culture that actually drive performance. Instead, we suggest that leaders use a tool that has been created specifically for this purpose: the organizational health index (OHI).² The OHI uses a combination of surveys and analytical techniques to measure all the key aspects of culture that drive alignment on direction, quality of execution, and the ability to innovate, adapt, and renew over time (Exhibit 2). And what you can measure, you can then manage.

The importance of the elements that make up the OHI for greater clarity has been established through rigorous analysis. At the company level, research reveals that those in the top quartile of organizational health are 2.2 times more likely than lower-quartile companies to have above-median EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). Across all measures of business performance, correlation coefficients indicate that roughly 50 percent of performance variation between companies is accounted for by differences in organizational health.

Within companies, the same holds true. For example, a large multinational oil company analyzed correlations between performance and organizational health across 16 refineries and found that organizational health accounted for 54 percent of the variation in performance. These findings are hardly surprising—

² More details on organizational health and the research underpinning it can be found in Scott Keller and Colin Price, *Beyond Performance: How great organizations build ultimate competitive advantage*, Wiley, 2011.



we know from our own experience that the healthier you are, the better you can perform.

Consider the new leader of an HR function whose people prided themselves on being the guardians of the organization's culture. Although traditional employee satisfaction scores were high, a diagnostic using the OHI revealed bottom-quartile scores in important areas such as operational management, bottom-up innovation, career opportunities, and role clarity. What's more, the group had long considered themselves role models of good performance management, yet the analysis showed that virtually everyone in the function was rated "very good" or "distinctive."

Digging deeper, interviews and focus groups revealed the root cause of the lack of differentiation: an ingrained tendency to avoid conflict. Armed with these insights into the organization's dynamics, the new leader had a powerful platform from which to drive much-needed change. If HR couldn't establish a healthy culture of challenge in its own function, how could it enable the wider organization to do so?

As this example suggests, looking through the OHI lens enables organizations to probe beneath the surface of observable behaviors into underlying mindsets. For example, an OHI diagnostic helped the new business-unit leader of an integrated



multi-business company understand that its cross-selling strategy would be thwarted by its prevailing mindset of “We win by adopting industry best practices.” To succeed with the new strategy, the organization needed a new mindset: “We win by providing customers with a full suite of products and services—an offering our mono-line competitors can’t match.”

Similarly, an OHI diagnostic helped a new head of sales see how his strategy to increase customer needs profiling was being watered down by the prevailing sales culture. The attitude that “We serve customers best by giving them what they want; additional questions are a burden” needed to be replaced by “We serve customers best by helping them understand their unarticulated needs.”

How to assess your organization’s cultural dynamics

- Establish a measurable baseline for your organization’s culture
- Identify prevailing mindsets that shape employees’ behaviors
- Articulate the shifts in mindsets and behaviors needed to drive improved performance.



1c. How strong is the team I am inheriting?

By far the most common regret we hear from leaders reflecting on their transition is “I wish I’d moved people on sooner to put my own team in place.” That said, you’d do well to ignore suggestions that are neither helpful nor fact-based, such as “You should

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replace 50 percent of your team if you want to be successful.” So how do you know who to move on, and when?

The first step in answering this question is to assess where each team member fits into a matrix of “performance” and “shared values,” or simply “skill” vs. “will.” Blockers and allies will be easy to see. But what should you do with the big group in the middle? We suggest you ask yourself the following questions:



- Do they have a clear understanding of what's expected of them?
- Do they have visible role models of what “good” looks like?
- Are their rewards and consequences aligned with the behaviors and results we expect from them?
- Have they had opportunities to address any skill gaps they may have?

If the answer to these questions is “no,” you’d do well to ensure that appropriate expectations, role models, incentives, and training are put in place so that you can judge your team members’ true potential. If the answers to the questions is “yes” and you still aren’t getting the performance and behaviors you are looking for, then these individuals aren’t of the caliber you need on your team.



The good news is that most leaders are pleasantly surprised by how quickly they can win the “war for the middle” by establishing the right supporting mechanisms. Consider the new leader of an operations function who inherited two team members that everyone had written off as waiting to retire. Instead of adopting a knee-jerk response, the new leader took the time to understand that the company’s compensation structure gave the pair little incentive to excel. What’s more, they had never been given candid feedback on how they were performing against expectations. Once these barriers were overcome, colleagues were delighted to see how quickly the pair were able to put their deep experience to good use in leading the function forward.

The second step in assessing the strength of your new team is to be clear about the mix of skills and perspectives you need and how it compares with what you’ve got. Even when you have strong players on your team, you may still need to bring in new talent.

At one company, the incoming head of risk looked at his team’s profile and realized that although they had deep skills in managing credit and operational risk, a recent industry crisis meant they now needed strong reputational risk management skills as well. By acting quickly, he was able to recruit a valuable new executive from another industry that had gone through similar reputational challenges.

Similarly, an incoming chief marketing officer quickly concluded that while her team was well equipped with traditional marketing skills, she needed to bring in fresh expertise to build her bench strength in the less familiar areas of social media and digital marketing.

How to choose your team

- Identify supporters and energize them; identify blockers and move them out
- Galvanize the fence-sitters by setting clear expectations, acting as a role model, coaching, and aligning incentives
- Hire in the skills and capabilities and make the structural changes you need to support future performance.



WHAT HOW
WHO & WHEN
Take stock: Myself

1d. What do I personally need to get smarter about in my new role?

We recommend that early on you make a point of understanding what stakeholders expect of you, get your “dumb” questions answered (discreetly), and go and see what’s actually happening in the business.

Your key stakeholders include your boss, important internal and external customers, peers you collaborate closely with, community groups, regulators, and so on. What do they see as your mandate? What are they wanting you to change? What are they hoping you *won't* change? What degrees of freedom do they see you have? What timeframes are important to them? When you first meet them, stay in listening mode to hear what their expectations are; once you know more, come back and spend time shaping what their expectations should be.

Understand what stakeholders expect of you, get your dumb questions answered (discreetly), and go and see what’s actually happening in the business.

To see why this is so important, consider the case of a new leader who was charged with returning her business unit to profitability. After taking stock of the situation, she approached her boss with a sustainable plan. She was clear that year 1 activities would lay the foundation for profitability, but positive numbers shouldn’t be expected until year 2. At the end of the first year, when results were still sub-par, she continued to have strong support from her boss and peers because the unit’s performance was meeting the expectations she had set. True to the plan, profitability was restored by the end of year 2, and this positive trajectory continued throughout her tenure.

Getting smarter also involves finding discreet ways to acquire the knowledge you’ll need for your new job. Don’t ever feel you have to know everything or have all the answers at your fingertips, but do invest time in understanding the technical aspects of your

role, especially if you are entering a function or line of business that is new to you.

When an executive without the usual finance background was appointed as chief finance officer, he had a series of brown-bag lunches with a technical expert two levels down in the organization to get smart about the technicalities of the company's financial hedging processes. A new chief marketing officer filled a gap in her knowledge by asking a recent young recruit for reverse mentoring to learn about trends in social media. An executive who had been headhunted from outside drew on insights from the company's long-standing consulting partner to understand the unwritten rules of the culture and how to navigate them. A new country manager joining from overseas held several dinners with the previous incumbent to understand the nuances of the local culture.

Finally, there is no substitute for what the Japanese call *genchi genbutsu*, or “go and see.” Before we can understand a situation fully, we need to observe where and how the work gets done. This means going to the factory floor, the call center, the retail outlet, or whatever the frontline setting is to observe and meet the people who are doing the actual work.

Being on the ground not only tells you what's happening but also makes your judgments and decisions more credible. When the new leader of a distributed sales network paid a visit to every sales center in her first three months in the job, she noticed the wide variations in how account managers used the company's technology platform and other central resources. Later, she was able to talk about what she had observed to illustrate the changes she wanted to see, making employees feel more confident in and motivated by her new strategy.

How to get up to speed

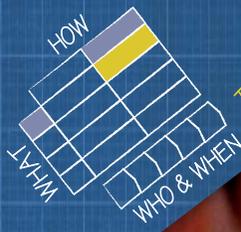
- Understand and shape key stakeholders' expectations
- Acquire any technical knowledge and skills you need
- Spend time in the field to understand how frontline operations work.

2. Take action

Now you've taken stock, you need to start getting things done. As the German writer Goethe said, "Knowledge is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do." The four most important actions in an executive transition are setting strategy with execution in mind, influencing mindsets and behaviors, building your team as a team, and playing the role that only you can play.

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."





2a. Set strategy with execution in mind

A well-executed “good enough” strategy will beat a poorly executed brilliant strategy every time.

It’s axiomatic that a well-executed “good enough” strategy will beat a poorly executed brilliant strategy every time. What many leaders don’t realize until too late, however, is that the will to execute can and should be developed from day 1 of the direction-setting process.

One way to do this is to build extra variables into that process. Most leaders set direction with reference to a fact-based view of market opportunities: which growth segments, trends in profit pools, customer and consumer insights, competitive positioning, and so on. But few leaders take the trouble to assemble facts about the institutional capabilities they need to capture these opportunities, or compare these desired capabilities with those that already exist in the organization.

Ignoring this variable can sabotage execution. Consider the new business leader who pursued a product-bundling strategy without ensuring his team had the pricing and merchandising expertise to execute it profitably. Conversely, taking the practicalities of execution into account can actually expand your strategic options. The new head of government relations at one



company recognized that its sales force possessed consummate relationship-building skills, and took advantage of this talent to build relationships with politicians in the nation's capital.

Even fewer leaders take into account a third variable—employee passion—as they set strategy, but those that do tend to be among the most successful. Once you've drawn up a list of strategies that match your market opportunities and institutional capabilities, consider which of them will also get people excited. It isn't hard to get a sense of where your employees' passions lie; just ask them when you are out in the field getting to know the organization. What's more, today's leaders can take advantage of advances in social media technologies to put their fingers on the pulse of employee sentiment on a much bigger scale than ever before.

One new leader was faced with the challenge of stable growth and maturing markets in his business unit. As well as asking the strategy function to identify growth ideas, he used the company's employee chat portal to host a dialogue to identify the next big thing for the business unit. Over two weeks, the online event generated nearly 800 ideas from 9,000 employees in 20 countries. The leader and his top team considered the strength of excitement around the ideas as well as the ideas themselves when choosing a priority list of 15 initiatives to launch.

Another way to lay the groundwork for superior execution during direction setting is to engage a broad leadership coalition in the process. A famous experiment by the economist Daniel Kahneman illustrates the underlying principle:

Researchers ran a lottery with a twist. Half the participants were given a lottery ticket with a random number printed on it. The other half were asked to choose their own number and write it on a blank ticket. Before drawing the winner, researchers offered to buy back the tickets. They wanted to find out whether there would be any difference in the price demanded by the people who had been handed a number and those who had chosen a number for themselves. Given that a lottery is pure chance, it would be rational to assume that there would be little or no difference. The real answer? Researchers had to pay at least five times more to those who wrote their own number.

The result of the experiment reveals an important truth about human nature: when we choose for ourselves, we are far more committed to the outcome. That doesn't mean you should let everyone decide their own direction, but it does mean enabling a broad group of people to feel personally involved in setting the direction—or at least choosing the implications—for their own area.

An important truth about human nature: when we choose for ourselves, we are far more committed to the outcome.

One new business-unit leader applied this principle by holding three separate multi-day offsite sessions for his top 100 leaders during his first four months in the role. The first offsite was intended to hold up a mirror to reality—the external context, the value-driver view of the business, and the cultural baseline—so that the group could roll up their sleeves and draft a statement of direction. During the second offsite, the group developed a portfolio of strategic initiatives to implement across the business and made personal commitments to them. In the third offsite, the group honed their skills at leading change to create the desired culture.

By the end of the process, each of the top 100 leaders felt they had been able to write their own lottery ticket. What's more, the process was then cascaded through the organization in a series

of one-day workshops that gave employees at all levels a chance to understand the direction and help set the agenda for their area of work and their role in making change happen.

How to set strategy with execution in mind

- Take into account your existing institutional capabilities and employees' passions
- Put in place any infrastructure you need to support your initiatives
- Involve a broad leadership coalition in setting direction.



2b. Influence mindsets and behaviors

The strategy you pursue is bound to require some degree of mindset and behavior change among leaders and employees. Typical shifts include a sharper customer focus, more collaboration, better performance management, stronger risk management, and so on. You will already have identified these shifts while taking stock of your organization's culture, but how

How do you go about making cultural changes rapidly and at scale? Fortunately, a playbook exists for this very purpose.

do you actually go about making them happen rapidly and at scale?

Fortunately, a playbook exists for this very purpose. We have boiled down years of research and experience into four levers that can reshape your organization: a compelling story, reinforcement mechanisms, skills required for change, and role modeling (Exhibit 3). By using these four levers together, you can put in place a powerful and proven system to encourage the behaviors you want to see.³

Approached in the right way, such interventions shouldn't make people feel they need to "do more things"; instead, they become part of "doing things differently" as they are incorporated into existing performance improvement initiatives. When one new operations leader adopted lean methods across the unit, he used the business-improvement processes not only to take cost out, but also to instill the desired culture. For example, *kaizen* events (problem-solving sessions used to improve the way people work in lean organizations) not only empowered frontline employees to use their ideas to improve operations but also tackled cultural issues such as increasing trust between the front line and management.

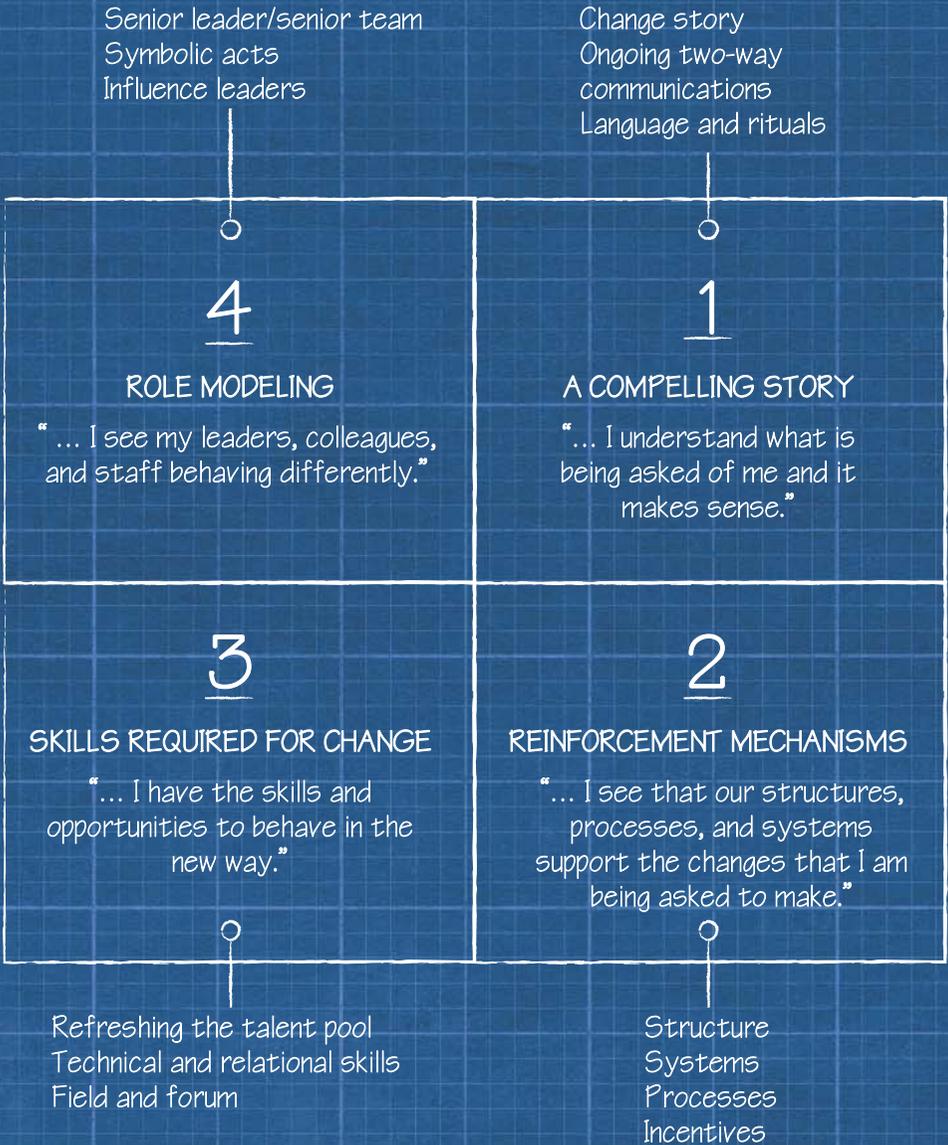
Similarly, lean training programs weren't confined to technical skills but explored emotional intelligence and how individuals could connect their work to their personal legacy. The change story spoke of how leaders and frontline employees should live the new values, as well as bringing to life the changes that the transformation would bring. Incentive programs were adjusted

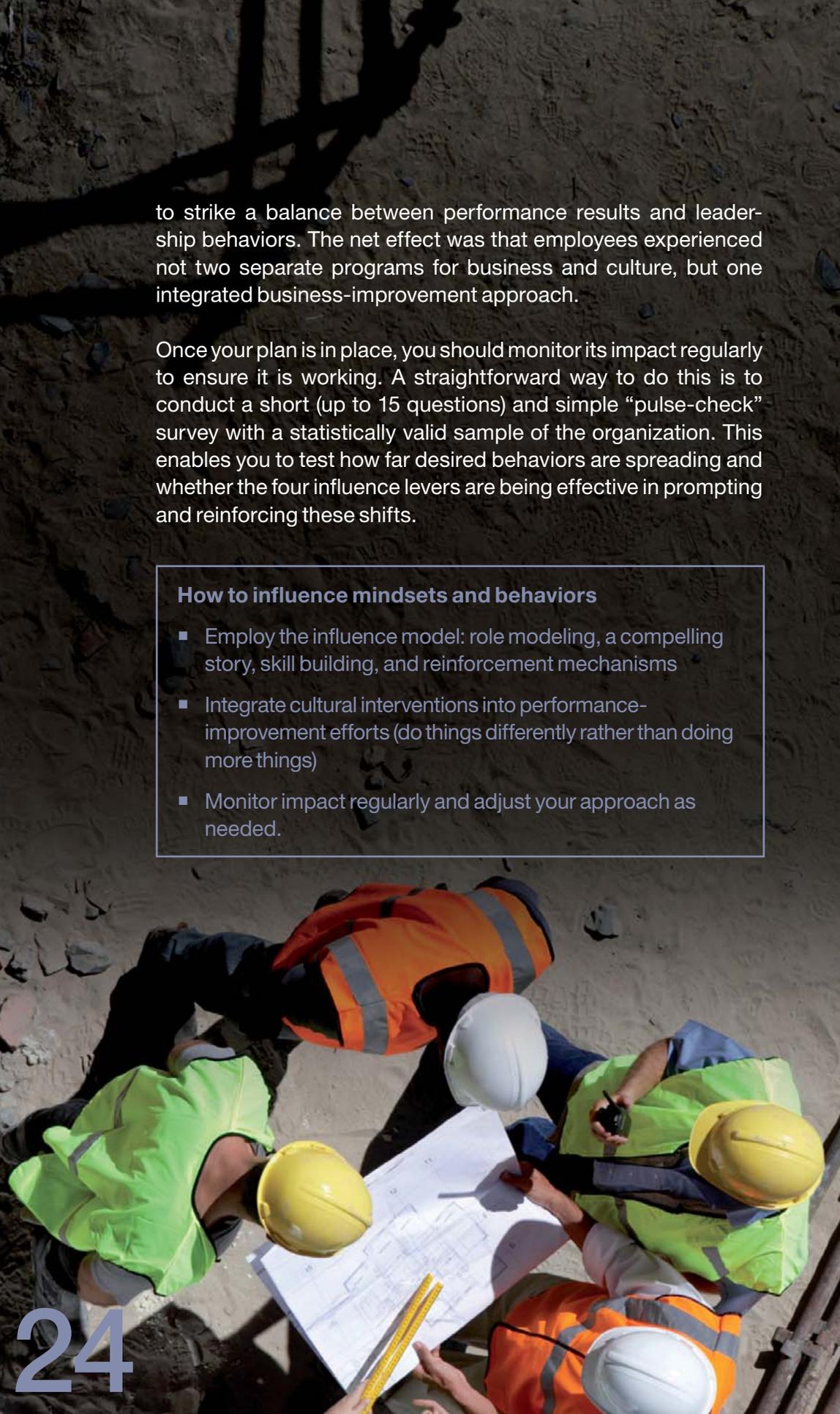
³ More details on influencing mindsets and behaviors can be found in Scott Keller and Colin Price, *Beyond Performance: How great organizations build ultimate competitive advantage*, Wiley, 2011, and Carolyn Aiken and Scott Keller, "The irrational side of change management," *McKinsey Quarterly*, April 2009.

EXHIBIT 3

INFLUENCING MINDSETS AND BEHAVIOURS

"I CHOOSE TO CHANGE MY MINDSET AND BEHAVIOR IF ..."





to strike a balance between performance results and leadership behaviors. The net effect was that employees experienced not two separate programs for business and culture, but one integrated business-improvement approach.

Once your plan is in place, you should monitor its impact regularly to ensure it is working. A straightforward way to do this is to conduct a short (up to 15 questions) and simple “pulse-check” survey with a statistically valid sample of the organization. This enables you to test how far desired behaviors are spreading and whether the four influence levers are being effective in prompting and reinforcing these shifts.

How to influence mindsets and behaviors

- Employ the influence model: role modeling, a compelling story, skill building, and reinforcement mechanisms
- Integrate cultural interventions into performance-improvement efforts (do things differently rather than doing more things)
- Monitor impact regularly and adjust your approach as needed.



2c. Build your team as a team

Once you have your team of all stars, it's time to build them into an all-star team. But what does it actually mean to be a high-performing team, and how can you tell when you've got one? You don't need fancy frameworks; in fact, a simple approach is better. You can use the following questions as your litmus test:

- Are we aligned on our direction? (Take into account the external context, emerging trends, strategy, culture, goals, operational implications, and so on.)
- Do we have a high quality of interaction? (That means trust, open communication, and constructive conflict.)
- Are we strongly motivated to work together to improve our business or function? (We need to feel that our work together matters and that we are learning, growing, and making a difference.)

These simple questions can help you and your team reflect on how you are doing and take actions to address issues.

When it comes to building your team, skip “team-building” exercises such as rope courses and trust falls. A team gels best when its members do real work together and feel a shared sense of meaning and accomplishment. This doesn't mean sitting in the same room while each member reads out their operating reviews (keep that for a one-on-one meeting); instead, get them working on the things only they can do together, such as direction setting, capital allocation, shaping culture, identifying and capturing synergies, managing bench strength, and developing leaders.

Skip “team-building” exercises such as rope courses and trust falls. A team gels best when its members do real work together and feel a shared sense of meaning and accomplishment.

In the early stages it pays dividends for a team to spend substantial amounts of time—hours or even days—working together in person in properly prepared and well-facilitated sessions. By investing this time upfront, the group can get comfortable enough to share information freely, voice construc-



tive criticism, embrace diverse points of view, respect others' backgrounds, good will, and competence, and ensure that underlying assumptions behind high-level agreements are harmonized.

When one new business-line leader broached the idea of going away for an offsite, he was surprised by the negative reaction, and discovered that his team was known for being dysfunctional and that past HR-led interventions to help its members work together better had failed. Once at the offsite, however, the team asked the simple questions above and took the time to discuss issues fully. They quickly realized that their lack of mutual trust was caused by differences in their interpretations of what mattered for the business and what their area was expected to contribute to it.

The breakthrough came when each team member was asked to write down his or her top five priorities for the business. When the team compared their lists, it turned out they had identified not five but 33 priorities between them, and there were no priorities that appeared on everyone's list. It was hardly surprising that previous interventions, such as playing golf and discussing personality types, had made no difference. Team members hadn't realized that their views of what mattered for the business differed so widely. That explained why other people's day-to-day actions sometimes seemed incompatible with company priorities, and why trust had broken down so badly.

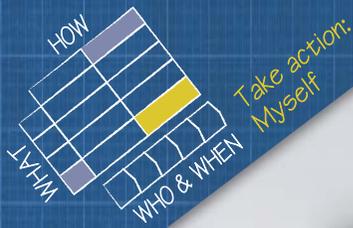


As you build your formal team, think too about who will make up your informal team. Who are your unofficial advisors—your sounding board and source of discreet advice? Who will keep you informed of the word on the street? Who can offer unfiltered praise and criticism grounded in a knowledge of who you are and what you are trying to achieve?

For some leaders, the answer might be one or two people they have grown up with professionally. For others, it might be an outsider who knows the company well but can tell it like it is because they aren't part of its culture or politics. For yet others, it might be a trusted peer from another part of the organization. Many leaders rely on a mix of all three, though most opt to keep their inner circle relatively small.

How to build your team as a team

- Get your senior team to agree on what a high-performing team looks like, and gauge progress regularly
- Focus your senior team by getting them to do the work that only they can do together
- As well as building your formal team, cultivate an informal team to use as a sounding board and source of discreet advice.



2d. Play the role that only you can play

The higher up the management ladder you go, the more powerful the amplification that happens between what you do and say and how it's heard by the rest of the organization. Like it or not, you are the chief story teller, über role model, master architect, lead performance manager, and chief coach for your business. With

It's important you are thoughtful and deliberate about what you spend your time doing—and not doing.

so much attention focused on you, it's important you are thoughtful and deliberate about what you spend your time doing—and not doing.

Start by knowing yourself. What do you want other people to say about you as a leader? What stamp do you want to leave on your company?

What will it take for your business to succeed? What gives you energy, and what drains it away? What are you good (and bad) at? What behavior will you not tolerate from those around you? What lifestyle tradeoffs are you willing (and not willing) to make? You should be able to answer these questions with clarity and conviction.

You'll also need to decide where you can make the biggest difference. Where will you roll up your sleeves and get involved in solving problems? Where do you draw the line between matters that only you should decide and those that can be delegated to others? How will you hold people accountable, and what will their rewards and consequences be? What are the most powerful symbolic acts you can take to inspire actions in others? Once you've answered the questions, it's up to you and your assistant to make sure your calendar reflects these priorities and preferences so that you use your time to achieve the greatest possible impact. The choices made by the business head of a retail network offer a good example. When an initial diagnostic revealed there were significant opportunities in supply-chain

management, she decided she would personally sign off on the budget for every new store opening. Onerous though this proved to be, it enabled her to coach her team and role model how she expected such decisions to be made, and sent a broader message to the organization about the importance of being on top of the numbers and managing costs. It also took advantage of her strong background in finance and negotiation and allowed her to add real value.

There was one catch, however. The leader lacked the self-awareness to realize she had a natural aversion to risk and believed she could do the job better than anyone else, making it difficult for her to relinquish control. Two years later she was still managing in the same fashion. What started as a powerful symbolic act that saved the company money had turned into habitual micro-management that disempowered her team. By this point, other leaders and employees had learned what they needed to do to adopt a more cost-oriented mindset.

This example illustrates one last point for new executives as they start to make an impact in their role. It's important to guard against hubris—the tendency for people in powerful positions to become over-confident. If you find yourself feeling excessively proud, not wanting to listen to your critics, surrounding yourself with yes people, refusing feedback on how you are doing, and refusing to adjust your path as the context changes or new information emerges, you could be about to sabotage your own success. Steve Jobs advised college graduates to “Stay hungry, stay foolish”; we would advise executives in transition to “Stay hungry, stay humble.”

How to play the role that only you can play

- Know what you are good at, what gives you energy, and what you expect of others
- Decide where to spend your time and where to delegate so that you can make the biggest possible difference
- Continue to learn and grow even as you succeed, guarding against complacency and hubris.

EXHIBIT 4

COMPLETENESS CHECK FOR HIGH-IMPACT TRANSITIONS

		HOW	
		1. Take stock	
WHAT	Business	<p>1a. Have I looked at value-driver analyses and external trends to identify where high-impact opportunities exist?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have I cast performance data from a value-driver perspective to get a true reading of performance? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I identified the external trends and competitive positions that will affect performance in the next three to five years? <input type="checkbox"/> Are my team and organization aligned on how the business is performing and where the high-impact opportunities lie? 	
	Culture	<p>1b. Have I rigorously assessed the cultural dynamics of my organization?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have I established a measurable baseline for my organization's culture? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I identified the prevailing mindsets that shape employees' behaviors? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I articulated the shifts in mindsets and behaviors that will drive improved performance? 	
	Team	<p>1c. Have I put the right team in place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have I identified supporters and energized them, and identified blockers and moved them out? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I galvanized the fence-sitters by setting clear expectations, acting as a role model, coaching, and aligning incentives? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I hired in the skills and capabilities and make the structural changes I need to support future performance? 	
	Myself	<p>1d. Have I done what it takes to get up to speed in my new role?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have I understood and shaped key stakeholders' expectations? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I acquired the technical knowledge and skills I need? <input type="checkbox"/> Have I spent time in the field to understand how frontline operations work? 	

HOW

2. Take action

2a. Have we shaped a clear, execution-oriented strategy that people feel they own?

- Have we taken into account our existing institutional capabilities and employees' passions in setting strategy?
- Have we put in place any infrastructure we need to support our initiatives?
- Have we involved a broad leadership coalition in setting direction?

Business

2b. Am I influencing the necessary shifts in mindsets and behaviors at scale?

- Am I using role modeling, a compelling story, skill building, and reinforcement mechanisms?
- Am I integrating cultural interventions into performance-improvement efforts to do things differently rather than do more things?
- Am I monitoring impact regularly and adjusting our approach as needed?

Culture

2c. Is my team becoming a high-performing team?

- Have we agreed on what a high-performing team looks like, and do we gauge our progress regularly?
- Does my team stay focused on doing the work that only we can do together?
- Have I also cultivated an informal team to use as a sounding board and source of discreet advice?

Team

2d. Am I playing the role that only I can play?

- Do I know what I am good at, what gives me energy, and what I expect of others?
- Do I know where to spend my time and where to delegate to make the biggest possible difference?
- Am I continuing to learn and grow even as I succeed, guarding against complacency and hubris?

Myself

WHAT



Who and when

Now you know about best practices in high-impact executive transitions. But what practical steps should you take to adopt them at your organization? How do the various elements fit together? What should you tackle first? What timing should you aim for?

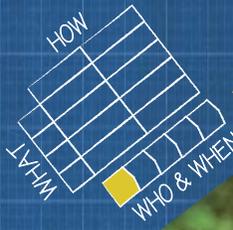
What should you tackle first? What timing should you aim for?

As you'd no doubt expect, there is no "one size fits all" answer; the right process for you will depend on your specific context. That said, there is a general pattern of activity that we have witnessed in most successful transitions, and it can be best explained by way of an example.

Let's look at the transition of Martin, a senior leader at a European financial services company. Martin started his career in the finance department of its retail banking unit and moved quickly through the ranks by taking on a series of increasingly challenging corporate roles. He then moved departments to become head of strategy, where he led a cross-business effort to improve customer experience and managed the integration of a major acquisition.

Martin's career trajectory had been closely observed by the company's leadership, and he was now regarded as a serious contender for a more senior position in the organization. In order to prove his worth, he would need to demonstrate that he could run a successful business unit, and so he was asked to replace the retiring leader of the company's insurance brokerage business. Although he'd had contact with the business in his corporate roles, he knew little about how its operation worked, but he was all too aware of its reputation as a weak performer.

Martin's journey to take stock and take action on the business, the culture, his team, and himself as a leader took shape in five stages: engaging stakeholders, aligning the top team, developing the roadmap, mobilizing a broad leadership coalition, and leading with purpose—deciding how he'd spend his time and energy to make the biggest possible difference.



Engage stakeholders

As soon as Martin found out about his new role, he immersed himself in the insurance brokerage business. He spent time with the outgoing leader to understand her view of the history of the organization and its future priorities, listening carefully while bearing in mind that performance was below par during her tenure. He organized a Saturday session with third-party experts to get primed on industry dynamics, best practices, and value creation in the context of a bank-owned insurer. In addition, he met up with a couple of colleagues from earlier in his career who now worked in the insurance brokerage business, and he started to get to know the team he was inheriting.

Once in the role, Martin began to engage the organization, spending a lot of time in the field visiting its regional offices. While there, he met high-performing employees individually to get their advice on what needed to change and what didn't, and spent time getting to know the broader office. He also met key customer accounts to hear their hopes and concerns.



To connect with employees throughout the organization, Martin began a weekly blog to share his reflections on what he was hearing and thinking. This also served to set a tone of transparency, which had been lacking under the previous leadership. During an early staff meeting with his team, he held a “getting to know you” Q&A session so that they could understand why he took the role, know what kind of transition process he had in mind, and learn a bit more about him as a leader and a person.

Six weeks into his new job, Martin announced a restructuring of the business, the early retirement of two executives, and the creation of three new roles.

At the same time, Martin asked a small team to pull together a baseline analysis of the company’s business performance and culture, with a focus on value drivers. He met the team every week to get updates on its findings as they emerged. Armed with this information and the experience he had gained in the field, Martin identified which leaders weren’t going to make the cut and what changes to the organization structure would help the business. Six weeks into his new job, Martin announced a restructuring of the business, the early retirement of two executives, and the creation of three new roles.





Align the top team

Ten weeks into his job, Martin brought his top team together for an offsite session lasting two and a half days. By now he had filled two of the new roles with people he trusted from past experience, and an external search was under way for the other position. In advance of the session, team members were sent baseline information about the business so that they could use their time together productively to focus on the work that only they could do. They also had to answer questions about how far they agreed with the strengths and opportunities identified by the diagnostic, and what the implications might be. This pre-work was then synthesized by a small working team, who organized the agenda to confirm and celebrate areas where the top team was already in agreement and focus discussion on areas of misalignment.

The session began with Martin putting a few stakes in the ground to guide the direction-setting process. Through personal introspection and discussions with a small informal group of advisors, he had reached a set of convictions about the business, and needed the team's support for them: "We will operate as a bank-owned business, not a standalone company," "We will be disciplined in our segmentation rather than being everything to everyone," and "We will show we can grow organically, and only then consider further acquisitions."

Martin was followed by his boss, Kim, whom he had asked to help create a burning platform for change. She sent a clear message to the team that the days of investing this year in the vain hope of a pay-off next year were gone for good.

The next part of the session was devoted to answering the team's questions about the baseline analysis. Taking a value-driver view had shed light on several areas of opportunity. The business's 12 percent compound revenue growth was being driven by dilutive acquisitions. It had more than 270 different compensation plans in place across the sales force, and even in periods of declining revenues, the overall pay structure remained high. A lack of consistency in the use of shared services created a duplication

of resources at central and local levels. Cross-selling rates to customers of other parts of the company were low. The insurance operation had 2,300 active supplier contracts, which incurred substantial legal and administrative costs and failed to take advantage of volume discounts and operational efficiencies.

To help the team engage and interact with these findings, they were presented like paintings in an art gallery. Team members walked past a series of posters of diagnostic data while the working team that had put them together acted as guides and interpreters.

An experienced facilitator then guided the team through a series of discussions to help them reach agreement on performance goals such as margin growth, cross-sell rates, and customer satisfaction, and a set of transformational business initiatives that would take place only if the team committed to working together to make them happen. These initiatives included defining a customer-segmentation strategy, optimizing technology resources, standardizing office models and compensation structures, and creating more integrated partnerships with other businesses in the company.

The second day of the offsite was devoted to exploring the priority initiatives in more detail, including measures of success, milestones, working teams, and governance; ensuring that the team was clear on how the new organization was meant to work in terms of decision rights, key performance indicators, and interdependencies; and discussing the culture that would be needed to enable the business to achieve its objectives. The team was shown data revealing that most employees had limiting beliefs that would need to be tackled. For instance, many employees felt that being part of a larger financial services institution inhibited the insurance operation's performance rather than giving it a competitive advantage. They lacked trust in the capabilities of colleagues outside their own department, and there was a widespread belief that "Everything else (including margin) takes care of itself as long as revenue is growing." There was also a perceived lack of alignment on a clear and compelling direction. The discussion then turned to practical changes

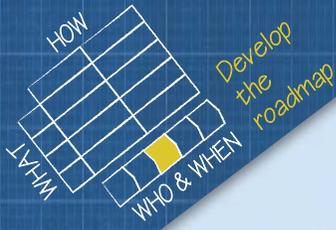
that needed to be made to shift these mindsets and behaviors through role modeling, story telling, reinforcing mechanisms, and skill building.

In the last half day of the session, the team developed an approach for taking the work forward, tackling questions such as how and when would the new direction be communicated? When would a broader leadership group be engaged in more detail? What should they talk about (and not talk about) back at the office?

The team reached agreement on their operating rhythm and norms, including how they would monitor their performance. Toward the end of the session, they evaluated themselves on their level of alignment, the quality of their interaction, and how energized they felt about what had been decided. This allowed them to identify what worked well and what didn't so that they could make adjustments for future sessions. The session closed with the team members talking about what the new direction meant for them personally and what others could count on them to do in the future.

The change story was written by the top team during the first session, tapping into the power of the “write your own lottery ticket” approach.

Over the course of the two and a half days, the team also started to capture the decisions they were making in the form of a change story. At mealtimes team members were handed a copy of the story so far and asked to rate whether it captured the conversation and represented the right answer for the company on a scale of 1 to 10. If it didn't score 10, what needed to change in order for it to do so? Thus the change story was written and revised by the top team during that first offsite session, tapping into the power of the “write your own lottery ticket” approach described earlier.



Develop the roadmap

As he came out of the session, Martin felt positive about the direction of change and the actions the top team had agreed on, but he also knew that the effort thus far amounted to little more than 10 people believing in words on a page. He quickly turned his sights to developing a roadmap by launching working teams to flesh out the initiatives needed to implement the strategy. He charged the small team that had pulled together the diagnostic with playing a program management office (PMO) role to coordinate a portfolio of initiative teams, and made sure these teams were staffed with the best talent from across the business. He asked his direct reports to act as executive sponsors to guide the initiatives, again signaling the importance of building the team by doing real work together.



A few weeks after the offsite, the initiative teams launched their efforts in a working session with the top team, facilitated by the PMO. They were given six weeks to prepare for another offsite, this time for the top 300 leaders. By then, they would need to be ready to explain the scope of their efforts, the milestones for assessing impact, how individual initiatives related to one another, how others in the organization would be involved, and their initial thoughts on what specific changes to the business were likely to be in store. The PMO was tasked with fleshing out the change management plan, planning the offsite in detail, proposing a communications strategy, and ensuring that actions to shift mindsets and behaviors were built into each initiative.

He asked his direct reports to act as executive sponsors to guide the initiatives, signaling the importance of building the team by doing real work together.

While developing the roadmap, Martin sought regular input from his confidants on a diverse range of topics: how best to bring his new external hires on board, which of his team members were on message once back in the field and which were not, how to strike the right balance between pushing for change and acknowledging good work in the past, and what he should communicate in the upcoming offsite. He also continued to get out in the field himself and kept up his blogs to communicate with the wider organization. He ensured that he and his team had the financial and operational data to see whether the early efforts were having an impact, and that leaders had individual performance targets that were directly linked to the overall objectives for the insurance business.

Martin also made a point of spending time with the initiative teams as they came up with their hypotheses, and took part in deep dives to solve problems in areas with the greatest potential for value creation. At the same time, he kept up discussions with key stakeholders to harmonize his plans with their expectations. On the day before the offsite session for the top 300 leaders, Martin, his top team, and the initiative teams met for one last review of the work to ensure that it held together as a coherent whole and that everyone knew their roles for the next few days.



Mobilize a broad leadership coalition

Kim, Martin's boss, kicked off the two-day session with an address designed to convince the leaders of the power of being part of a larger enterprise. Martin then gave his opening address, sharing a high-level view of the organization's direction and initiatives that covered both business and cultural elements. He also referred to key points from the baseline analysis produced for the top team session, which had subsequently been sent to the top 300 leaders in order to maintain the transparency so lacking under the previous leadership. The audience was then given a detailed overview of the new organization—who was who and how each area was expected to work together with others.

In the next part of the session, each participant followed a personal agenda that took them through a series of six breakout sessions devoted to the initiatives most relevant to them, in which they rolled up their sleeves in smaller groups to help solve problems and push the organization's thinking. The whole group then reconvened and the leader of each initiative reported on how the sessions had shaped their thinking, discussed next steps, and explained how leaders could stay involved. In the closing afternoon, participants had the opportunity to articulate their "elevator speech" about the changes and consider how the new direction would affect their teams and their own work as leaders.

The day after the offsite, leaders met in their business and functional groups to determine what the new direction meant for their area and discuss how they would communicate the strategy to their respective groups. Representatives from the PMO introduced the communications plan and provided materials to help cascade the key messages throughout the organization. Booklets had been printed overnight with an updated version of the change story that reflected the input from the top 300 leaders; it covered who we are, where we are heading, how we will get there, what is expected of me, and why it matters. As a powerful symbol of alignment and commitment, the cover of the booklet featured a graphic with the signatures of all 300 leaders, which had been obtained at dinner the evening before.





Lead with purpose

With the top 300 leaders' session behind him, Martin began to move from transition mode into a steady-state operating rhythm. In the next six months he held monthly meetings with the PMO, steering committee, and initiative teams, switching to a quarterly schedule once things were on track. He was thoughtful about how he spent his time, balancing customers, business partners, regulators, and team coaching, and keeping back enough time to reflect on strategy, the organization's dynamics, and his personal impact.

By now Martin felt confident in his new structure and his new team. They continued to focus on the work that only they could do together, and felt they were gelling as a high-performing team. As for individual team members, many were fully on board in both skill and will, and he had clear milestones in mind for the rest. He continued to make regular use of his inner circle of informal advisors to help him understand how to make the greatest possible impact on the culture. He also got them to alert him if his language or actions risked producing unintended consequences, knowing that his finance background meant he was most comfortable managing by the numbers and could easily miss important cues in other areas.

A year into the journey, Martin was back in front of his top 300 leaders. Much had happened since the last time they'd been together as a group. He'd had to move out one of his top team members unexpectedly after major risk and compliance issues had emerged in his area. Unforeseen changes in the economic climate that limited growth on the commercial side had dictated a change in strategy to focus more on the consumer business. Thanks to the operating rhythm Martin had put in place, the team was able to pick up the need for adjustments at an early stage and make changes in a timely and seamless manner.

Martin was pleased to announce that the business unit was starting to see a turnaround in its fortunes. By implementing the agreed strategic initiatives, strengthening performance management in each area, and bringing about significant cultural change (partly

by abandoning the acquisition strategy on which the organization had previously depended), the business had beaten its plan, delivering increases in cross-sell penetration and profit margins. The cultural side had seen improvements across the board. In one particularly large shift, more than 95 percent of employees

“So what should we change in our direction in the coming year?” The answer came with a click of the slide changer: “NOTHING. We have the right strategy, the right plans, and the right team.”

felt there was a clear shared direction, up from less than 50 percent prior to Martin’s arrival.

The highlight of Martin’s presentation came after he had reviewed the results to date. He paused on a slide that read “So what should we change in our direction in the coming year?” The answer came with a click of the slide changer: “NOTHING. We have the right strategy, the right plans, and the right team.” Cue a round of applause.

How we can help

Our goal in helping leaders with their transitions is simple: to provide highly personalized support that is tailored to your needs and draws on proven best practices to accelerate your progress from transition to sustainable impact. That's why we developed the method for achieving a high-impact transition that we've outlined in this booklet.

For each element of the approach, we've developed proprietary tools and techniques that represent powerful interventions in their own right. More importantly, though, they reinforce one another to enable all the elements of your transition to come together in a seamless whole, as they did in Martin's case as we've discussed previously. We can support you in "taking stock" by:

- Providing analytical support to help you understand the value drivers of your business, your competitive position, and the external trends that will affect your future performance. We draw on analytical methods and data from our global industry and functional practices to obtain a full, accurate, and insightful reading of your organization's performance.
- Establishing a measureable baseline for your organization's culture and identifying the mindset shifts required to improve your performance. We use purpose-designed tools including our organizational health index, rapid assessment of mindsets methodology, and social network analysis.
- Acting as an experienced thought partner and sounding board as you design your organization, put your team in place, and get up to speed in your new role. We use our OrgLab interactive restructuring tool and organization design benchmarks, team assessment framework, and unrivalled network of experts and peer coaches to give you the support you need.
- Building top-team alignment on your organization's strategic and cultural direction using proven techniques that help develop a deep shared conviction about the future. For instance, we use pre-work methods to ensure all participants'

perspectives are understood and articulated prior to the first workshop, create agendas based on appreciative inquiry, and introduce techniques to help your top team improve their interactions as they do the real work of setting direction.

We can support you in “taking action” by:

- Working with you and your team to set the right execution-oriented strategy. Our interactive methods help you find where your organization’s opportunities, capabilities, and passions intersect. We apply our ten timeless tests of strategy and our portfolio of initiatives framework and toolkit to help you develop an implementation roadmap for your organization.
- Introducing you to reliable methods to influence shifts in your organization’s culture and mindsets, such as the five frames of performance and health, the influence model, and our cultural interventions catalogue. By integrating these methods into existing performance initiatives, your organization doesn’t have to do more things to shift the culture, but rather does things differently for greater impact.
- Aligning and mobilizing the broader organization to execute in ways that create understanding, conviction, and action. The methods we use include our next-generation PMO toolkit, large-group interventions catalogue, and dialogue-based story-telling and cascading methods.
- Creating the right conditions for a high-performing team by helping you set an operating rhythm that balances action, reflection, and renewal. Among the methods we apply are our top-team effectiveness survey and toolkit, capability-building modules, and facilitation techniques.
- Providing coaching and continuous learning opportunities to help you weave together all aspects of your transition to stay ahead as you develop in your role. We apply methods such as our personal effectiveness assessment tool and executive time and energy calendar analysis, and alert you to ongoing

learning opportunities through our roundtable forums and the McKinsey Leadership Development Center.

Although we typically support executives for the full duration of their transition, we find our role as an external advisor is most effective when it is tailored to suit your needs. Some leaders get the greatest benefit from having us play a visible hands-on role in performing analyses and developing solutions to cut through office politics and challenge orthodoxies. Other leaders prefer a more discreet approach, using us behind the scenes as a thought partner and facilitator to help align their team and the broader organization.

Recognizing the value created when an incoming leader swiftly takes the organization to a new level of productivity, yet other companies engage us institutionally to provide “on call” support to any transitioning executive anywhere in the organization. No matter which model is best for you, we can help you make your transition a success.

Helping leaders during their transition represents some of the most meaningful work we do. It enables talented people like you to achieve success at a pivotal time in your career. It helps your company develop its leaders and achieve a high return on its investment in their transitions. In turn, your employees, customers, shareholders, and communities all reap the benefits.

McKinsey & Company is the recognized leader in management consulting. We have more than 9,000 consultants in 100 offices in 55 countries. Our consultants are grouped into practices dedicated to all major industries and to key functions such as strategy, organization, marketing and sales, risk operations, and technology. Each practice has a deep understanding of how value is created within its industry or function, and has established itself at the forefront of trends and best practices both globally and in individual markets.

Our high-impact transition teams combine industry and functional knowledge with deep expertise in executive coaching, senior-team alignment, large-group facilitation, organizational health, and change management. The teams have supported a number of high-profile transitions, some of which are described in *Beyond Performance: How great organizations build ultimate competitive advantage*, Wiley, 2011.

We hope this booklet has been helpful to you, and we would welcome the opportunity to be of further assistance. If you would like to receive more information on high-impact transitions or discuss how we can help support your own transition, please contact one of the following leaders:

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