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The IdeaBridge White Paper Series:
100-Day Success Plan for
Crisis Recovery and New CEOs



100-DAY SUCCESS PLAN FOR CRISIS RECOVERY AND NEW CEOs

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Summary

This is one of the tools in the essential toolkit for new CEOs or CEOs who move from one company to another. This was developed from many CEOs who have given us input on the paper. We have been told that this paper has never left the side of some new CEOs and Entrepreneurs.

The first 100-Days in your role of CEO will often make or break your position. People will be watching you very closely looking for clues to your thinking, your team building, your leadership, your focus and your character. This document can be a good primer to help maintain your focus during the critical first 100-Days.

Maintain a Laser-Like Focus

- Leaders must balance an intense, single-minded focus on only a few vital priorities with flexibility about when and how they are implemented. The leader must determine what the three or four key strategic priorities must be.
- You must be relentless in prioritizing and focusing your efforts and must quickly develop a compact set of objectives which are used to keep everyone focused.
- The new leader must identify the core objectives or goals, explain why these are the goals and must constantly articulate them over and over again in order to get everyone on the same page within the first 100 days.
- When making recommendations, stick to the three most important-the ones with the biggest payoffs. Don't worry about the supporting data: you can always give that later when you have more time. When thinking of solutions, think of the elevator speech: the solution should be so crisp and clear that you could explain it to someone in a 30 second elevator ride.
- When developing a list of the core issues, objectives or contributing factors, you should generally come up with three to five "drivers" and everything else will tend to logically fall under one of the key drivers. (Note: keep it 3 – 5). When trying to figure out if you are really looking at the core problem, dig deeper. Gather more facts.
- Some leaders will decide on the core objectives and put them onto charts, demanding that all senior managers carry the charts and track progress daily toward the shared objectives.

Building Momentum

- Early wins energize people and focus their attention on the needed changes. If you can't get some major wins within 100 days, you will fail. So think very carefully about what you will get done in the first 100 days.
- In the first 100 days, the leader must energize people and focus them on solving the most vexing problems of the business. This is a time to lay the foundation for substantial growth and change. It's critical that the employees perceive momentum building during the first 100 days. Seeing tangible improvements in how work is performed boosts motivation and encourages further support for your initiatives.



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- Figure out what momentum building actions are most likely to succeed and give you the greatest lift; focus on those.

Building the Management Team

- Within 100 days, you should generally decide the composition of the new management team and decide if structural and personnel changes are necessary. Remember, you inherited what you got from day one, but after 100 days, you have bought into everything that's still going on. Regardless of whether it's good, bad, or ugly, after 100 days, you have bought in and you own it!
- You will find that there are usually just a handful of people that will make all the difference. Your job is to search-out and find those people. Find out who those people are by announcing that you know this to be true and that you are looking to find those people. Announce that once you find them, you will work to remove all roadblocks and impediments so that they can be even more successful.

Executing the Plans

- Be rigorous about implementation and execution. Making change happen takes a lot of work. Be rigorous and thorough. Make sure someone takes personal responsibility for getting the job done. You must have a plan of execution with timelines, objectives and goals. State what needs to be done, and when it needs to be done by, at such a level of detail and clarity that a sixth-grader can readily carry it out. To implement major change and stick to an aggressive timetable, pick someone who can kick tail and take names. Every two weeks the team should meet for detailed updates. Anyone who is behind plan must explain to the team why they are behind and what specific action steps that they will undergo in order to catch up by the next meeting.

Understanding the Politics and Building Coalitions of Support

- You must figure out what's important, who the decision makers are, who has the customer contacts, who the opinion-makers are and whose support you must have.
- Learn as much as you can about the politics and culture of the company. You must quickly learn about and understand the "shadow organization" which is really the behind the scenes politics and the people who can undermine your change efforts, or support them.
- People will want to see you, talk to you, spend time with you; do not isolate yourself behind a desk. Be visible.
- A lot of people will want to try to influence the new guy, and they will be watching to see how you react. Be very careful and deliberate.
- Map-out the likely opposition to your change initiatives. Who won't like this idea? Who does it impact? Who will have more work to do because of this initiative? Identify likely allies and opponents and those who may be on the fence. Then craft a strategy for consolidating support and overcoming resistance.



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- You can quickly assess the health of an organization based on the attitude of the staff. Look at attitudes first. Are there a lot of interested, engaged people? Are they encouraged to speak-up and come forward with ideas? Do they care? Do they have a sense of urgency? Do they have a winning attitude?

Fact-Finding Methods and Analyzing Data

- Develop an aggressive attitude toward fact finding and gathering. Despite the power of facts, many leaders fear them. Perhaps they are afraid that if they look too closely at the facts, they might not like what they see. But hiding from the facts is always a prescription for failure. You must never fear the facts. Hunt them down with a vengeance. Get the facts out into the open.
- Fact-based analysis requires hard evidence and rigorous analysis, before any recommendations can be made to the Board.
- You have to be very clear from the very beginning: "Show me the facts, let me see the analysis." You will profoundly influence decision making by introducing a rigorous framework from which decisions are made and problems are analyzed.
- Require that decision-making be supported by hard data. Encourage this by demanding that people show you the facts that were used to arrive at the decision. The new leader can profoundly influence the decision-making capability of the company by introducing new decision making frameworks and requirements.
- When trying to boost profits, first look at where you are currently making money. When you have your data, put it on a spreadsheet or into a database and sort it in various ways. Play with the numbers and you will begin to see patterns or clumps that stand out. Those patterns will highlight aspects of your business that you probably didn't realize. They may mean problems, but they may also mean opportunities. Find the opportunities and make the most of them.