



# people management

## **Entry Strategies**

By Nancy Polk, Ph.D.

## Entry Strategies

Congratulations! You just accepted the job of your dreams. You know the company, its competitors, and the industry it operates within, but what do you know about the internal workings of your new organization? The corporate culture, protocols for how issues will be addressed, who the key players are, who is likely to be a key player in the future? If you are like many managers and executives, you focus on the business issues: strategy, execution, products, financial issues, and devote much less time to the subtleties and intricacies of how work gets done and decisions made in your new organization. While you will likely pick up much of this information over time, you can give yourself a leg up by spending some time thinking about your entry strategies for your new role. Many an executive has made unnecessary blunders or failed to inspire others' trust and confidence in their early days and weeks on the job. Many times this is due to not paying enough attention to what is already in place before they arrived that will play a critical role in their future success.

One of the primary challenges of a new executive seems to be how to establish a strong, confident, seasoned presence while simultaneously seeking to learn from colleagues and direct reports the information which the new executive could not possibly yet know. Many executives who have succeeded in the past by being the expert and the decision maker, have difficulty putting themselves in the learner role for all to see. To do so feels threatening to the strong, self-assured leadership presence one is trying to establish. My suggestion is to err on the side of soliciting others' views, perspectives, and information. To do so looks reasoned, deliberate, respectful, and team oriented. Generally one will not be faulted for taking time to learn and not quickly making sweeping statements or profound changes. One can be faulted, however, for acting impulsively if statements and changes do not seem to be based upon information gathered and reasoned analysis. What does this mean on a day-to-day basis? You've heard it before: Listen, listen, listen. Ask friendly, open-ended questions that encourage others to be open and comfortable, and then listen to the answers. Follow up with clarifying questions and express your admiration, praise, and appreciation when appropriate. Don't work too hard to impress them with what you know. Let them impress you with all that they know. This doesn't mean you need to look apologetic or unsure of yourself. It does mean to show intense interest and curiosity about others' roles and responsibilities, accountabilities and challenges, and how your role interacts with theirs. In the process you will hear how others are viewed, their strengths as well as opportunities for development. You will hear themes that you can piece together to form a picture of the corporate culture and the protocols for how to get things done. And most importantly, you will begin to forge trusting partnerships with your colleagues that are based on respect and goodwill.

**Nancy Polk, Ph.D. has extensive experience in executive coaching and career counseling. She may be contacted at [careerpsg@aol.com](mailto:careerpsg@aol.com)**