

6 Rules For a New Boss

You have just taken over an exciting new project and you have all the skills for the new job. But equally important for your success is your leadership qualities. **Saumya Bhattacharya** explains



In your new role as the boss, apart from giving a stellar performance, it is time to start managing expectations. Reason: career progression is no longer just decided by the organisation. You also define what the organisation should expect from you.

Rule #1: Start Early

The newly anointed MD of Canaan Partners Rahul Khanna says expectation management needs to happen even before you take up the job. A key part is not to oversell yourself, he says. So while you may be excited about the new job, the idea is to suit the role. "When you take the hot seat, you need to be equipped for it," says Khanna.

But if you have already joined your new job, there is still a set of rules you can follow to cope with expectations from the team and organisation alike, say leadership pundits.

Rule #2: Communicate

At the peak of the slowdown in early 2009, organisations such as the Future Group and Maruti Suzuki and others went on an overdrive to convey the cash crunch to their employees. Blogs, formal emails, informal chats all became a key to communication. S Ramnarayan, clinical professor of organisational behaviour at the Indian School of Business, says managing information—good or bad—is the key in managing expectations.

Words alone will not do. Ramnarayan recommends if you have joined a new leadership role, go in for some clear and short-term wins

to show that things are happening. "You can pick up projects that can be turned into immediate successes. Show how things can be done differently to put your point across," he says.

Rule #3: Take Stock

It sounds simple, but bosses do not take time out to do this. When Piyush Mehta, HR head at Genpact, talks to the members of his team, the conversation once in a while turns towards the roles these members have in the organisation compared to their peers in the industry. The conversation also veers towards the attractive titles and job offers these employees may get from outside. But the idea is to emphasise the opportunity the company offers. "Their expectations remain realistic," he says. That is just one of the ways Mehta manages the expectations of his most important stakeholder—the employees. He works in an industry that deals with employee attrition upwards of 30%.

Rule #4: Listen

When leadership coach Ashu Khanna handholds new bosses, her first advice to them is to listen to the cues—from the market, customers and employees. "Listen so that you understand what they are saying," she says. Listening is critical. "To make sure people have an emotional connect with you—make them feel heard and understood," agrees Ramnarayan. Managing emotions is critical, especially during change. At work you may have a variety of stakeholders to address. Managing their emotions may mean manag-

ing your goal in the context of all. The ability to accommodate other kind of ideas is critical.

Rule #5: Say No

A financial services firm came to Khanna with a unique problem. One of its star performers was on the brink of burnout because he would not say no to anything. His team was stretched too. Her brief was to identify the issue and also make the executive, head of a business in this case, learn the power of saying no. "Ask yourself—are you delegating

enough? Are you comfortable with the deadlines," she says.

Rule #6: Re-skill

According to management guru Peter Drucker, "Mathematicians are born, but everyone can learn trigonometry." Holds true for new bosses too. You may have got the new role because of your managerial abilities, but if you are working with a team of domain specialists, brush up on your skills. The team feels motivated with a performer in the driver's seat.