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Changing from peer to boss has its challenges

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How can you move from being on the inside to being on the outside? Simple: Get promoted.

It's not uncommon to want to move up. After all, you've taken those extra courses, are lots more work-savvy than you were a year ago and it's a good way to move up the salary ladder.

So what could hold you back? Co-workers and colleagues?

How about you?

In and Out Groups

Workplaces create "in" and "out" groups. You're on the "in" when you have a commonality, you are the same as others; type and/or class of work come to mind.

Let's say you work in sales and there are 10 of you in your department plus an overall director.

The 10 of you have a common bond -- job and employer. You are OK, They are OK. Granted, you may be in competition with your colleagues for gross sales and a coveted prize, but you are kindred spirits.

What happens if you decide to make the leap? Your boss has moved on. You no longer want to be just a salesperson; you want to be director of sales, the boss. How will that go down with the others? Maybe not so well.

You're now different. The old gang is still alike; they are OK with each other. But now, you're the boss, unlike the old gang. Sure you understand sales, but you are no longer one of them. The group closes ranks -- you are on the outs, no longer privy to inside jokes, the grapevine, just being in sales. You now have a new group -- other directors, supervisors and managers within the organization. You're now one of them.

Yet, there's a hitch. The new group knows you were recently a salesperson and that you've not managed others as yet. So the group is quasi-closed as well until you prove yourself as a manager, and they welcome you in.

Moving from Peer to Supervisor

In other words, it can be lonely when you break ranks. Companies today value the expertise of employees and are promoting from within. As the new boss, one of the first things you're

going to have to do is win over the old team. Oh, on the outside, things may appear smooth, but don't count on it.

Someone may be a tad angry he or she was passed over for the slot. Or they may question your skills: Sure, you were great in sales, but running the team is a whole new world.

So as the new leader, it's assessment time. Assessment of what each member of the team does, of what his or her job entails, of what the environment is. Start by asking:

- Is the employee clear about the requirements of the job?
- Does she understand what factors go into measuring accountability?
- Do they work within a cooperative and efficient environment?

As the new boss, you have to be focused on accountability and not use excuses to explain away any type of negative outcome. Your former co-worker may feel he has to run everything by you because of your previous relationship or be overly sensitive to any criticism you direct toward him.

Socializing can be a challenge. Pre-promotion, you went out for a few beers with your pals after work. Now you're going to separate the two. Personal stuff is talked about outside work, business stuff inside work. It becomes a balancing act.

Mistakes happen. It's unreasonable to think you will do everything perfectly the first time out or even as a seasoned pro. Most leaders will say their major mistakes include being too demanding, not listening, thinking too short-term, separating yourself from former peers, implementing change without understanding how the job really works (which you really didn't understand fully before you took the position), and not doing appraisals and giving appropriate feedback.

The skills that make you a good leader and manager will be different than the ones that made you the best in sales. As the boss, your new challenge is to focus on goals, create ideas and encourage others on your team to stretch and be empowered to take their skills to another level.

It's smart to have both group meetings and a one-on-one session with each member of the team, and find out what's important to them. Find out by asking open-ended questions and listening. Don't expect the same response from each. You have to determine if you have the right team and that each member is doing the job for which they are best suited.

Let your team know how you're going to manage, remind them you have been in their shoes, how you're going to do things differently (if you are) and let them know what you want followed.

It's not rocket science, but does take work.

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