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YOUR 30-, 60-, AND 90-DAY GAME PLAN FOR CAREER SUCCESS

**IN TODAY'S LEANER
WORKFORCE**

BY DOUG ARMS



Companies are accustomed to doing more with less, and every team member is critical to an organization's performance.

Think about it: A department that had 10 people before the recession may now be made up of seven—yet the workload, the variety of tasks, and the complexity of the business have all stayed the same, or even increased. People have broadened their job descriptions and this has made the search for replacement employees that much more challenging.

What does this mean? The time it takes to on-board a new employee can seriously eat into productivity. While cliché, the interview solicitation of “we need someone who can hit the ground running” is often a cry for help by many employers.

Gone are the days when you could take your time settling in—the stakes are now higher, and the expectations are greater for you to quickly get up to speed. While 90 days may still be the magic time allotment for building a successful foundation at your new job, the best way to stick the three-month landing is to use one- and two-month benchmarks to your advantage.

YOU'LL BE ON YOUR WAY TO BECOMING A VALUABLE MEMBER OF YOUR NEW TEAM.

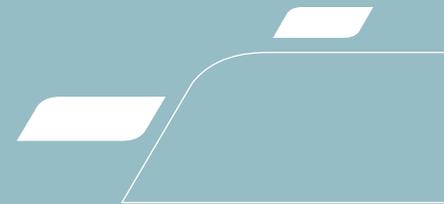
Meet with your manager from day one to understand what is expected of you. Work together to develop a “velocity to success” game plan, and 30-, 60-, and 90-day checkpoints.





“Who’s the new guy?”

Whether or not you enjoy the spotlight, it’s shining on you these first few weeks. But no matter how nice everyone is, here’s what’s really going on: your team needs you to get up to speed as quickly as possible—with little disruption to their own work days. Remember, your new team is investing in you; today’s workforces are collaborative and co-dependent. Everyone must succeed for anyone to succeed.



This 30-day game plan will get you off on the right foot:

- 1. Bring your homework** – Walk into your new job with as much knowledge as you can find. Use LinkedIn®, Glassdoor®, and other resources to help you paint a clear picture of the culture, your boss and your team. Read your company’s website content and related industry articles—especially if the industry is new to you. Understand the competitive landscape. During your on-boarding period, continue to dig deeper and stay up-to-date.
- 2. Join the team** – Be early; create a first impression that will serve you well on the inevitable days ahead when you get stuck in traffic. Establish yourself as being a punctual and willing member of the team by arriving at meetings on time. Your manager should introduce you to fellow team members and provide you with an org chart. In meetings, jot down everyone’s position at the table and their name/department—then refer to people by name (because for many, nothing is sweeter than the sound of their own name).
- 3. Invest your own time in research** – Showing up a few minutes early each day will give you a chance to learn more about your new company, understand what your new company’s overall plans are, and how you and your department fit into them. Your knowledge gap will fill in fast when you invest this time. Don’t forget to also spend time learning about some of the internal processes and systems that will impact your daily work life, including special databases, networks and portals that you may need to access in order to complete assignments.



4. **Leave your last job at your last job** – Avoid “at my last job” references. Whether praises or complaints, these comments are best left unspoken at work, and can make you seem less than engaged in your present position. There will be a time and place to discuss ideas and experiences from your past, but for now, focus on the company you have joined. You have a clean, blank slate—be flexible and open to the changes ahead.
5. **Learn the communication patterns** – Ask your manager for his/her preferred communication style. Whether it’s a “respond with urgency” or a “don’t flood my inbox” culture, figure it out quickly—but always be courteous and respectful, providing a timeframe for completing requests. As for project-based communications, schedule weekly or bi-weekly meetings to stay on top of priorities, and communicate the status of individual projects.





“Figured that out yet?”

The new person on any team is hired to be part of the solution. But remember, you have been chosen over other candidates so have confidence, and start contributing. Minimize the disruption of asking team members to repeat directions, and interrupting their workflow unnecessarily. By your second month, you should be leaning less on your co-workers and manager, and showing an understanding of your company's infrastructure.

This 60-day game plan will show your team that you respect their time:

- 1. Be resourceful** – Know the basic path for troubleshooting computer/database issues and display independence when it comes to internal problem solving. Always know the go-to people (every company has them)—such as the IT support staff; the star-tenured administrative professional who knows EVERYONE; whoever orders supplies; people on the HR, Payroll, Benefits teams...many people can be helpful. Show your resourcefulness in knowing who they are, and thank them for their willingness to help you transition into the company.
- 2. Know who's who and what's what** – While the ink has barely dried on your "new member" card, it's nearly expired by now. Know who the key players are in your organization, both by face and by name. Start to understand the organization's overall structure and the core responsibilities and objectives of each internal department. Print key organizational charts for reference.
- 3. Build your credibility** – After two months on the job, there should be no doubt in anyone's mind—especially your manager's mind—that you were the right hire for the job. Look for opportunities that promote your credibility. Offer to lead or manage a key initiative that allows you to contribute your knowledge and experience in ways that will enhance the project while also showing that you are a team player.



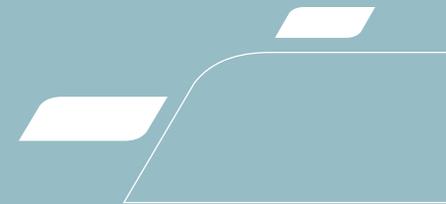
4. **Solidify your core responsibilities** – Understand the strategic objectives of your new team and how your performance will be measured against those objectives. You may see potential opportunities other than the ones you were hired for, but resist the temptation to set your cap on a promotion. Don't give your co-workers any inkling that you are not in the moment, or in the project at hand.
5. **Don't rush to judgment** – It's easy to spot areas that need improvement, but hold off until you know the history. While you might be hoping for a pat on the back for your fresh insight, you could, instead, step on the wrong toes. Consider using non-accusatory phrasing such as: "I was wondering about a particular process. Can you tell me your impression of it and the history?"





“You got this.”

Does it seem as though you’ve been going at full speed, without ever taking your foot off the gas pedal? That’s simply the way of today’s leaner workforce—it’s constantly accelerating.



For the win—your 90-day game plan:

- 1. Accelerate your learning** – Don't fall behind the curve. By 90 days, you should be more solution than problem; more advantage than burden. Identify weak areas and ask your team and manager to weigh in on areas for improvement. Engage others around you and develop in-network allies that will work with you to further your team's goals.
- 2. Schedule a voluntary review** – Take the pulse of your performance, according to your manager and team's perspective. While you may be seeking praise, look for honest feedback of ways to improve your performance in order to help the team, and the organization.
- 3. Team build** – Identify areas of involvement. Any opportunity to be one of the team will never be wasted. If your company is staying after work to assemble boxes for charity, then be the first to arrive and the last to leave. Bring pizza.





Build on the momentum.

You've hustled these past three months. You've demonstrated awareness and respect of established working relationships and successfully taken ownership of the critical role you play in a lean work environment. Now, take your 90-day foundation and go forward—managing your career with confidence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DOUGLAS ARMS is vice president of the Americas Finance Product Group at Kelly Services—responsible for the strategic planning, brand management, thought leadership, and growth of workforce solutions provided in the finance and accounting specialty across North America. Along with his extensive experience as a talent management executive, Mr. Arms has been featured in *Forbes*®, *The Wall Street Journal*®, and on CBS MoneyWatch, CNN®, and NBC® as well as a number of other news outlets. He provides insight into labour market trends as a weekly employment expert on the FOX 13 news show in Tampa, Florida. His training includes the IMD, Lausanne, Switzerland; ALP Leadership Development Program; and Dale Carnegie®: Leadership Training for Managers; Effective Public Speaking. Mr. Arms is a graduate of the Montclair State University located in Upper Montclair, New Jersey.



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