

# Starting a New Job as a Mid-Career Professional

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**Summary.** If it's been a while since you started a new job, you might experience a range of emotions once you start your new position. But those first weeks in a new job are when you make your first impression, and it's hard to change people's perceptions once they're... [more](#)

Bill thought he'd never leave the comfortable job he'd enjoyed for the past decade. But when another company reached out to him with an offer, it was so intriguing that he took the job. Then the

fear set in because he hadn't started a new job in 10 years. He read *The First 90 Days* and learned he needed to make an impact fast, so he immediately started trying to solve problems.

Two weeks into his new job, Bill had already solved a problem — his first win. But he was noticing his coworkers were standoffish. His boss causally mentioned he needed to slow down but didn't tell him complaints were coming in about his work approach and style. Bill didn't realize his first win wasn't actually about accomplishing a goal — it was about how he accomplished his work.

Those first weeks in a new job are when you make your first impression, and it's hard to change people's perceptions once they're developed. Here are five tips on how to transition into a new job, especially if it's been a long time since you've made a move.

### **Build relationships.**

This is the most important priority when joining a new company. If you've been in a job for a long time, you may not realize how your relationships had a direct impact on your success. When building relationships, you're building trust, and you can move faster when people trust in your decision-making.

How do you build relationships quickly? First, be as curious about others and their work as they are of you as the “newbie.”

Understand their roles and how you can provide value to them before proposing any changes. Understanding your coworkers' needs will start the relationship-building process, because your interest alone will leave your them feeling good about your entry.

Second, when having these conversations, respect history. If people have been at a company a long time, they built the foundation, and may be holding together antiquated systems or processes with a paperclip and Band-Aid due to lack of funding, people, or capability. Show respect for what's currently in place by

acknowledging the years of hard work it took to get there. Then in subsequent conversations, bring your colleagues along on the journey of the vision for the future. Don't rush step one! It could take weeks, months, or even a year to build relationships (depending partly on whether you're in person or remote).

### **Dig deep into the business.**

When you enter a new company, you probably don't know much about it except what you've read to prepare for interviews. Your new colleagues will view you as someone who knows nothing about the business. Spend time learning about the company and the culture.

Most company websites have a newsroom link with all their press releases. If you work for a publicly traded company in the U.S., take a look at their SEC 10-K report and investor information, which usually includes their annual report. Find out: How does the company make revenue? What products does it sell? How do the products work? What are the quarterly and yearly goals? What metrics are used to measure the company's success and substantiate its growth? Where is the company headed in the next three to five years? Answers to these questions will help inform how your work is connected to the larger organization.

Also, dive deep into learning the culture. How do people work cross functionally here? Is the company agile and fast moving, or more cautious and slow moving? What impacts the business's speed? How do people communicate? Via email or chat, or do they pick up the phone and just call anytime? Can all levels communicate with all levels, or is it more hierarchical? No matter what position you're in — entry level or senior executive — the more you know about the company and culture, the more effective you can be at aligning your work to the goals of the company and behaving in a way that's congruent with the culture.

### **Understand how others perceive your job.**

While building relationships and learning about the company, also ask questions about how others perceive your job to understand their expectations of you, your role, and your overall function. Just because you have the same title or functional job you had at your last company, the job itself could be quite different, and how you bring value in the role could be different.

When I joined one company, I found that every one of my stakeholders had a different expectation of my role, and one leader had no idea how he viewed my role or how I could use my skills to bring value to his organization. I realized I would have to spend time aligning everyone on what my role was and wasn't so I could meet their expectations.

### **Learn dependencies.**

Understand dependencies and cross-functional workflows to determine who needs something from you and what you depend on to be able to provide it. Who are you providing work output to, and how do your cross-functional stakeholders use it? Ask your manager who are the top 10 cross-functional people your team interacts with. Then, spend time understanding how they view the workflows between the functions and what they need from your role to be successful. Understand the timing of workflows so you can meet deadlines and provide the most value with your work.

### **Give yourself time.**

People take jobs and want to feel connected instantly, but that doesn't always happen. It's hard to onboard in any new company and can be even harder to onboard remotely. Give yourself grace to move through the Kübler-Ross change curve — at first you'll be excited, then shocked at what may be different or harder in the new job, and then in denial that it's *that* different, which can quickly turn into frustration. You may even hit the lowest mood, a depression-like state, before starting to experiment and engage in a way that allows you feel good about your new job.

Eventually, you'll integrate into the new company and feel comfortable. Each person moves through the curve at a different pace, so be patient, breathe, and try to find one person to connect with if you're not already paired with a mentor. Know that change is hard for nearly everyone, so embrace it and know it's all part of your growth.

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The best way to work through all of these steps is to listen more than you speak and phrase every thought in the form of a question. For example, if you're in a meeting and you have a great idea, you could say, "I think we should do this." Everyone in the room will either a) shoot you down because it has been tried before and failed, b) dismiss you because you're new and don't know the business, or c) think it's interesting but still dismiss you because you're new.

Instead, phrase your input in the form of a question, like, "I'm curious, have we tried to do this?" If you're wrong because it failed in the past, you'll be educated on history and viewed as someone trying to learn. If it has never been tried before and could work, your curiosity makes you a hero.

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