



## It Was Supposed to Be GOOD News

Ever have the sense that someone needed to talk?

That was exactly the feeling I got when, after a recent training session, I noticed a woman lingering. Yes, she was at the back of the room, making polite post-session small talk with colleagues. Yet, while physically at the rear, her eyes kept track of me as I engaged with others up front.

As the crowd thinned, she felt safe to approach. And, the conversation went something like this:

*"Thank you for the presentation. It was right on point."*

*"You're welcome. Tell me, what's your role here?"*

*"I'm the \_\_\_\_\_ Manager. It's strange saying that. I was on the team and got promoted not long ago."*

*"Congratulations! How are things going so far?"*

*"It's been...interesting."*

*"That description is...interesting. What's happening?"*

*"Honestly, it's been harder than I thought it would be."*

And, with that admission, the real conversation began.

Being promoted is good news, right? It is indeed. The challenge is that, often, that wonderful acknowledgement of a person's achievements can be tarnished by a lack of preparation...by the company, of the person, and with the team s/he is going to lead.

In this edition of **EA Insights**, let's explore a few of the obstacles that may arise when someone's promoted into a leadership role. Along with pinpointing possible hiccups, we'll consider ways to make the transition smoother for all involved. So, keep reading!

Did I mention that a promotion really *IS* good news?

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
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## 2 Sides of the Coin: Leaders Chosen from Within

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It's not a new idea. Companies have long looked within for people to move up through the leadership ranks. After all, when a position opens up, why not first look to those already on the team to fill the gap?



Well, quite frankly, there are two sides to the "choose from within" coin. There are pluses and minuses that, if considered, would help the company in making an informed choice and in preparing all involved for the transition.

### The "Known Commodity" Coin

**Heads:** One unmistakable reason to promote from within is that the person selected is known. The mystery of whether the hire actually will resemble the resume becomes a nonissue because the new leader has been seen in action day in and day out. Work product,

### In This Issue

[2 Sides of the Coin:  
Leaders Chosen from  
Within](#)

[Quotes](#)

### Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Solutions for  
Businesses](#)

[Solutions for  
Professionals](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)



### "Quotes"

*"The Leader will be a person with the management skills to coordinate the activities of the Team, and to assure that the Team remains faithful to the objectives[.]"*  
~Richard V. Allen

*"I became a sales manager..., promoted from within the sales team. My peers were less than excited that I had gotten the job, especially one of my male peers who said he just wasn't going to work for a woman."*  
~Carol Bartz

*"It means a lot that my peers think so much of me that they would pick me to be their team leader."*  
~Michelle Carter

*"I really like it that they promote from within."*  
~Carson Daly

*"To get promoted, company executives need to be able to see you as one of them."*  
~Dale Dauten

*"There's always a learning curve, where you've got to learn what [it] is all about."*  
~Brad Gilbert

*"[T]he more well-known you get, the more people are going to have expectations of you. Although that's great, it also imposes certain pressures."*  
~Sally Hawkins

temperament, reliability, and more have been assessed and deemed acceptable.

**Tails:** On the flip side is the recognition that the person being promoted, though known, has only been viewed in his previous position. What remains a mystery to all is how he will perform in a new role. Functioning as a super worker is not necessarily synonymous with performing well as a supervisor. The skillset for one role may be different than that for another. Thus, if decision makers are opting simply for the known, or are resting on present strengths without realistically considering the criteria success in the new role, then they may be setting in motion a fail.

### The "Low Learning Curve" Coin

**Heads:** With the "Known Commodity" coin, the focus is on familiarity with the person to be promoted. The benefit of the "Low Learning Curve" coin is the selected person's knowledge of the company and possibly the team she will be leading. Unlike a new hire, the person has been a part of the culture. She knows the ropes -- how things are done, who handles what, and so on. Such awareness can add significant value to a candidate. Unlike an external hire, who must learn culture *and* job, the choice from within is in a position to begin tackling substantive work more quickly because she isn't starting from scratch.

**Tails:** Just as new skills are likely to be required in a role change, a culture shift may be in order as well. For instance, the culture or manner of performing on the line may differ from that on the management team. And, without adequate preparation, culture ignorance or culture shock can easily lead to disillusionment for the new leader.

On the other hand, culture consistency may be the opposite of what the organization truly needs at a given point in time. Especially when a group is struggling, an internal pick, who brings along history and allegiances and connections to the current culture, may slow the desired progress toward the revised vision.

### The "Team" Coin

**Heads:** Teams can experience great angst with a leadership change. Accordingly, from the team's perspective, there definitely are pros to an in-house leadership selection. Selection of a co-worker, especially if he is a member of the team, can alleviate fear of the unknown associated with a choice from the outside or even from another part of the company. The ability to work with a colleague negates the dance of getting to know the person, discerning how he works, and helping the new leader to get up to speed on policies, procedures, personnel, and projects. Selection from within ushers in perhaps the least difficult transition because it, in theory, brings about minimal disruption.

**Tails:** On the other side of the coin, choosing from within doesn't always occur without a hitch. Bypassed internal candidates may find it hard to stomach a choice other than themselves. Also, the adjustment in going from team *member* to team *leader* may be wrought with tests -- how to navigate friendships and supervision, priority and/or availability changes, and other possible tensions.

Yes, when a leader's seat becomes vacant, there are pros and cons associated with choosing an internal replacement. However, there are ways to make the path smoother for all involved.

It is important for the **company** to make a thoughtful decision about choosing the new leader. Avoid tapping an internal candidate largely because the person works well in her current role, has seniority and is in need of a next career step, or presents a quicker fix than available by launching an external search. Ensure that the candidate is well-equipped or exhibits bona fide potential for the new job. Further, while onboarding to acquaint the person with the company is not necessary, onboarding a person at each leadership level within the company certainly is.

**Team members** play a part as well. Recognize that this new leader is feeling his way through, and cut him some slack. Especially if this is a first official leadership role, there will be changes and some growing pains. However, even a seasoned leader changing roles still must learn the new job, and being a help rather than a hindrance in that process tends to make life and work easier all around.

Lastly, many **new leaders** fall into the trap of thinking that they should be operating at 100% on Day 1 -- knowing and doing everything to perfection. That's a fallacy. Give yourself time to learn, absorb, and transition. Don't forget the team-level partnerships that helped you to shine originally. And, most importantly, reach out for help from trusted mentors or friends within the organization, take advantage of training opportunities, and secure an executive coach to help you transition from staff to leader and navigate both the victories and the trials involved.

Could you use some help in leveraging the heads and minimizing the tails of in-house leader selection or new role acceptance? Reach out to us at **Executive Advantage**. We're here not only to support the decision making and lead-up to the leadership transition but also to walk alongside leaders as and after they fill their seats. [Contact us today](#).

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*"Management is the set of skills that can help get things done."*

~Frances Hesselbein

*"The people in the decision-making positions need to be thinking differently about who to hire, and looking more unsparingly at their choices. Why give this person a break over that person? Why give this person a second chance over that person?"*

~Karyn Kusama

*"It's not easy when you have a new manager because you have to try and adapt yourself to him [and] the team[.]"*

~Henrikh Mkhitarian

*"Being ready isn't enough; you have to be prepared for a promotion or any other significant change."*

~Pat Riley

*"When you come in as a new leader, it's really important that people do get to know you and that you are constantly communicating."*

~Julie Sweet

*"One of the great difficulties as you rise up through an organisation is that your prior competencies are exploded and broken apart by the territory you've been promoted into:*

*the field of human identity."*

~David Whyte

## About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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