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## ADJUSTING TO A NEW BOSS: TIPS FROM A PRO ON WEATHERING LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS



"There is always some disruption to the flow of things when a new leader takes over," says Karen Konrath, executive coach and owner of [Transitions Coaching](http://www.transitionscoachingllc.com/), [\[http://www.transitionscoachingllc.com/\]](http://www.transitionscoachingllc.com/), who spent more than 20 years leading human resource teams in a range of industries.

And why wouldn't there be?

"It's natural that team members view the arrival of a new leader as a significant event in their work lives," Konrath says. After all, it's pretty much a given that pre-existing team dynamics are likely to change. At the same time, the new boss is eager to get things up and running again.

Such a weighty change is bound to cause what Konrath calls a "time-consuming 'dance' between the team and the leader."

Just how long and how disruptive that dance becomes, however, can be a matter of choice.

### Learn about your new boss

The minute a new leader comes on board, Konrath says, "the race is on to learn about him or her—to test assumptions, expectations, values and hot buttons."

That's why lots of [experts](http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/how-to-succeed-with-your-new-boss) [http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/how-to-succeed-with-your-new-boss] suggest [questions](http://time.com/money/4044071/dealing-with-new-boss/) [http://time.com/money/4044071/dealing-with-new-boss/] and [conversations](http://theundercoverrecruiter.com/adjust-new-boss/) [http://theundercoverrecruiter.com/adjust-new-boss/], for team members to broach with their new bosses in a bid to anticipate their leadership styles. Certainly, nothing is inherently wrong with asking about, say, whether or not you're expected to correspond on weekends or how your new leader will define success, Konrath says. After all, learning about communication preferences can help you avoid responding in ways that aren't effective for (or even accessible to) your boss. Clarifying what they expect, and articulating what you, in turn, hope to receive, can also seem at first glance to be a solid strategy for setting some parameters straight from the get-go.



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## Think about your new boss

"Here's the thing that I think a lot of people miss," Konrath shares after years of observing and facilitating transitions between leaders and teams. "In the majority of situations, the new boss is working just as hard to acclimate."

It may be hard to remember when the person before you controls your financial future, but they, too, "are trying to figure out how to fit in, how not to step on landmines and how to ensure that the team accepts them in a positive way."

That's why, while the above strategies for early conversations may be good general tips, Konrath also urges team members to check their own anxiety at the door and cultivate some empathy for the new kid in town.

"Rather than showing up in your new boss's office demanding to know what they are going to change, how they are going to fix messes, how they will measure your performance or simply ensuring they know how *fabulous* you are," she says, "it might be more helpful to instead show up and ask how *you* can help *them* through their transition."

Let them know you'd like to help them succeed, Konrath suggests. Ask how you might serve as a resource. See if you can find a way to support them as they adjust to the new environment. Your best bet, she says, is to start from a place of good will. "The rest of the conversations will be much more productive and comfortable when they are built on a foundation of respect, empathy and trust."

"Now not all bosses are wonderful, we know that," Konrath acknowledges, "but they are all human. So treating them as such might go farther than if we assume they are evil people trying to take over the world."

And if they *do* turn out to be evil people trying to take over the world? Well, at least you'll know you didn't fuel their wrath.



### A NEW TWIST: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AS YOU ADJUST TO A NEW BOSS

Instead of immediately interrogating your new boss about leadership styles, consider first checking in with yourself on similar matters. The more insight you have about your own preferences and work styles, the more likely you are to understand where conflicts may arise and adjust to your new bosses preferences.

#### Communication Format & Frequency

- How frequently do you like to communicate with your boss? After completing each task, for example, or once a week? Do you mind corresponding on weekends and evenings? Do you feel more comfortable providing your boss with an immediate response or responding after a thoughtful delay?
- What formats are most effective for you? Email, phone calls, texts, or one-on-one meetings?
- Are you visual or auditory? Are you likely to bring paper print outs to your meetings?
- How frequently do you like to meet?

#### Expectations & Recognition

- What does success look like for you and the team?
- How do you prefer supervisors articulate their expectations of you?
- How do you like to relay your accomplishments?
- What are your career goals?

#### Resources & Rewards

- In what ways do you think you can help be a resource and support to your new boss?
- What resources (support staff, budget) are you used to? What would be ideal?
- What rewards (bonuses, professional development opportunities, raises) are most motivating to you?

**Remember:** The goal isn't so much to relay this information to your new boss as it is to understand your own work styles in anticipation of the need for open



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