

ASAP: A new leader transition process



Transition and turnover in leadership is a fact of life in both the public and private sector organizations. And while there are certainly benefits to be gained from these changes, if they are not properly managed the short-term results can be very dysfunctional for an organization (postponed or poor decisions, poor communications, unclear roles, stress, and conflict, to mention a few).

As well, departing leaders or managers often leave their “ghosts” to hang around and inevitably reappear after they have left. People who reported to the former leader can act as though the person is still there and still influential. This situation obviously interferes with the new leader’s transition and performance in general.

Indeed, it may take as much as four months to a year (and sometimes never) for a new leader to become fully effective in the new role. Managing the transition process shortens this timeline by providing the new leader with the information needed to make sound decisions in developing priorities, understanding the organization, implementing improvement and enhancing effectiveness and teamwork.

Originally developed in the business world, and refined in the military, the ASAP process is designed to achieve the following practical anticipated results:

- Reduce anxiety.
- Dramatically shorten the time it usually takes for people to learn enough about how things are going to work to get back to a reasonable level of productivity.
- Prevent many of the early problems new managers create by over- or under-managing the work group.
- Enhance organizational effectiveness by providing an opportunity for a team to work together to identify major goals and discuss priority issues.
- Provide team members the opportunity to learn first-hand the new leader’s management style and philosophy.
- Build a solid foundation to support the group’s efforts to reach mutually agreed upon goal.
- Minimize the need for guesswork about what life is going to be like with the new leader.
- Develop a greater understanding about each other — about how the new leader wants to manage, about what s/he feels the team members’ responsibilities are and about what the work group wants and needs from the leader.
- Help people get to know each other better.
- Help team members understand the new leader’s management style, how the group can work best together and what is expected of them on the job.
- Help the new leader and the existing team get to know each other better.
- Establish "ground rules" that cover how the group members (including the new leader) are going to work together to assure the highest level of effectiveness.
- Identify potential problem areas and agree upon ways to approach them, work through them and get on with business.
- Provide a forum to address concerns and to develop positive plans of action.
- Avoid going off on tangents due to incomplete communications or unchallenged assumptions.
- A key element of ASAP the intervention is to provide, if needed, a structure that gets rid of the “ghost.”

SAMPLE MEETING DESIGN

8:00 AM: <i>Introduction</i>	12:00 Noon: <i>Lunch</i>
8:30 AM: <i>Individual work</i>	1:00 PM: <i>Exchanging information (cont'd)</i>
9:00 AM: <i>Small group work</i>	2:30 PM: <i>Comparing, contrasting, contracting</i>
10:00 AM: <i>Prioritization</i>	4:00 PM: <i>Wrap-up & set schedules.</i>
10:30 AM: <i>Exchanging information</i>	4:30 PM: <i>Adjourn</i>

This facilitated methodology may be utilized, as well, to integrate a new team member into an existing team or for forming new teams.

Please contact us to discuss your leadership development and change management needs.