

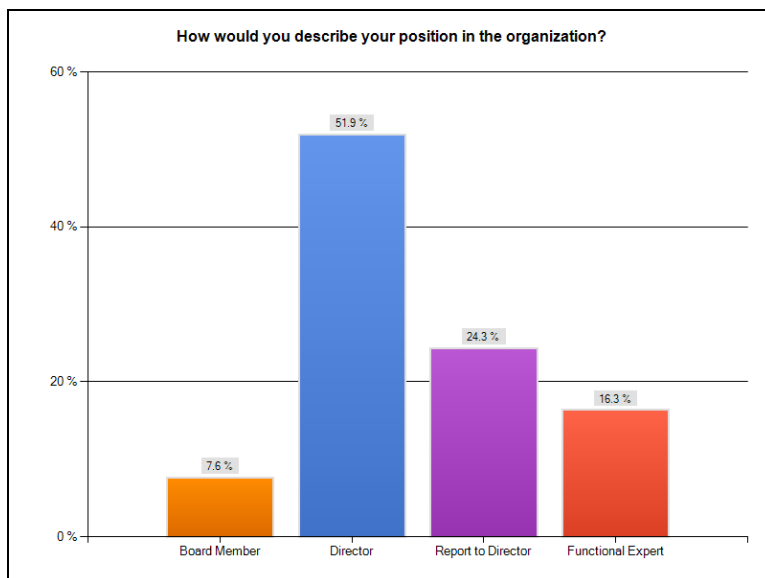
## *First100Days Executive Survey*

*Summary June 2010*

*by Tell Muenzing*

**Talented leaders are a rare find; so what can be done to get them off to a flying start?**

This is the world's first comprehensive survey of business leaders in their first 100 days in office with over 400 senior executives in board, director and functional leadership roles across a range of industries participating.



Conducted and analysed by the foremost international provider of executive search and leadership services, and the pioneers of executive coaching and leadership transformation, the survey set out to discover answers to the following: **What are the experiences and most important issues for leaders in their first 100 days in a new position?**

The responses have provided an opportunity for executives to learn from the experiences of peers and to prepare more effectively for new roles. For Boards and management teams looking for talented executives, and human resources leaders planning improvements in how their organisations perform, the results are a call to review and improve the on-boarding process and in the first 100 days increase the effectiveness of newly-appointed executives.

A consequence of the findings has been the design of a fresh, ground-breaking approach that ensures effective on-boarding and accelerates the contribution by new executives, from day one.

## Key findings

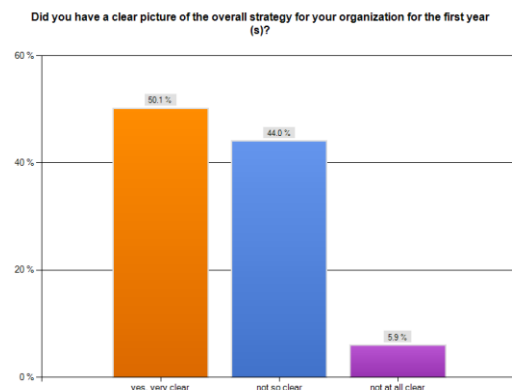
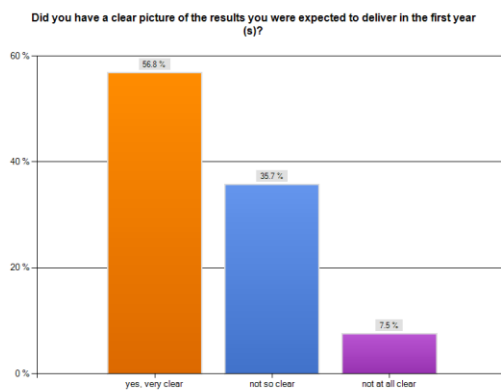
Changing the job is exciting. Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the opportunity and energy that a new position brings. They share a strong sense of excitement that they are wanted and needed. They bring enthusiasm to their new environment. Executives are eager to learn and explore, to take charge and bear the responsibility; they enjoy the challenges; they are stimulated by their new teams and opportunities to innovative.

Respondents commonly identify the quality or absence of on-boarding and people processes as obstacles to a flying start. The findings show where and how to improve in many areas. The effectiveness of the entry process in the first 100 days is hampered by a general confusion, a lack of personal introductions, bureaucracy, ambiguous goals and expectations, and communication failures in the reporting line.

Executives are frequently faced with unexpected people and cultural issues in the first 100 days. Although confident by nature, situations can be complex to handle without adequate understanding of the culture and history of the organisation. There is a sense of being 'on your own' and not having the resources to improve the situation.

Areas that call out for improvement are:

1. The business: Creating clarity about strategy and results: For 43% of respondents the expectations of what they were expected to deliver in the first year were not clear. 50% of executives did not have a clear picture of the strategy for the new organisation.



2. The organisation: Clarity needed on values, better processes to build relationships & new ways of engaging and integrating executives in shaping the organisational culture.
3. The person & role: Better HR process that are put in practice and ensuring that leadership skills and capabilities can be demonstrated.

On observing the results, Sir John Whitmore, a pioneer of coaching in the workplace and Executive Chairman of Performance Consultants International said, “The first 100 days is an extremely important point for a new executive and is traditionally not well dealt with by organisations. This study and its findings are proof of that.”

Employers need to do whatever they can to help the person to transition rapidly into the new role. Even with the most confident and senior of executives it is important to start the process on day 1, exploring the anxieties around the new role, creating awareness of the obstacles and surfacing unstated fears. This is the very essence of executive coaching. Companies need to assess their on-boarding process and how things actually work in practice. With these in mind, here are two key findings of the study.

Executives comment that companies often try and frequently fail to give their new people adequate briefings about policies, resources, stakeholders, culture and values; they assume that the new executive just has to ‘get it’. Something more profound is required. For example, ask ‘what can the new person do that we can’t do already?’ In turn, the new person has to ask questions about the company, the new position and culture. An executive coach can help to create co-ownership and responsibility for success and unlock the full potential of this new ‘pairing’ of the company and the executive.

The executives surveyed felt very confident about their people management and soft skills. This is at odds with years of coaching experience that show the need for better people skills and higher EQ at executive level. It is also at odds with the frustrations that the executives voice in the survey about their ability to integrate and relate with people. This points towards over-confidence or perhaps turning a blind eye to the realities. The entire on-boarding process would benefit substantially from the use of an executive coach that would stimulate the new executive to seek self-knowledge and what more is required of him or her to understand the needs and attitudes of the people they now work with.

Companies like to feel that there is consistency in their approaches to situational leadership and on-boarding processes. This is evidently not the case. The consequence is a failure that causes companies to underperform and fails new executives. There is an evident need for new executives to benefit from coaching, especially at the start of their assignments.

The survey’s authors, Borderless Executive Search and Performance Consultants International plan to conduct a similar survey at a later date with a group of newly-appointed executives that have undertaken coaching in the First100Days.

### **Afterword Borderless**

Experience tells us that the first 100 days can be crucial to the success of a newly-appointed executive. Yet, fact-based insight into the factors and dynamics that affect executives as they integrate into their organizations, have not been widely available till today.

We invited over 600 senior executives to participate in a survey, which sought personal perceptions of the initial period in their current position. We are grateful for their participation as they helped to improve the body of knowledge related to the success of newly-appointed executives and their organizations.

This briefing and our First100Days executive coaching service is our response to what we heard. We are delighted to collaborate with Performance Consultants International in generating the insights and the provision of executive coaching.

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