

CHAPTER 3

Match Strategy to Situation

If Karl Lewin knew anything, it was how to manage in times of crisis. In fact, he'd recently overseen a quick and successful turnaround of European manufacturing operations at Global Foods, a multinational consumer products company. He was less sure, however, that the same sort of approach would be effective in his new role at the firm.

A hard-driving, German-born executive, Karl had acted decisively in Europe to restructure an organization that was broken because of the company's overemphasis on growth through acquisition and its focus on country-level operations to the exclusion of other opportunities. Within a year, Karl had centralized the most important manufacturing support functions, closed four of the least efficient plants, and shifted a big chunk of production to Eastern Europe. These changes, painful though they were, began to bear fruit by the end of eighteen months, and operational efficiency improved dramatically.

But no good deed goes unpunished. Karl's success in Europe led to his appointment as the executive vice president of supply chain for the company's core North American operations, headquartered in New Jersey. The job was much bigger than the earlier one, combining manufacturing with strategic sourcing, outbound logistics, and customer service.

In contrast to the situation in Europe, North American operations were not in immediate crisis—something Karl recognized was the essence of the problem. The organization's long-term success had only recently shown signs of slipping. The preceding year, industry benchmarks had placed the company's manufacturing performance slightly below average in overall efficiency, and in the lower one-third in the crucial area of customer satisfaction with on-time delivery. Mediocre scores, to be sure, but nothing that screamed "turnaround."

Meanwhile, Karl's own assessment indicated that serious problems were brewing. The business was addicted to fighting fires; managers reveled in their ability to react well in crises rather than prevent problems in the first place. Karl believed it was only a matter of time before major failures occurred. Furthermore, executives relied too much on gut feelings to make critical decisions, and information systems provided too little of the right kind of objective data. These shortcomings contributed, in Karl's view, to widespread, unfounded optimism about the organization's future.

To take charge successfully, you must have a clear understanding of the situation you are facing and the implications for what you need to do and how you need to do it. From the outset, leaders like Karl need to focus on answering two fundamental questions. The first question is, What kind of change am I being called upon to lead? Only by answering this question will you know how to match your strategy to the situation. The second

question is, What kind of change leader am I? Here the answer has implications for how you should adjust your leadership style. Careful diagnosis of the business situation will clarify the challenges, opportunities, and resources available to you.

Using the STARS Model

STARS is an acronym for five common business situations leaders may find themselves moving into: start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success. The STARS model outlines the characteristics and challenges of, respectively, launching a venture; getting one back on track; dealing with rapid expansion; reenergizing a once-leading business that's now facing serious problems; and inheriting an organization that is performing well and then taking it to the next level.

In all five of the STARS situations, the eventual goal is the same: a successful and growing business. However, the challenges and opportunities, summarized in table 3-1, vary in predictable ways depending on which situation you are experiencing.

What are the defining features of the five STARS situations? In a *start-up*, you are charged with assembling the capabilities (people, funding, and technology) to get a new business, product, project, or relationship off the ground. This means you can shape the organization from the outset by recruiting your team, playing a major role in defining the agenda, and building the architecture of the business. Participants in a start-up are likely to be more excited and hopeful than members of a troubled group facing failure. But at the same time, employees of a start-up are typically much less focused on key issues than those in a turnaround, simply because the vision, strategy, structures, and systems that channel organizational energy are not yet in place.

TABLE 3-1

The STARS model

Start-Up	Turnaround	Accelerated growth	Realignment	Sustaining success
<p>Assembling the capabilities (people, financing, and technology) to get a new business or initiative off the ground</p> <p>Challenges Building the strategy, structures, and systems from scratch without a clear framework or boundaries</p> <p>Recruiting and welding together a high-performing team</p> <p>Making do with limited resources</p> <p>Opportunities You can do things right from the beginning.</p> <p>People are energized by the possibilities.</p> <p>There are no rigid preconceptions.</p>	<p>Saving a business or initiative widely acknowledged to be in serious trouble</p> <p>Reenergizing demoralized employees and other stakeholders</p> <p>Making effective decisions under time pressure</p> <p>Going deep enough with painful cuts and difficult personnel choices</p> <p>Everyone recognizes that change is necessary.</p> <p>Affected constituencies offer significant external support.</p> <p>A little success goes a long way.</p>	<p>Managing a rapidly expanding business</p> <p>Putting in place structures and systems to permit scaling</p> <p>Integrating many new employees</p> <p>The potential for growth helps to motivate people.</p> <p>People will be inclined to stretch themselves and those who work for them.</p>	<p>Reenergizing a previously successful organization that now faces problems</p> <p>Convincing employees that change is necessary</p> <p>Carefully restructuring the top team and refocusing the organization</p> <p>The organization has significant pockets of strength.</p> <p>People want to continue to see themselves as successful.</p>	<p>Preserving the vitality of a successful organization and taking it to the next level</p> <p>Living in the shadow of the former leader and managing the team he or she created</p> <p>Playing good defense before embarking on too many new initiatives</p> <p>Finding ways to take the business to the next level</p> <p>A strong team may already be in place.</p> <p>People are motivated to continue their history of success.</p> <p>A foundation for continued success (such as a long product pipeline) may be in place.</p>

In a *turnaround*, you take on a unit or group that is recognized to be in deep trouble and work to get it back on track. A turnaround is the classic burning platform, demanding rapid, decisive action. Most people understand that substantial change is necessary, although they may be in disarray and in significant disagreement about what needs to be done. Turnarounds are ready-fire-aim situations: you need to make the tough calls with less than full knowledge and then adjust as you learn more. In contrast, *realignments* (and *sustaining-success assignments*) are more ready-aim-fire situations. Turning around a failing business requires the new leader to cut it down to a defensible core fast and then begin to build it back up. This painful process, if successful, leaves the business in a sustaining-success situation. If efforts to turn around the business fail, the result often is shutdown or divestiture.

In an *accelerated-growth situation*, the organization has begun to hit its stride, and the hard work of scaling up has begun. This typically means you're putting in the structures, processes, and systems necessary to rapidly expand the business (or project, product, or relationship). You also likely need to hire and onboard a lot of people while making sure they become part of the culture that has made the organization successful thus far. The risks, of course, lie in expanding too much too fast.

Start-ups, turnarounds, and accelerated-growth situations involve much resource-intensive construction work: there isn't much existing infrastructure and capacity for you to build on. To a significant degree, you get to start fresh or, in the case of accelerated growth, to build on a strong foundation. In realignments and sustaining-success situations, in contrast, you enter organizations that have significant strengths but also serious constraints on what you can and cannot do. Fortunately, in these two situations you typically have some time before you need to make major calls. This is good,

because you must learn a lot about the culture and politics and begin building supportive coalitions.

Because of internal complacency, erosion of key capabilities, or external challenges, successful businesses tend to drift toward trouble. In a realignment, your challenge is to revitalize a unit, product, process, or project that has been drifting into danger. The clouds are gathering on the horizon, but the storm has not yet broken—and many people may not even see the clouds. The biggest challenge often is to create a sense of urgency. There may be a lot of denial; the leader needs to open people's eyes to the fact that a problem actually exists. This was the situation facing Karl in North America. Here, the good news is that the organization likely has at least islands of significant strength (good products, customer relationships, processes, and people).

In a sustaining-success situation, you are shouldering responsibility for preserving the vitality of a successful organization and taking it to the next level. This emphatically does not mean that the organization can rest on its laurels. Rather, it means you need to understand, at a deep level, what has made the business successful and position it to meet the inevitable challenges so that it will continue to grow and prosper. In fact, the key to sustaining success often lies in continuously starting up, accelerating, and realigning parts of the business.

A key implication is that success in transitioning depends, in no small measure, on your ability to transform the prevailing organizational psychology in predictable ways. In start-ups, the prevailing mood is often one of excited confusion, and your job is to channel that energy into productive directions, in part by deciding what not to do. In turnarounds, you may be dealing with a group of people who are close to despair; it is your job to provide them with a concrete plan for moving forward and confidence that it will improve the situation. In accelerated-growth situations, you need to help people understand that the organization needs to be

more disciplined and get them to work within defined processes and systems. In realignments, you will likely have to pierce the veil of denial that is preventing people from confronting the need to reinvent the business. Finally, in sustaining-success situations, you must invent the challenge by finding ways to keep people motivated, combat complacency, and find new direction for growth—both organizational and personal.

You cannot figure out where to take a new organization if you do not understand where it has been and how it got where it is. In Karl's realignment situation, for example, it is essential that he understand what made the organization successful in the past and why it drifted into trouble. To understand your situation, you must put on your historian's hat.

But if you're not leading a large business, can you still use the STARS model to understand the challenges you face? Absolutely. You can apply it regardless of your level in the organization. You may be a new CEO taking over an entire company that is in start-up mode. Or you could be a first-line supervisor managing a new production line, a brand manager launching a new product, an R&D team leader responsible for a new product development project, or an information technology manager responsible for implementing a new enterprise software system. All of these situations share the characteristics of a start-up. Similarly, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success arise at all levels, in companies large and small.

Diagnosing Your STARS Portfolio

In reality, you're unlikely to encounter a pure and tidy example of a start-up, turnaround, accelerated-growth, realignment, or sustaining-success situation. At a high level your situation may fit

reasonably nearly into one of these categories. But as soon as you drill down, you will almost certainly discover that you're managing a portfolio—of products, projects, processes, plants, or people—that represents a mix of STARS situations. For instance, you may be taking over an organization that enjoys incremental growth with successful products and in which one group is launching a line of products based on a new technology. Or you may be working to turn around a company that has a couple of high-performing, state-of-the-art plants.

The next step in applying the STARS model is to diagnose your STARS portfolio; you must figure out which parts of your new organization belong in each of the five categories. Take time to assign the pieces of your new responsibilities (such as products, processes, projects, plants, and people) to the five categories using table 3-2. Given this arrangement, how will you manage the various pieces differently? This exercise will help you to think systematically about challenges and opportunities in each piece. It will also supply you a common language with which to talk to your new boss, peers, and direct reports about what you are going to do and why.

Leading Change

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to leading change. This is why it's important to be clear about the STARS mix. Using the STARS model, Karl was able to recognize the clear differences between the realignment situation he was heading into (where problems were gradually mounting, but there was no crisis to drive action) and the dramatic turnaround he had successfully managed in Europe (where urgent needs demanded rapid, radical surgery), and he identified the associated implications for how he needed to lead change and manage himself. If Karl had treated

TABLE 3-2

Diagnosing your STARS portfolio

Use the table to identify the mix of STARS situations you face. First, identify which elements (projects, processes, products, perhaps even complete businesses) in your new responsibilities fall into the various STARS situations in the first column; list those elements in the second column. You need not have something in every category. Everything may be in turnaround, or it may be a mix of two or three types. Then use the third column to estimate the percentage of your effort that should be allocated to each category in the next 90 days, making sure it adds up to 100%. Finally, think about which of these situations you most prefer to do. If you also assigned that situation the highest priority, be sure that your preferences are not overly influencing your priorities.

STARS situation	Job element	Priority percentage
Start-up		
Turnaround		
Accelerating growth		
Realignment		
Sustaining success		100

his new situation as a turnaround and tried to conduct radical surgery, he probably would have incurred both active and passive resistance, undermining his ability to realize needed change, especially because he was an outsider and therefore vulnerable to being isolated and undercut. Recognizing what was required in North American operations, Karl adopted a more measured approach.

Armed with insight into your STARS portfolio and the key challenges and opportunities, you will adopt the right strategies for leading change. Doing so means, however, adopting the approaches laid out in this book for creating momentum in your next 90 days. Specifically, you must establish priorities, define strategic intent, identify where you can secure early wins, build

the right leadership team, and create supporting alliances. Let's look at what Karl did differently in the turnaround and realignment situations he faced.

The starting point, of course, was focused learning. In the turnaround situation in Europe, Karl needed to rapidly assess the organization's technical dimensions—strategy, competitors, products, markets, and technologies—much as a consultant would. In his new leadership role in North America, Karl's learning challenge was markedly different. Technical comprehension was still important, obviously, but cultural and political learning mattered more. That's because internal social dynamics often cause successful organizations to drift into trouble, and because getting people to acknowledge the need for change is much more a political challenge than a technical one. Particularly for a newcomer to the organization, as Karl was, a deep understanding of the culture and politics is a prerequisite for leadership success—and even survival.

Likewise, as Karl worked to establish priorities, he had to weigh the demands of the situation. The European turnaround required radical surgery. The strategy and organizational structure of the business were preventing it from achieving its goals and had to be changed quickly. So Karl closed plants, shifted production, and cut the workforce dramatically. He also rapidly centralized important manufacturing functions in order to reduce fragmentation and cut costs. The North American realignment, in contrast, didn't call for an immediate transformation of strategy or structure. There weren't any major capacity or productivity problems, so plant closures weren't necessary. The manufacturing functions were already centralized and strong. The real problems lay in systems, skills, and culture. It therefore made sense for Karl to focus on those areas.

Situational factors also played a large role in how Karl built his leadership teams in the two situations. To expeditiously turn around

the European business, Karl cleaned house at the top of the organization and recruited most of the new senior talent from the outside. In North America, however, the leadership team he inherited was already quite strong. Still, he realized he needed to make a few high-payoff changes in the roster. A couple of central manufacturing roles required leaders with stronger technical skills to support the systems changes he planned to make, and there was an influential manager who, despite Karl's best efforts, didn't grasp the need for change; in fact, the manager's inaction threatened to undermine Karl's leadership. That person's departure sent a crucial message to the rest of the organization. Meanwhile, Karl promoted from within to fill that role and others, and that helped rally the organization behind his plans. People came to see that he wasn't only focusing on the weaknesses of the business but was also appreciative of its strengths.

Finally, Karl had the good judgment to secure early wins differently in the two situations. In turnarounds, leaders must move people out of a state of despair. Karl did that in Europe by closing ailing plants and shifting production, actions that refocused the organization on its core strengths and helped cut unnecessary projects and initiatives. In the realignment, in contrast, Karl's most important early win was to raise people's awareness of the need for change. He accomplished that by putting more emphasis on facts and figures; he revamped the company's performance metrics in manufacturing and customer service to focus employees' attention on critical weaknesses in those areas, and he also introduced external benchmarks and hard-nosed assessments by respected consultants—drawing on impartial voices from outside the company to help make his case. These actions enabled him to pierce the unfounded optimism and send an important message to the rest of the organization.

Key differences between leading change in turnaround and realignment situations are summarized in table 3-3.

TABLE 3-3

Leading change in turnarounds versus realignments

	Turnarounds	Realignments
1. Organize to learn Figure out what you most need to learn, from whom, and how you can best learn it.	Focus on technical learning (strategy, markets, technologies, and so on). Prepare to act quickly.	Focus on cultural and political learning. Prepare to act deliberately.
2. Define strategic intent Develop and communicate a compelling vision for what the organization will become. Outline a clear strategy for achieving that vision.	Prune noncore businesses. Hone and leverage existing capabilities. Stimulate innovation.	
3. Establish A-item priorities Identify a few vital goals and pursue them relentlessly. Think about what you need to have accomplished by the end of year 1 in the new position.	Make faster, bolder moves. Focus on strategy and structure.	Make slower, more deliberate moves. Focus on systems, skills, and culture.
4. Build the leadership team Evaluate the team you inherited. Move deftly to make the necessary changes; find the optimal balance between bringing in outside talent and elevating high potentials within the organization.	Clean house at the top. Recruit external talent.	Make a few important changes. Promote high potentials from within.
5. Secure early wins Think through how you plan to "arrive" in the new organization. Find ways to build personal credibility and energize the ranks.	Shift the organizational mind-set from despair to hope.	Shift the organizational mind-set from denial to awareness.
6. Create supporting alliances Identify how the organization really works and who has influence. Create key coalitions in support of your initiatives.	Gain support from bosses and other stakeholders to invest the required resources.	Build alliances sideways and down to ensure better execution.

Managing Yourself

The STARS state of your organization also has implications for the adjustments you'll need to make to manage yourself. This is particularly true when it comes to determining leadership styles and figuring out whether you are reflexively a "hero" or a "steward."

In turnarounds, leaders are often dealing with people who are hungry for hope, vision, and direction, and that necessitates a heroic style of leadership—charging against the enemy, sword in hand. People line up behind the hero in times of trouble and follow commands. The premium is on rapid diagnosis of the business situation (markets, technologies, products, strategies) and then aggressive moves to cut back the organization to a defensible core. You need to act quickly and decisively, often on the basis of incomplete information.

Clearly, this was the case for Karl in Europe. He immediately took charge, diagnosed the situation, set direction, and made painful calls. Because the outlook was bleak, people were willing to act on his directives without offering much resistance.

Realignments, in contrast, demand from leaders something more akin to stewardship or servant leadership—a more diplomatic and less ego-driven approach that entails building consensus for the need for change. More subtle influence skills come into play; skilled stewards have deep understandings of the culture and politics of their organizations. Stewards are more patient and systematic than heroes in deciding which people, processes, and other resources to preserve and which to discard. They also painstakingly cultivate awareness of the need for change by promoting shared diagnosis, influencing opinion leaders, and encouraging benchmarking.

In his North America appointment, Karl needed to learn to temper some of his heroic tendencies; he had to make careful assessments, move deliberately toward change, and lay a

foundation for sustainable success. Whether any leader in transition can adapt her personal leadership strategy successfully depends greatly on the ability to embrace the following pillars of self-management: enhancing self-awareness, exercising personal discipline, and building complementary teams.

Because of their differing imperatives, it is easy for heroes to stumble in realignment and sustaining-success situations and for stewards to struggle in start-ups and turnarounds. The experienced turnaround person facing a realignment is at risk of moving too fast, needlessly causing resistance. The experienced realignment person in a turnaround situation is at risk of moving too slowly and expending energy on cultivating consensus when it is unnecessary to do so, thus squandering precious time.

This is not to say that people who are natural heroes cannot get in touch with their inner stewards and vice versa. Good leaders can succeed in all five of the STARS situations, although no one is equally good at all of them. It is essential to make a hard-headed assessment of which of your skills and inclinations will serve you well in your particular situation and which are likely to get you into trouble. Don't arrive ready for war if what you need is to build alliances.

You also need to remember that leadership is a team sport. Your STARS portfolio has implications for the precise mix of heroes and stewards (every organization needs both) on your leadership team. Karl willed himself toward stewardship in North America, but he knew he more naturally and effectively played the hero role. The implications of this bit of self-awareness were threefold. First, he needed to stock his team with some natural stewards to whom he could turn for wise counsel (lest he go off half-cocked) and to whom he could delegate some of the necessary outreach. Second, he had to identify where it actually made sense to focus some of his heroic energies. After all, every organization, even the

most successful, has parts that are in serious trouble. As long as he didn't start setting fires just to fight them and didn't jeopardize the larger goal of realigning the business, this was an appropriate way to achieve a balance. Third, Karl needed to take into consideration STARS preferences and abilities as he hired, promoted, and assigned people to key projects.

Rewarding Success

The STARS framework has implications for how you should evaluate the people who work for you, and for the culture you want to create. Data from the *Harvard Business Review* Transition Survey helps illustrate this essential point. Participants were asked which of the STARS situations they thought were most challenging and in which they would most prefer to be. The results, summarized in table 3-4, are illuminating. The most challenging situation was assessed to be realignment, followed by sustaining success and turnaround. Start-up and accelerated growth were assessed as being significantly easier. However, when it came to preferences, the pattern reversed, with start-up being (by far) the most popular, followed by turnaround and accelerated growth.

This is not a surprising finding, and the underlying reasons are revealing. It is not the case that people are drawn to the easy situations. Rather, they are drawn to situations that are (1) more fun and (2) get more recognition.

A successful start-up is a visible and easily measurable individual accomplishment, as is a successful turnaround. In a realignment, in contrast, success consists of avoiding disaster. It is hard to measure results in a realignment when success means that nothing much happens; it's the dog that doesn't bark. Also, success in realignment requires painstakingly building awareness of the need for change, and

TABLE 3-4

STARS challenges and preferences

Survey respondents were asked to identify which STARS situation they thought was the most challenging and which they most preferred (i.e., would choose if they could). The differences in their assessments are striking, particularly when the sums of the numbers for more action-oriented, authority-driven STARS situations (start-up, turnaround, and accelerated growth) are compared to those that call for more focus on learning, reflection, and influence (realignment and sustaining success).

STARS situation	Most challenging	Most preferred
Start-up	13.5%	47.1%
Turnaround	21.9%	16.7%
Accelerated growth	11.6%	16.1%
Realignment	30.3%	12.7%
Sustaining success	$\frac{22.6\%}{100\%}$	$\frac{7.4\%}{100\%}$
Total		
Start-up, turnaround, or accelerated growth	47.1%	79.9%
Realignment or sustaining success	52.9%	20.1%

that often means giving credit to the group rather than taking it yourself. As for rewarding sustaining success, people seldom call their local power company to say, "Thanks for keeping the lights on today." But if the power goes off, the screaming is immediate and loud.

There is a paradox inherent in rewarding people lavishly for successfully turning around failing businesses (or starting exciting new ventures). Few high-potential leaders show much interest in realignments, preferring the action and recognition associated with turnarounds (and start-ups). So who exactly is responsible for preventing businesses from becoming turnarounds? And does the fact that companies reward turnarounds (and do not know how to reward realignments) make it more likely that businesses

will end in crisis? Skilled managers can seemingly count on less-accomplished people to mess up businesses so that they can come charging to the rescue.

The more general point, of course, is that performance must be evaluated and rewarded differently in the different STARS situations. The performance of people put in charge of start-ups and turnarounds is easiest to evaluate, because you can focus on measurable outcomes relative to a clear prior baseline.

Evaluating success and failure in realignment and sustaining-success situations is much more problematic. Performance in a realignment may be better than expected, but still poor. Or it may be that nothing much seems to happen, because a crisis was avoided. Sustaining-success situations pose similar problems. Success may consist of a small loss of market share in the face of a concerted attack by competitors or the eking out of a few percentage points of top-line growth in a mature business. The unknown in both realignments and sustaining-success situations is what would have happened if other actions had been taken or other people had been in charge—the "as compared to what?" problem. Measuring success in such situations takes much more work, because to assess the adequacy of their responses, you must have a deep understanding of the challenges new leaders face and the actions they are taking.

Closing the Loop

Your understanding of the mix of STARS situations inevitably will deepen and shift as you learn more about your new organization. Plan to return to this chapter periodically to reassess your diagnosis of your organization, and think about the implications for what needs to be done and who needs to do it.

MATCH STRATEGY TO SITUATION—CHECKLIST

1. What portfolio of STARS situations have you inherited? Which portions of your responsibilities are in start-up, turnaround, accelerated-growth, realignment, and sustaining-success modes?
2. What are the implications for the challenges and opportunities you are likely to confront, and for the way you should approach accelerating your transition?
3. What are the implications for your learning agenda? Do you need to understand only the technical side of the business, or is it critical that you understand culture and politics as well?
4. What is the prevailing climate in your organization? What psychological transformations do you need to make, and how will you bring them about?
5. How can you best lead change given the situations you face?
6. Which of your skills and strengths are likely to be most valuable in your new situation, and which have the potential to get you into trouble?
7. What are the implications for the team you need to build?

CHAPTER 4**Negotiate Success**

When Michael Chen was promoted to be chief information officer for a key business unit of a mid-sized oil company, he was elated—until he received calls from two colleagues. Both told him the same thing: “Start updating your résumé. Cates is going to eat you alive.”

His new boss, Vaughan Cates, was a hard-driving business unit leader with a reputation for getting results—and for being tough on people. She had recently taken over the unit, and several of the people she had inherited had already left.

Michael’s friends anticipated the problem. “You’ve had a lot of success,” one said. “But Cates will think you’re not aggressive enough. You’re a planner and team builder. She’ll think you’re too slow and not up to the tough decisions.”

Forewarned, Michael laid the groundwork with Vaughan to gain time for diagnosis and planning. “I want to operate on a 90-day time frame, starting with 30 days to get on top of things,” he told her. “Then I will bring you a detailed assessment and plan with goals and actions for the next 60 days.” Michael updated

her regularly on his progress. Pressed by her to make a call on a major systems purchase after three weeks, Michael held firm to his schedule. At the end of 30 days, he delivered a strong plan that pleased his new boss.

A month later, Michael returned to report some early wins and to ask Vaughan for more head count to advance a key project. She subjected him to withering questioning, but he was on top of his business case. Eventually she agreed to his requests but set strict deadlines for achieving results. Armed with what he needed, Michael was soon able to report that he had met several interim targets.

Building on his momentum, Michael raised the question of style at their next meeting: "We have different styles, but I can deliver for you," he said. "I want you to judge me on my results, not on how I get them." It took nearly a year, but Michael built a solid, productive working relationship with Vaughan.

To succeed as Michael did with a new boss, it's wise to negotiate success. It's well worth investing time in this critical relationship up front, because your new boss sets your benchmarks, interprets your actions for other key players, and controls access to resources you need. He will have more impact than any other individual on how quickly you reach the break-even point, and on your eventual success or failure.

Negotiating success means proactively engaging with your new boss to shape the game so that you have a fighting chance of achieving desired goals. Many new leaders just play the game, reactively taking their situation as given—and failing as a result. The alternative is to shape the game by negotiating with your boss to establish realistic expectations, reach consensus, and secure sufficient resources. By negotiating effectively with Vaughan, Michael laid the foundation for his success.

Keep in mind that the nature of your relationship with your new boss should depend on your level in the organization and the business situation you face. The higher you rise, the more autonomy you're likely to have. This is especially the case if you and your boss are situated in different locations. Lack of oversight can be a blessing if you get what you need to succeed. Or it can be a curse if you get enough rope to hang yourself.

What you need from a boss also varies among the STARS business situations. In start-ups, you need resources and perhaps protection from higher-level interference. In turnarounds, you may need to be pushed to cut back the business quickly to the defensible core. When you're accelerating growth, the key may be securing appropriate levels of investment. If you're in a realignment, you may need your boss to help you make the case for change. In a sustaining-success situation, you may need help to learn about the business and avoid early mistakes that threaten the core assets.

There is much you can do to build a productive working relationship with your new boss, and you should start doing it as soon as you're being considered for a new role. Keep it in mind as you participate in interviews, get selected, and formally begin the new job.

This chapter shows you how to engage in the right kinds of dialogue with your new boss. Read it even if you will be reporting to the same boss in your new role. Your relationship likely won't stay the same. The boss's expectations may be different, and you may need more resources. Many managers mistakenly assume that they can continue to work with a current boss in the same way despite being in a different role. Don't make this error.

Think also about how you might use the ideas in this chapter to accelerate relationship building with your own new direct reports. After all, don't you have a big stake in getting them to the break-even point as quickly as possible?

Focusing on the Fundamentals

How do you build a productive relationship with a new boss? There are some basic do's and don'ts. Let's start with the don'ts.

- **Don't stay away.** If you have a boss who doesn't reach out to you, or with whom you have uncomfortable interactions, you will have to reach out yourself. Otherwise, you risk potentially crippling communication gaps. It may feel good to be given a lot of rope, but resist the urge to take it. Get on your boss's calendar regularly. Be sure your boss is aware of the issues you face and that you are aware of her expectations, especially whether and how they're shifting.
- **Don't surprise your boss.** It's no fun bringing your boss bad news. However, most bosses consider it a far greater sin not to report emerging problems early enough. Worst of all is for your boss to learn about a problem from someone else. It's usually best to give your new boss at least a heads-up as soon as you become aware of a developing problem.
- **Don't approach your boss only with problems.** That said, you don't want to be perceived as bringing nothing but problems for your boss to solve. You also need to have plans for how you will proceed.

This emphatically does not mean that you must fashion full-blown solutions: the outlay of time and effort to generate solutions can easily lure you down the rocky road to surprising your boss. The key here is to give some thought to how to address the problem—even if it is only gathering more information—and to your role and the help you will need. (This is a good thing to keep in mind in dealing with direct reports, too. It can be dangerous to say, "Don't bring me problems, bring me solutions." Far better is, "Don't just bring me problems, bring me plans for how we can begin to address them.")

- **Don't run down your checklist.** There is a tendency, even for senior leaders, to use meetings with a boss as an opportunity to run through your checklist of what you've been doing. Sometimes this is appropriate, but it is rarely what your boss needs or wants to hear. You should assume she wants to focus on the most important things you're trying to do and how she can help. Don't go in without at most three things you really need to share or on which you need action.
- **Don't expect your boss to change.** You and your new boss may have very different working styles. You may communicate in different ways, motivate in different ways, and prefer different levels of detail in overseeing your direct reports. But it's your responsibility to adapt to your boss's style; you need to adapt your approach to work with your boss's preferences.

There are some fundamental do's as well. Following them will make your life easier.

- **Clarify expectations early and often.** Begin managing expectations from the moment you consider taking a new role. Focus on expectations during the interview process. You are in trouble if your boss expects you to fix things fast when you know the business has serious structural problems. It's wise to get bad news on the table early and to lower unrealistic expectations. Then check in regularly to make sure your boss's expectations have not shifted. Revisiting expectations is especially important if you're onboarding from the outside and don't have a deep understanding of the culture and politics.
- **Take 100 percent responsibility for making the relationship work.** This is the flip side of "Don't stay away." Don't expect your boss to reach out or to offer you the time and support you need. It's best to begin by assuming that it's on your shoulders to make the relationship work. If your boss meets you partway, it will be a welcome surprise.
- **Negotiate time lines for diagnosis and action planning.** Don't let yourself get caught up immediately in firefighting or be pressured to make calls before you're ready. Buy yourself some time, even if it's only a few weeks, to diagnose the new organization and come up with an action plan. It worked for Michael in his dealings with Vaughan, and it can work for you. The 90-day plan discussed at the end of this chapter is an excellent vehicle.
- **Aim for early wins in areas important to the boss.** Whatever your own priorities, figure out what your boss cares about most. What are his priorities and goals, and how do your actions fit into this picture? Once you

know, aim for early results in those areas. One good way is to focus on three things that are important to your boss and discuss what you're doing about them every time you interact. In that way, your boss will feel ownership of your success.

- **Pursue good marks from those whose opinions your boss respects.** Your new boss's opinion of you will be based in part on direct interactions and in part on what she hears about you from trusted others. Your boss will have preexisting relationships with people who are now your peers and possibly your subordinates. You needn't curry favor with the people your boss trusts. Simply be alert to the multiple channels through which information and opinion about you will reach your boss.

With these basic rules in mind, you can begin to plan how to engage with your new boss.

Planning for Five Conversations

Your relationship with your new boss will be built through an ongoing dialogue. Your discussions will begin before you accept the new position and continue into your transition and beyond. Several fundamental subjects belong at the center of this dialogue. In fact, it's valuable to include plans for five specific conversations with your new boss about transition-related subjects in your 90-day plan. These are not subjects to be dealt with in separate meetings but are intertwined threads of dialogue.

1. **The situational diagnosis conversation.** In this conversation, you seek to understand how your new boss sees the

STARS portfolio you have inherited. Are there elements of start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, and sustaining success? How did the organization reach this point? What factors—both soft and hard—make this situation a challenge? What resources within the organization can you draw on? Your view may differ from your boss's, but it is essential to grasp how she sees the situation.

2. **The expectations conversation.** Your goal in this conversation is to understand and negotiate expectations. What does your new boss need you to do in the short term and in the medium term? What will constitute success? Critically, how will your performance be measured? When? You might conclude that your boss's expectations are unrealistic and that you need to work to reset them. Also, as part of your broader campaign to secure early wins, discussed in the next chapter, keep in mind that it's better to underpromise and overdeliver.

3. **The resource conversation.** This conversation is essentially a negotiation for critical resources. What do you need to be successful? What do you need your boss to do? The resources need not be limited to funding or personnel. In a realignment, for example, you may need help from your boss to persuade the organization to confront the need for change. Key here is to focus your boss on the benefits and costs of what you can accomplish with different amounts of resources.

4. **The style conversation.** This conversation is about how you and your new boss can best interact on an ongoing basis. What forms of communication does he prefer, and for what? Face-to-face? Voice, electronic? How often?

What kinds of decisions does he want to be consulted on, and when can you make the call on your own? How do your styles differ, and what are the implications for the ways you should interact?

5. **The personal development conversation.** Once you're a few months into your new role, you can begin to discuss how you're doing and what your developmental priorities should be. Where are you doing well? In what areas do you need to improve or do things differently? Are there projects or special assignments you could undertake (without sacrificing focus)?

In practice, your dialogue about these subjects will overlap and evolve over time. You might address several of the five issues in a single meeting, or you might work out issues related to one subject through a series of brief exchanges. Michael covered style and expectations in a single meeting and established a schedule for talking about the situation and more deeply about expectations.

However, there is logic to the sequence just described. Your early conversations should focus on situational diagnosis, expectations, and style. As you learn more, you will be ready to negotiate for resources, revisiting your diagnosis of the situation and resetting expectations as necessary. When you feel the relationship is reasonably well established, you can introduce the personal development conversation. Take time to plan for each conversation, and signal clearly to your boss what you hope to accomplish in each exchange.

Use table 4-1 to take stock of where you currently stand in having each of these conversations and what your priorities are for the next 30 days. If you're in the process of interviewing for a new role, use it to capture what you've learned and identify focal points for conversation.

TABLE 4-1

The five conversations

Conversation	Current status	Priorities for the next 30 days
<i>Situation:</i> How does your boss see your STARS portfolio?		
<i>Expectations:</i> What are you expected to accomplish?		
<i>Resources:</i> What resources do you have at your disposal?		
<i>Style:</i> How can you best work together?		
<i>Personal development:</i> What is going well, and what do you need to do differently?		

Now use the detailed guidelines that follow to plan the next steps for each of the five conversations with your new boss.

Planning the Situation Conversation

Reaching a shared understanding of the business situation you face, and of its associated challenges and opportunities, is your goal in the *situational diagnosis* conversation. This shared understanding is the foundation for everything you will do. If you and your boss do not define your new situation in the same way, you will not receive the support you need. Thus, your first discussion should center on clearly defining your new situation using the STARS model as a shared language. (The same is true, as I discuss later, with your team.)

Match Your Support to Your Situation

The support you need from your boss will depend on your STARS portfolio—start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, sustaining success, or some mix. Once you reach a common understanding of the situation, think carefully about the role you need your new boss to play and the kinds of support you will ask for. In all five situations, you need your boss to give you the direction, support, and space to do your job. Table 4-2 lists typical roles your boss might play in each of the STARS situations.

TABLE 4-2

Matching support to your situation

Situation	Typical roles for your boss
Start-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help getting needed resources quickly • Clear, measurable goals • Guidance at strategic breakpoints • Help staying focused
Turnaround	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as start-up, plus • Support for making tough personnel calls • Support for changing or correcting external image • Help cutting deeply enough, fast enough
Accelerated growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as start-up, plus • Support for getting investment to fuel growth at the right rate in the right ways • Help making the case for new systems and structures
Realignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as start-up, plus • Help making the case for change, especially if you're from outside
Sustaining success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as start-up, plus • Constant reality testing: Is this a sustaining-success situation, or is it a realignment? • Support for playing good defense and avoiding mistakes that damage the business • Help finding ways to take the business to a new level

Planning the Expectations Conversation

The point of the *expectations* conversation is for you and your boss to clarify and align your expectations about the future. You need to agree on short- and medium-term goals and on timing. Critically, you need to agree on how your boss will measure progress. What will constitute success, for your boss and for you? When does your boss expect to see results? How will you measure success? Over what time frame? If you succeed, what is next? If you don't manage expectations, they will manage you.

Match Expectations to the Situation

Closely align your expectations with your shared assessment of the situation. In a turnaround situation, for example, you and your boss would probably agree on the need to take decisive action quickly. You would both have explicit expectations for the immediate future, such as making difficult decisions to reduce costs in nonessential areas or concentrating on the products with the highest margins. In this scenario, you would probably measure success by improvements in the business's overall financial performance.

Aim for Early Wins in Areas Important to Your Boss

Whatever your own priorities, pinpoint what your boss cares about most, and aim for early wins in those areas. If you want to succeed, you need your boss's help; in turn, you should help her succeed. When you pay attention to your boss's priorities, she will feel ownership in your success. The most effective approach is to integrate your boss's goals with your own efforts to get early wins. If this is impossible, look for early wins based solely on your boss's priorities.

Identify the Untouchables

If there are parts of the organization—products, facilities, people—about which your new boss is proprietary, it is essential to identify them as soon as possible. You don't want to find out that you're pressing to shut down the product line your boss started up or to replace someone who has been his loyal ally. So try to deduce what your boss is sensitive about. You can do this by understanding your boss's personal history, by talking to others, and by paying close attention to facial expression, tone, and body language. If you're uncertain, float an idea gently as a trial balloon, and then watch his reactions closely.

Educate Your Boss

One of your immediate tasks is to shape your boss's perceptions of what you can and should achieve. You may find her expectations unrealistic, or simply at odds with your own beliefs about what needs to be done. If so, you must work hard to make your views converge. In a realignment, for example, your boss might attribute the worst problems to a certain part of the business, whereas you believe they lie elsewhere. In this case, you would need to educate your boss about the underlying problems to reset expectations. Proceed carefully—especially if your boss feels invested in the way things have always been or is responsible in part for the problems.

Underpromise and Overdeliver

Whether you and your boss agree on expectations, try to bias yourself somewhat toward underpromising achievements and overdelivering results. This strategy contributes to building credibility. Consider how your organization's capacity for change might affect your ability to deliver on the promises you make.

Be conservative in what you promise. If you deliver more, you will delight your boss. But if you promise too much and fail to deliver, you risk undermining your credibility. Even if you accomplish a great deal, you will have failed in the boss's eyes.

Clarify, Clarify, Clarify

Even if you're sure you know what your boss expects, you should go back regularly to confirm and clarify. Some bosses know what they want but are not good at expressing it. You don't want to achieve clarity only after you have headed down the wrong road. So you must be prepared to keep asking questions until you're sure you understand. Try, for example, asking the same questions in different ways to gain more insight. Work at reading between the lines accurately and developing good hypotheses about what your boss is likely to want. Try to put yourself in his shoes and understand how his boss will evaluate him. Figure out how you fit into the larger picture. Above all, don't let key issues remain ambiguous. Ambiguity about goals and expectations is dangerous. A tie in a conflict over what was said about expectations in an earlier conversation doesn't go to you. It goes to your boss.

Planning the Resource Conversation

The *resource* conversation is an ongoing negotiation with your new boss for critical resources. Before you launch this conversation, you must have agreement with your boss on your STARS portfolio and associated goals and expectations. Now you must secure the resources you need to meet those expectations.

The resources you need will depend on the situations you're dealing with.

- In start-up situations, your most urgent needs are likely to be adequate financial resources, technical support, and people with the right expertise.
- In turnaround situations, you need authority, backed by political support, to make the tough decisions and secure scarce financial and human resources.
- In accelerated-growth situations, you need the investment necessary to support growth, as well as support for putting in place needed systems and structures.
- In realignment situations, you need consistent, public backing to get the organization to confront the need for change. Ideally, your boss will stand shoulder to shoulder with you, helping pierce through denial and complacency.
- In sustaining-success situations, you require financial and technical resources to sustain the core business and exploit promising new opportunities. You also need periodic pushes to set stretch goals that will keep you from drifting into complacency.

The first step is to decide what resources—tangible and intangible—you must have to succeed. Identify the resources already available to you, such as experienced people or new products ready to be launched. Then identify the resources you will need help in obtaining. Ask yourself, "What exactly do I need from my boss?" The sooner you can articulate the resources you need, the sooner you can broach these requests.

It's best to put as much as possible on the table as early as possible. Try using the menu approach: lay out the costs and benefits of different levels of resource commitment. "If you want

my sales to grow seven percent next year, I need investment of X dollars. If you want ten percent growth, I will need Y dollars." Going back for more too often is a sure way to lose credibility. If it takes more time to get a handle on the resources you need to achieve specific goals, then so be it. Michael negotiated for the necessary time—a critical resource—to avoid this problem.

Play or Change the Game?

You may be able to achieve your goals by playing the game according to the prevailing rules. If you can maneuver within the accepted cultural and political norms, your resource requests will be expected—and you will find it easier to get what you need.

In other situations—notably realignments and turnarounds—you may need to change or even abandon established ways of doing business. Your resource requests will probably be more sweeping, and failure to secure them more damaging. You will have to negotiate harder to get what you need. These circumstances call for being clear about how the situation, expectations, and resources must line up to give you a reasonable shot at success. Clarify your needs in your own mind before you enter these discussions, back them up with as much hard data as you can get, and prepare to explain exactly why you see certain resources as essential. Then stick to your guns. Keep coming back. Enlist others to help make your case. Seek out allies within and outside your organization. It is better to push too hard than to slowly bleed to death.

Negotiate for Resources

As you seek commitments for resources, keep these principles of effective negotiation in mind.

- **Focus on underlying interests.** Probe as deeply as possible to understand the agendas of your boss and any others from whom you need to secure resources. What is in it for them?
- **Look for mutually beneficial exchanges.** Seek resources that both support your boss's agenda and advance your own. Look for ways to help peers advance their agendas in return for help with yours.
- **Link resources to results.** Highlight the performance benefits that will result if more resources are dedicated to your unit. Create the menu described earlier, laying out what you can achieve (and cannot achieve) with current resources and what different-sized increments would allow you to do.

Planning the Style Conversation

People's stylistic preferences affect how they learn, communicate, influence others, and make decisions. In the *style* conversation, your agenda is to determine how you and your boss can best work together on a continuing basis. This was the key challenge that Michael faced in working out his relationship with Vaughan. Even if your boss never becomes a close friend or mentor, it's essential that you understand what it takes to build a productive working relationship.

Diagnose Your Boss's Style

The first step is to diagnose your new boss's working style and figure out how it jibes with your own. If you leave messages for her about an urgent problem, and she doesn't respond quickly

but then reproaches you for not giving her a heads-up about the problem, take note: your boss doesn't use that mode of communication!

How does your boss like to communicate? How often? What kinds of decisions does he want to be involved in, and when can you make calls on your own? Does your boss arrive at the office early and work late? Does he expect others to do the same?

Pinpoint the specific ways in which your styles differ, and assess what those differences imply about how you will interact. Suppose you prefer to learn by talking with knowledgeable people, whereas your boss relies more on reading and analyzing hard data. What kinds of misunderstandings and problems might this difference in style cause, and how can you avoid them? Or suppose your new boss tends to micromanage, but you prefer a lot of independence. What can you do to manage this tension?

You may find it helpful to talk to others who have worked with your boss in the past. Naturally, you must do this judiciously. Be careful not to be perceived as eliciting criticism of how the boss leads. Stick to less fraught issues, such as how the boss prefers to communicate. Listen to others' perspectives, but base your evolving strategy chiefly on your own experience.

Observe, too, how your boss deals with others. Is there consistency? If not, why not? Does the boss have favorites? Is he particularly prone to micromanaging certain issues? Has he come down hard on a few people because of unacceptable performance?

Scope Out the Dimensions of Your Box

Your boss will have a comfort zone about her involvement in decision making. Think of this zone as defining the boundaries of the decision-making box in which you will operate. What sorts

of decisions does she want you to make on your own but tell her about? Are you free, for example, to make key personnel decisions? When does she want to be consulted before you decide? Is it when your actions touch on broader issues of policy—for example, in granting people leave? Or when there are hot political issues associated with some of the projects you're working on? When does she want to make the decision herself?

Initially, expect to be confined to a relatively small box. As your new boss gains confidence in you, the dimensions of the box should increase. If not, or if it remains too small to allow you to be effective, you may have to address the issue directly.

Adapt to Your Boss's Style

Assume that the job of building a positive relationship with your new boss is 100 percent your responsibility. In short, this means adapting to his style. If your boss hates voice messages, don't leave them. If he wants to know in detail what is going on, over-communicate. Of course you should not do anything that could compromise your ability to achieve superior business results, but do look for opportunities to smooth the day-to-day workings of your relationship. Others who have worked with your boss can tell you what approaches they found successful. Then judiciously experiment with the tactics that seem most promising in your case. When in doubt, simply ask your boss how he would prefer you to proceed.

Surface the Difficult Issues

When serious style differences arise, it's best to address them directly. Otherwise, you run the risk that your boss will interpret a style difference as disrespect or even incompetence on your part.

Raise the style issue before it becomes a source of irritation, and talk with your boss about how to accommodate both your styles. This conversation can smooth the path for both of you to achieve your goals. This is what Michael did, although he wisely waited to build credibility before addressing it.

One proven strategy is to focus your early conversations on goals and results instead of how you achieve them. You might simply say that you expect to notice differences in how the two of you approach certain issues or decisions but that you're committed to achieving the results to which you have both agreed. An assertion of this kind prepares your boss to expect differences. You may have to remind your boss periodically to focus on the results you're achieving and not on your methods.

It may also help to judiciously discuss style issues with someone your boss trusts, who can enlighten you about potential issues and solutions before you raise them directly with your boss. If you find the right adviser, he may even help you broach a difficult issue in a nonthreatening manner.

Don't make the mistake of trying to address all style issues in a single conversation. Nevertheless, an early dialogue explicitly devoted to style is an excellent place to start. Expect to continue to be attentive to, and adapt to, the boss's style as your relationship evolves.

Planning the Personal Development Conversation

Finally, when your relationship with your boss has matured a bit (roughly the 90-day mark is a good rule of thumb), begin to discuss how you're doing. This need not be a formal performance review, but it does need to be an open discussion of how things

are going. What are you doing well, and what do you need to do differently? What skills do you need to develop to do the job better? Are there shortcomings in your leadership capacities that you need to address? Are there projects or special assignments that you could get involved in (without sacrificing focus) that could strengthen your skills?

It's especially critical that you do this when you're making key career passages. If you're a first-time manager, get into the habit early of asking your boss for feedback and help in developing your supervisory skills. Your willingness to seek candid feedback on your strengths and weaknesses—and, critically, your ability to act on the feedback—sends a powerful message.

The same principle holds whether you're becoming a manager of managers for the first time, a functional leader, a general manager, or a CEO. Whenever you are at a point in your career when success demands a different set of skills and attitudes, discipline yourself to be open to learning from others who have gone before you.

Don't restrict your focus to hard skills. The higher you rise, the more important the key soft skills of cultural and political diagnosis, negotiation, coalition building, and conflict management will become. Formal training can help, but developmental assignments—in project teams, in new parts of the organization, in different functions, in different locations—are indispensable in honing these key managerial skills.

Working with Multiple Bosses

You face even more daunting challenges in managing expectations if you have more than one boss (direct or dotted-line). The

same principles hold, but the emphasis shifts. If you have multiple bosses, you must be sure to carefully balance perceived wins and losses among them. If one boss has substantially more power, then it makes sense to bias yourself somewhat in her direction early on, as long as you redress the balance, to the greatest extent possible, later. If you can't get agreement by working with your bosses one-on-one, you must essentially force them to come to the table together to thrash issues out. Otherwise, you will get pulled to pieces. You should complete a version of table 4-1 for each of your bosses, and look closely at where their views of the situations, expectations, and resources converge and where they diverge. Pay attention, too, to differences in their styles, and adapt accordingly.

Working at a Distance

Managing when you are located far from your boss presents a different set of challenges. The risk is greater of falling out of step without realizing it. This puts the onus on you to exert even more discipline over communication, scheduling calls and meetings to be sure you stay aligned. It also is even more critical to establish clear and comprehensive metrics so that your boss gets a reasonable picture of what is going on and you can more effectively manage by exception.

If it is humanly possible, you should plan to have one or more in-person meetings with your boss early on. It is essential to make face-to-face connections early on to begin to establish a basis of confidence and trust (the same is true if you're leading a virtual team). So if this means you need to fight for the resources and fly halfway around the world, you should do it.

Think, too, about good ways to carve out time with your boss, who is likely to be busy and buffered by requests from people who are more physically present than you are. Identify windows of time when your boss is less likely to be completely occupied—for example, during the times when she is traveling to or from the office.

Putting It All Together: Negotiating Your 90-Day Plan

No matter what situation you're entering, it can be useful to create a 90-day plan and get buy-in from your boss. Usually, you will be able to devise a plan after a couple of weeks in the new job, when you have begun to connect with the organization and get the lay of the land.

Your 90-day plan should be written, even if it consists only of bullet points. It should specify priorities and goals as well as milestones. Critically, you should share it with your boss and seek buy-in for it. It should serve as a "contract" between the two of you about how you're going to spend your time, spelling out both what you will do and what you will not do.

To begin to sketch out your plan, divide the 90 days into three blocks of 30 days. At the end of each block, you will have a review meeting with your boss. (Naturally, you're likely to interact more often than that.) You should typically devote the first block of 30 days to learning and building personal credibility. Like Michael, you should negotiate for this early learning period and then try to hold your boss to that agreement. Then you can proceed to develop a learning agenda and learning plan for yourself. Set weekly goals for yourself, and establish a personal discipline of weekly evaluation and planning.

Your key outputs at the end of the first 30 days will be a diagnosis of the situation, an identification of key priorities, and a plan for how you will spend the next 30 days. This plan should address where and how you will begin to seek some early wins. Your review meeting with your boss should focus on the situation and expectations conversations, with an eye to reaching consensus about the situation, clarification of expectations, and buy-in to your plan for the next 30 days. Continue the weekly discipline of evaluation and planning.

At the 60-day mark, your review meeting should focus on assessing your progress toward the goals of your plan for the previous 30 days. You should also discuss what you plan to achieve in the next 30 days (that is, by the end of 90 days). Depending on the situation and your level in the organization, your goals at this juncture might include identifying the resources necessary to pursue major initiatives, fleshing out your initial assessments of strategy and structure, and presenting some early assessments of your team.

Planning the Five Conversations with Your Team

Finally, you won't merely *have* a new boss; you are likely to *be* a new boss as well. You will almost certainly have new subordinates. Just as you need to develop a productive relationship with your new boss, so, too, will they need to work effectively with you. In the past, have you done a good job of helping subordinates with their transitions? What might you do differently this time?

Think about how to apply all the advice in this chapter to working with your own direct reports. The golden rule of transitions is to

transition others as you would wish to be transitioned yourself (see “The Golden Rule of Transitions”). The same five-conversation framework can help you build productive relationships with the people who report to you. Introduce the framework to them right away, and schedule a first conversation with each of them to talk about the situation and about your expectations. Get them to do some pre-work before the meeting—for example, reading the chapter on matching strategy to situation. See how fast you can accelerate their transitions.

The Golden Rule of Transitions

Think about how you would like new bosses to help you transition into new roles. Ideally, what kinds of guidance and support would they give you? Now think about how you deal with new direct reports. What kinds of guidance and support do you give them?

Now juxtapose these assessments. Do you transition others as you would wish to be transitioned yourself? If there is a big inconsistency between how you prefer to be dealt with as a new direct report and how you deal with new direct reports, then you are part of the problem.

Helping direct reports accelerate their transitions is about more than being a good manager and contributing to others' development. The faster your direct reports get up to speed, the better able they will be to help you reach your goals.

Use table 4-3 to keep track of where you stand in having those key conversations with each of your reports.

