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The New Leader



Moving to a new position and making it work is never easy. A new Prime Minister has about 100 days to settle into the job, unless “events” intervene. A new business leader has to make do with 90. And a new partner has to establish herself both as a business and as a legal leader.

The first hundred days sets the tone for what is to come. If they get it wrong, the new leader may never recover. If the Prime Minister were to follow good business practice, how might he address the foundation period of his new post?

30 Day Foundations – a guide for Prime Ministers

1. Take a very good look at what is really going on. Meet a large number of civil servants, diplomats and leaders in business, education, medicine, the law and so on. Not everyone is as interested in politics as you are. Be systematic. Beware of gatekeepers of information (the Sir Humphreys), and above all meet ordinary voters. Keep asking questions and double check the answers you are given. Try not to be overly influenced by the last person you spoke to (or, for that matter, the first).
2. Take a good look at the strengths and weaknesses of your cabinet, and of your junior ministers. For each key post, ask if the holder is good enough to deliver what is needed, and if not how you are going to deal with them. All Prime Ministers are constrained by political considerations in dealing with colleagues, but there are two particular problems where a party is in a coalition and has been out of government for 13 years. A coalition partner makes moving or demoting a minister much more difficult, while the period out of office means that many ministers have little or no experience of running a department. The habits of opposition need to be dropped for the habits of government.
3. Identify the culture of the various facets of government. Does anything need changing – if so, can you change it? How?

The Second Thirty Days

1. This is the time to start preparing strategic and operational plans. In government terms, that means a legislative programme and Queen’s speech, together with a holding budget.
2. Ensure that your ministers understand, have had an input and buy into the programme. This is particularly important with coalition partners.

The Next 40 Days and More

1. Communicate – with your back benchers and with the public, so they know what to expect, and what is expected of them.
2. Start changing the culture – and in current circumstances rebuild trust with the electorate and the financial markets.

Acknowledgements: inspired by an article on Sketchleys in *Director* magazine 1994

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