

# 20 Questions To Answer As You Start A New Senior Management Role

**Use these questions to plan how you are going to  
impress in your first 90 days +**

- Helps you solve the problems that make the biggest positive difference when starting your new senior management role
- Questions apply to all senior management roles, in all industries.



## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

1 **What do I need to learn to enable success in my new job?**

In every new job there are a ton of things to learn to enable your success in role.

Common areas of focus are the business situation, your team capabilities, what your boss needs you to achieve in the short term, the culture you will be working in, and the goals and direction of the overall business.

You will have a list of other factors specific to your company, role, situation and your own aspirations, strengths, and challenges.

Prioritise first and then focus on systematically learning what you need to learn.

2 **What, in my approach, do I need to change to be successful in this new role?**

[What worked successfully in previous roles, that will hinder me now?]

The requirements of every role are different. Conscious awareness of the differences needed will speed up your transition to success.

What worked very successfully in your previous role may now be a hindrance. An example – your attention to detail and hands on approach may now cause unnecessary oversight and interference with team members very capable to delivering what is needed autonomously.

Flex your approach to what is needed in this specific role, with the team you are working with, in this specific company.

## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

3 **Are there aspects of my new job that are critical to success that I don't enjoy/prefer not to focus on?**

We all prefer doing or focusing on some aspect of our roles at the expense of other parts of our role.

Be conscious of what you don't like doing, what you are less inclined to focus on and check how important these areas are. How are you going to compensate for your natural tendency to avoid these areas?

What actions am I going to take to compensate for my potential lack of interest or focus on these areas?

4 **What steps am I going to take to identify, plan and deliver quick wins (90 days) within my team?**

Delivering quick wins cement your credibility with your team (and others) and you gain their trust as a leader they are happy to follow.

Quick wins will also increase your confidence, help dispel imposter syndrome thinking and reduce the pressure on you to perform.

## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

5 **In the next year, what are the most important 5 things to achieve to develop myself/my career?**

This question is partly to focus you on the big challenges ahead that will define your success, partly on what you want to achieve personally to develop your skills and progress your career.

How can you maximise the development you gain from the challenges and opportunities you will be dealing with? What additional steps do you need to take to gain the development you want? (i.e. from outside of your team or the organisation)

Keep the list short – up to five items so you keep focus on the critical areas to you.

6 **How do I view the business situation?**

What is the overall business situation – for example start-up, turnaround, realignment, or sustaining success.

What is the business situation with each respective business unit, team or product (or other way you split what you look after).

[e.g. start-up, turnaround, realignment, or sustaining success].

Gain a clear understanding of where each is, you then adapt your approach according, significantly increasing your chances of success, with each unit and overall.

## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

7 **What are the implications for the challenges and opportunities I am likely to confront?**

This question challenges you to think ahead, to focus on impact of what you will be confronting e.g. on:

1. Timeframes
2. Resources
3. People and skills
4. Strategy and tactics
5. Personal skills and knowledge to be successful

Think through what is in front of you, what the challenges and opportunities are likely to demand of you and how you prepare for them to increase your chances of success.

8 **What are the implications of company culture on how I need to operate and communicate?**

How you work and how you get things done matters.

For example, is it okay to shout about personal successes or is this seen as grandstanding? How should you shout about team successes?

Learn what the norms are in your company and fit in with these. Actively looking to understand the norms will make speed up how quickly you fit into them.

## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

9 **What exactly is my part/my team's part in delivering the company strategy?**

To answer this question, you must understand the overall company strategy, where the company is on the journey to achieving its goals and thus what you and your team need to focus on to enable the next stage of the company strategy to be realised.

10 **What changes are needed to organizational structures, people, processes, and systems to achieve better alignment between my team and the company strategy?**

Achieving strong alignment between the current and planned activities and projects and what is required to achieve company strategy is necessary for company success.

Business environments change fast so maintaining alignment requires constant balancing and recalibrating.

Answering this question focuses you on how well the company and your areas are currently aligned and what changes are needed to achieve better alignment.

11 **What are the key goals I am going to set myself to deliver in the next 30, 60 and 90 days?**

Keep a monthly cycle in mind as you plan out what you want to achieve in the next 3 months.

Be clear what success looks like and include milestones if this helps you assessing your progress.

## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

12 **How exactly does my boss view the business/function/team situation and on what points do I agree and disagree?**

Understanding how your boss views the business situation is a critical step in creating a joint plan of action. You may or may not agree with your boss's assessment. Understand the differences and be clear on why you have differences.

Educate your boss with an open mind. Keep discussing until you both reach an agreed common assessment and then you can negotiate the goals and resources to enable your success.

13 **What changes are needed to organizational structures, people, processes, and systems to achieve better alignment between my team and the company strategy?**

A good relationship between you and your boss is more in your interests than theirs, therefore adapt your style to fit in with them. [hopefully they will also adapt their style too]

Pay carefully attention to what you boss appreciates and doesn't appreciate, how they manage in different situations, what level of detail they need in what areas etc.

Ask them what they want or prefer. Ask colleagues for their feedback on what is preferred.

Work out your boss's working and communication style and plan how you are going to adapt to it.

## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

14 **What areas are important to my boss and how can I achieve early wins in those areas?**

Being able to provide concrete help to your boss in areas they care about will increase your credibility, your likeability, and your ability to do your job.

Ask your boss. Observe them closely. What do they focus on and ask about most?

Put time in to identify the important areas and work out how you are going to help. Something is better than nothing.

15 **What steps am I going to take to understand and negotiate realistic goals with my boss and secure the resources needed to deliver those goals?**

When you accept the goals you are given, you are less likely to be able to achieve them.

When you create the opportunity to negotiate the goals, you are more likely to succeed. Delivering on goals agreed is key to gain credibility, autonomy, trust and many other factors.

Do everything you can to give yourself realistic goals to achieve.



## Question

16 **How do I reduce or eliminate surprises for my boss?**

## Why it's so important to answer this question

Surprises damage your credibility and the trust your boss has for you. Minimal surprises will strengthen your relationship, your credibility, and your ability to work autonomously.

Work out how you are going to communicate potential issues and opportunities to your boss, when and in what level of detail.

17 **On what criteria am I going to assess each team member's capability and suitability?**

Answering this question depends very much on the needs that the team's goals require of the team.

Some examples might include:

1. Competence
2. Judgement and decision making
3. Energy and proactivity
4. Focus and prioritisation
5. Strength & breadth of current relationships and relationship-building skills
6. Trust

Work out the criteria most relevant and useful for you

## Question

## Why it's so important to answer this question

18 **What steps am I going to take to discover who is capable and who is not in the team?**

Answering this question helps you systematically plan how you are going to assess your team's capabilities and the set of capabilities each team member has.

19 **How will I work out who can be trusted and who should not be trusted?**

Decide what levels and types of trust you are looking for from each of your team members. Examples include:

1. How much do I trust this person will deliver on what they commit to?
2. How much do I trust this person will put team before themselves?
3. How much do I trust this person to be honest and open?

Choose the criteria that matter to you and your situation.

20 **How will I work out who can be trusted and who should not be trusted?**

Answering this question gets you to discover the "lay of the land", who has relationships with whom, the basis of those relationships and what you need to consider before taking actions or making decisions.

Those with influence are in a better position to help or hinder you achieve team goals.

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