



Going from Buddy to Boss (When Peers are Promoted)

Picture This: Let's say a supervisor, after years of service, decides to retire. The position is posted both within the organization as well as in the community and beyond to locate the best replacement. It just so happens the company was able to hire from within because they found the perfect fit, both by way of experience and credentials.

The stress comes when others in that organization felt equally qualified for the position and desired that position.

To complicate matters, the one promoted over the other were best friends. So, as they visited the previous Friday after work, which was normal to discuss workplace politics or management, now on Monday one of the friends IS management!



I'm sure that many reading this have the picture, and this picture takes about a year to refocus and become clear for everyone involved in that department or division.

Where does this company, department or shift begin with a transition that is generally more challenging than previously planned?

A Couple of Awkward Characteristics

1. New Boss-Allow time for individuals or the team to struggle with the decision-

The first thing to accept is that this inter-office dynamic can take up to a year to feel a sense of unity within the team. We must accept the disappointment that can come from those that were not chosen for that position, especially if they felt they were more qualified.

2. New Boss-Begin re-engineering the relationships-

There is also a need right out of the gate for the new boss to re-engineer the new relationship with others. For example: You must now go from being a friend to being friendly! Obviously, it is unreasonable to think that years of friendship must end, however, it **MUST** be recalibrated for the transition to be successful. It's not about keeping friends. It's about creating results to further the goals of the company.

continued

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For instance, if you are at a BBQ together as families, discussions of current workplace issues shouldn't be addressed because that can prove to be a conflict of interest and seen by others on the team as favoritism, which never has a good outcome for the staff.

Initial Steps for a Smooth Transition

It is best for the new boss to move methodically and in some sense slower than to "clean house" and start throwing out unnecessary protocols or problematic people immediately.

I suggest the new supervisor arranges an "expectation meeting" to set a fresh tone with the team to establish trust and comradery as soon as possible.

In this gathering a few things need to happen. First the boss can put them at ease by assuring them of their secure place within the team, if that's the case. Anytime there is a major shift in the workplace, leadership must understand most employees feel insecure and wonder if their job is in jeopardy.

Author, Michael Walkins, writes a piece called "The First 90 Days" and suggests:

1. Approach your team as if it is a new team, not your former peers.
2. Give staff time to catch up with you; solicit Ideas and input about their perspective etc.
3. Move methodically and purposefully and slowly with changes and/or shifts within the team.

He goes on to say the new boss should avoid "Three Common Mistakes":

1. Don't become the insecure authoritarian or the leader that wants to be everybody's friend.
2. Not being ready to take charge or have a plan.
3. Not understanding the necessity and dynamics of the relational changes or the impact on the culture.



Understanding Your Team in the Transition

Generally, three groups can begin to form and/or be identified early on in their response to the change. The attitudes during this transition period can be vastly different.

Group #1 The Supporters Say: "What will do you want us to run through next? I think these are good ideas."

These key workers pick up the need for transition quickly. They can validate your cause and set the standards for the rest of the group.

Group #2 The Apathetic Say: "I've heard this all before. Just tell me what to do and I'll do it."

The apathetic must be challenged and pressured from the beginning to adapt to the new roles.

Group #3 The Dissenters Say "Nobody asked me about the changes. I'll do as little as I can to keep my job."

These will be quick to challenge your authority. I would quickly pull them in for mediation or at least speak to them about their resistance. In most cases, if they don't adapt within the first year, they won't adapt at all.

For additional training on this subject visit teamworks-works.com and click on the workshop link **Track #15 "When Peers are Promoted from Buddy to Boss"**.

Training modules can be "Live" or on Zoom.

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Final Leadership Transitional Tips

For the Boss

- Going from “us” to “them” can force times of loneliness at the top. Being a good leader never suggests there won’t be times of isolation from the team. This comes with the territory and don’t take it personal.
- Ask your most experienced staff for input and give them independence.
- Never ask “What should we do now?”
- Communicate as much information as often as possible to everyone.
- Gain commitment from key staff who will assist in encouraging buy-in from others in the organization.
- Create opportunities for people to provide feedback and comments about the promotion.
- Notice everything your team does right and tell them immediately.
- Don’t try to be your former boss; be you.
- Admit your mistakes quickly and adopt a “What can we learn from this?” attitude.

For the Buddy

- Cut him/her some slack and try to get behind their eyes. This is awkward for them as well.
- Have a candid discussion with your boss on how to make things better.
- If there is a problem or question, go to your boss or immediate supervisor directly rather than over their head.
- If your conversations with your boss are unsuccessful, seek the advice from another in leadership about the best way to approach him/her.
- Either accept your boss’s new position or ask for a change within the organization.
- Do not continue to vent about the injustice of the promotion to other staff. If you don’t adapt soon, you will not adapt at all.

Conclusion:

These necessary changes in the workplace, once managed correctly and adapted to, can prove to strengthen morale and take the organization to a new level of efficiency. It also can push the team to be more adaptable and creative on how they face challenges together and accept what they cannot control.

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Bill Gallagher has been counseling and working with professionals since 1980. His emphasis in the workplace is to help develop both relational skills and professional standards among administration and staff. He has worked in multiple organizational settings and of recent has spent most of his time addressing workplace issues in healthcare and city government.

Bill formed TeamWorks in 2001 to help organizations achieve their goals for establishing high morale and client satisfaction. TeamWorks currently specializes in offering one-on-one surveys and evaluations for management and staff to assess the current culture’s needs and recommended trainings going forward.

In addition to conducting a variety of workshops and in-services on workplace issues, Bill mediates conflict among partnerships and staff relationships, speaks at conventions, facilitates management retreats, and offers personal consultation and counseling for staff.

Bill’s strengths are in public speaking, mediation, and understanding the complexities of relational dynamics in the workplace. He lives in Medford, Oregon, with his wife Jenny, and enjoys spending time with their five children and five granddaughters.