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TOP FIVE MISTAKES

NEW HIRES MAKE IN THEIR FIRST 90 DAYS

**& How Coaching
Can Help Them
Avoid These Pitfalls**



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INTRODUCTION

When a new hire begins working at your ministry or organization, the first 90 days are a critical time for them to get onboarded and start well. Studies show that how you navigate this window of time will determine how quickly new staff members bring value to their new roles in the short term and add value to your team and organization in the long term.

As leaders, how can we ensure new hires are set up for success starting on day one? In this white paper, we'll walk through the benefits of investing in new hires from the onset—so you can avoid the most common mistakes people make when they start a new role.

Let's get started!

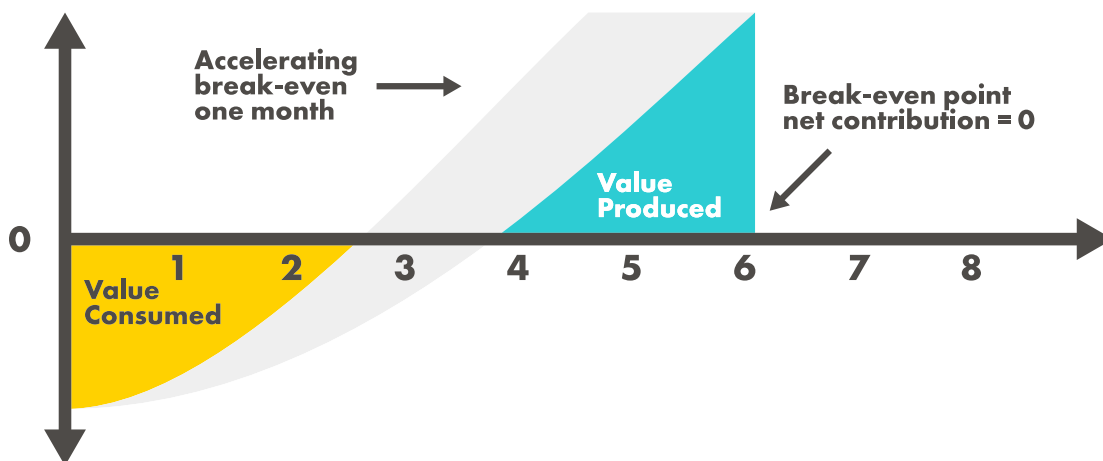
—David A. Miller

WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THE FIRST 90 DAYS?

In government, everyone pays attention to the president's first 100 days. This period is considered a benchmark to measure their early success as president. Similarly, in ministry, the first 90 days are the most critical time for a new hire. They determine the next five years of their time with your organization and the way other members of your team perceive them for the duration of their role. You can't take back a first impression. But what you can do is set your new hire up for success when they first join your ministry.

In their first 90 days, you want them to have access to all the resources they need, get answers to the questions they have, and learn best practices for starting well. But that's not all. Studies show that by investing in your new staff during their first three months on your team, you'll help them:

- **Avoid common mistakes and pitfalls**
- **Innovate and accomplish more from the onset**
- **Accelerate their influence and impact**
- **Adapt more quickly to the team and culture**



If you're preparing to bring on someone new and want to make the most of their first 90 days, I encourage you to rethink your current onboarding process. But before we dive into the importance of coaching, let's take a look at the top five mistakes new hires make during their first three months on the job.

TOP 5 MISTAKES NEW HIRES MAKE DURING THEIR FIRST 90 DAYS

1. Try to Change Things Without Relational Equity

These are the ‘bull in a china shop’ type of leaders. They come into a new role wanting to prove themselves. Oftentimes, this means they charge the hill, running over anyone who gets in their way. They may have previously come out of a role where they had or earned a lot of voice when it came to making decisions, but they don’t yet have the same relational equity in this new position. Their new co-workers have no history with them and therefore no trust in their abilities, which can easily cause them to make enemies early on. These types of leaders don’t know how to navigate interpersonal dynamics and are trying to change things before they have the relational capital needed to do so. Ultimately, this means that change (even change for the better) doesn’t happen or takes longer to get implemented, and oftentimes critical relational bridges are burned along the way.

2. Passively Follow the Team’s Current Playbook

This type of leader enters a new role and starts by following the last person’s playbook. They’re enamored with the team they’re joining, and as a result, may feel underqualified. Over time, they never find their voice to truly speak up and offer their own ideas. Instead, they bury their head in the sand and simply do the same things the last person did over and over again. They’re often compared to the previous person—something that sticks with them throughout their role because they never truly make their own mark. Ideally, when a new team member joins your team, it’s a chance to have new eyes and a fresh perspective on “the way it’s always been done.” New hires need to be given a chance to do it their own way—to dream new dreams and try new things—so they don’t fall into the trap of getting the same results you’ve gotten in the past.

3. Make Assumptions vs. Clarifying Expectations

It’s not uncommon for new hires to come into their new role with assumptions they’ve carried over from their previous role. Unless expectations are set up front, they’ll assume they know exactly what their supervisors want from them. The downfall of making assumptions early on is that new staff members will often work hard to accomplish a goal you never actually wanted or asked of them. For example, your new hire’s goal may be to create a specific type of ministry environment for your church’s young adult’s ministry, when your primary goal is to fill the room. See how the disconnect happens? It’s not uncommon for supervisors to also make the mistake of assuming.

We may think new hires know what we value, how we define success, and how we want them to spend their time each day. But have we had a conversation with them to define those things and make sure they're on the same page? It's critical that you have honest conversations about values and assumptions right from the onset to prevent any miscommunication.

4. Don't Know Themselves or What They Have to Offer

Knowing yourself is critical to performing well in a new role. It's difficult to contribute to something without knowing what your value is, what you're skilled at, and what you have to offer a new organization. Personality assessments are a great start when it comes to discovering what value new hires bring to the table. Defining these things early on can help you mold the role around your new hire's natural skillset and giftings. Taking a look back at what they've previously accomplished in other roles and the things that have shaped them as a leader up to this point will help you better determine what types of scenarios and situations they'll thrive in within their new work environment. But it all begins with the new hire understanding themselves and knowing what they can offer your team and the audience you're serving. New staff who don't know their sweet spot may find themselves doubting their work or lacking the confidence to step fully into their new role.

5. Come in and Wing It While Hoping for the Best

A common mistake we see new hires make is coming into a new role and winging it. These types of leaders get by on their charm or talent without having a clear plan in place to move things forward and accomplish your organization's goals. Think of it this way: if you know you're about to walk into the middle of a dark room and you're not sure where the light switch is, you need to have a plan for locating the light switch. The same applies when a new hire begins a new job. They need to have set goals to accomplish in order to move your ministry's mission forward. Early wins are especially important for new hires to show you that they're capable of doing something the last person didn't do or accomplishing something the team thought would never get accomplished. New hires need a clear plan and pathway when they join your team. Winging it should never be their first option.

WHY INVEST IN COACHING?

Coaching your new hire is the best thing you can do when they start with your organization. It not only sets the tone for their experience in your organization but your experience with them for years to come.

Think of it as a foot race. Whether you're in the Olympics or at a high school track meet, the same thing is true: the start is the most important. Everything happens at the very beginning. Sure, if you're running the race, you need the fortitude to run the long distance. But that's not all. You can be the fastest person in the world, but if you stumble out of the blocks, you won't win the race. It doesn't matter how talented you are. **If you don't start the right way, you simply won't be the first to cross the finish line.**

So, what's at risk when leaders don't invest in coaching—and, more specifically—in their new hire's first 90 days?

When you don't take the time to invest, you're rolling the dice with a new hire. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "If we're hiring someone good enough, they don't need it. If they're a strong enough leader, why would we need to coach them during their first three months?" I hear you. It's easy to assume they already know everything coming in and have the skills and experience to connect seamlessly into your team's current culture and processes. That's why you've hired them, right? Wrong. As we explored above, that's most often not the case.

Investing in your new hire from day one will also mean you won't have to make bigger investments later on to fix the mistakes they made early on in their role. Being proactive is always better (and more cost effective) than being reactive and trying to course correct afterwards. When you invest in them, you'll also show your new hire that you care and value them. Rather than throwing them into the deep end and hoping they don't drown, coaching them from the onset will communicate: "We value our culture, we value you, and we want to bring you into it." This communication of value is huge. And, it's been seen to increase longevity across a variety of different industries.

GET STARTED

LAUNCH: THE FIRST 90 DAYS

Tools & Strategies to Take Your New Hires to the Next Level

Slingshot Group's *Launch: The First 90 Days* coaching will equip your new staff members with the skills and understanding they need to get off to a great start. Backed by science, tried and true practices from the corporate business world, and Slingshot Group's 12+ years of experience in staffing and coaching, this training centers around three Master Tools that teach new staff members how to learn, lead, and leverage when they join your ministry or organization.

Launch: The First 90 Days will help you, as a leader:

- **Integrate new hires into your organization and make them a fully functioning member of the team as quickly and smoothly as possible.**
- **Set the tone for how successful your new employee will be during their time in your ministry.**
- **Get insight on how the rest of your team is functioning, and get "fresh eyes" on current processes and strategies.**

Ensure your new hires start strong (and stay strong) by investing in their first 90 days. We can help.

Learn more and get started today:

[SLINGSHOTGROUP.ORG/LAUNCH](https://slingshotgroup.org/launch)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David A. Miller has had the privilege of serving as a pastor, mentor, speaker, and teacher. His diverse experiences on both the East and West Coasts—in thriving, multi-site churches and parachurch ministries—collectively contribute to an arsenal of skills he brings to Slingshot Group. As Vice President of Slingshot Group’s Coaching Division, David leads with a strategic mind and intuitive spirit, walking with church leadership through challenges and opportunities that shouldn’t be navigated alone. David helped develop the IMPROVleadership™ coaching strategy and trains leaders around the country in these culture-changing tools. In addition to leading staff teams of pastors and administrators, he coaches leaders across the U.S., speaks at retreats and conferences, and is a contributing author of various publications, blogs, and books, including *Improv Leadership: How to Lead Well in Every Moment*.

