

## Getting on Board as Assistant to the President 7.22.13

**As a new assistant to the President, I'm feeling my way. Sometimes I feel like I'm on my own island, not doing a lot with others. If people are having meetings, I may not be included. I also don't know a lot about the company, who does what - think I should know more.**

**Thoughts of the Day:** Your role can be an intimidating one for others. Carve out your niche. Introduce yourself formally. Build an orientation program. Decide what your contribution is going to be, and then make it happen.

Any new job can be a challenge. The memory of your predecessor lingers. You have yet to make an impression. People are curious about who you are, what they can count on from you.

Fitting in carries some unique challenges since you report directly to everyone's boss. Most people are deciding how to play that out. Some may not be open with you, figuring anything they say goes back to the boss. Others may look to curry favor, hoping for good words on their behalf with the president of the company.

Treat everyone equally. Of course there will be some employees who are annoying, and some who are friendlier than others. Remember your special position as representative of the boss. Find the balance between being approachable and being a gatekeeper.

Get to know other people in the company by attending meetings. Work from the top down. While you may not be a peer to the CFO, COO, CSO and other chief officers, you are going to have to work with those folks, direct their activities, gather information from them, and get them to pay attention.

Set up an appointment to meet one on one of the company's senior executives. Find out what they need that you can help to make happen. You want them to see it as useful to support you by opening up a 2-way street.

Learn about the company's routines. Ask about standard meetings and reports. Figure out how information flows formally and informally. Discuss your role in supporting and enhancing that.

Ask each department to give you an tour. Take careful notes. Use those notes to build an orientation program for other new hires.

Ask for an organization chart. If one exists, keep it with you at all times. Make notes on what you're learning about each area. Suggest edits if what you see doesn't match what's on paper. If there is no organization chart, draft one and review that with your boss at one of your weekly meetings. If you find problems or good things, ask your boss how much to report back.

You also have the usual challenges. What does your boss need you to do? How can you best work together? What results do you hope to produce? Clarify what's expected.

When you interviewed for the job you probably presented yourself as organized, assertive and willing to take action. What past skills and attributes did you discuss as valuable to this company? Your collective experiences are probably a big part of why you got this job. Focus there as you learn more about your new home and your role in it.

Make sure you and your boss are on the same page. Discuss your role when it comes to giving people access to the boss' calendar, organizing your boss' desk, managing personal and confidential information and tasks, special projects.

Set goals. Start short term. What do you want to learn and be able to do the first, second and third months? After a month on the job clarify 6 month and 1 year goals. Stay on the same page with your boss by scheduling monthly and quarterly reviews.

Looking for a good book? *I've Landed My Dream Job – Now What???: How to Achieve Success in the First 30 Days in a New Job*, by Scot Herrick and Jason Alba.

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