

# April 2005, The First 90 Days: Critical Strategies for New Leaders

"The President of the United States gets 100 days to prove himself; managers get 90." That's the challenge presented by Michael Watkins in his book, *The First 90 Days: Critical Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels*. This book contains practical advice designed to help new managers make a strong first impression that becomes the foundation for long-term success in their job and career.

Underlying Watkins' approach is what he calls "the breakeven point." That's the point in every new manager's job where the person goes from a net consumer of value - moving up the learning curve - to becoming a net creator of value for the organization. In a recent survey of 210 CEOs, mid-level managers took an estimated 6.2 months to reach the breakeven point. That's a significant amount of downtime given the fact that each year over half a million managers enter new positions in Fortune 500 companies alone.

Watkins' book is a "how to" guide for speeding the transition, either your own or a new subordinate. "Given the stakes, it is surprising how little good guidance is available to new leaders about how to transition more effectively and efficiently into new roles," Watkins writes. "There are plenty of books and articles on leadership, but few directly address transitions at all."

To help fill this gap, Watkins shares a "proven blueprint" to create your personal 90-day acceleration plan, including how to promote yourself, accelerate your learning, match strategy to situation, secure early wins and create coalitions. Each point is illustrated through specific insights, diagrams, and examples that will help make it easier for you to reach the "breakeven" point well ahead of the six-month average. It also gives you the tools to boost the performance of those around you, especially your team.

Watkins makes the case that getting a strong start helps increase the chances that managers will be successful in their new positions.