

Stacking the Deck for Success

Sally is considering taking a new position as a department manager in her company—but is she ready? Does she have what it takes to be successful? She is excited about the prospect and the fact that her company believes she is ready for more and different responsibilities. She has 5 years of technical experience and this new position would give her a promotion and also give her the chance to manage people. In her previous positions, she achieved results on her own. In this new position, she will have to get results through other people. Sally spoke with her potential new boss, Jim, who said, 'Don't worry, you have terrific technical skills. And, we'll help you with the rest.' But, what is 'the rest'? If Sally considers her current set of skills and resources as a tools in a toolbox, what new tools does she need to add to be successful in this new job?

Many of us have the concerns that Sally has, especially when moving up within a company. We see that the person offering the new position has confidence in us. And, they tell us that we can do the job. Yet, how many of us actually evaluate our current set of skills and resources against what is needed to be successful? As a result, how many of us have gotten into a new position and found ourselves working 14 hours/day to 'get up to speed'? How many of us stack the deck in our favor for success in a new position? To Stack the Deck, you need to do three things — evaluate your skills, evaluate your support system, and make requests.

A basic evaluation can be done by drawing a table with four columns. The columns are labeled Expectations, Tasks, Skills, and Needs. In the first column, list the Expectations of this position, especially the hard number results are listed. In the second column, list the Tasks that have to be done to accomplish each of the results. In the third column, list the Skills required to do the tasks. Compare your current skills with the skills needed in the new tasks. Then, list all the Needs— training, resources, support, etc. that you will need to be successful in the fourth column.

Expectations	Tasks	Skills	Needs
Provide coaching and feedback.	Do performance reviews.	Listening, acknowledgement, confrontation skills.	•Training for skills listed. •Office large enough to have a 2-3 person conversation.
Increase department's output.	Change the work schedule from 5-day to 24-hr, 7-day.	•Aligning a team and gaining team commitment skills.	•Training for team alignment and commitment.

In Sally's case, it doesn't take long before she sees opportunities. She will be expected to provide ongoing coaching to the people reporting to her by providing ongoing feedback and performance reviews. Sally looks around her office — there is barely enough room for her, let alone anyone else. Additionally, Sally will be required increase the output of her department. She lists these two items on her evaluation form. Sally completes the evaluation for all of the Expectations, Tasks, Skills, and Needs that she can think of and that have been discussed with Jim.

The second step is to evaluate the support system needs for the new role. Who are the people who will support you in your new role? Who are the people that won't support you in this new role and that you may have to leave behind? Sally makes a list of the people who currently support her, inside and outside of her company, and in her personal life. Finally, Sally thinks about the people who she believes 'do things the right way'. She lists them as possible mentors and coaches. With the evaluation of skills and support complete, she ranks her needs and identifies the 'by when' dates. Sally made a special note by the office need — this would need to be available on the first day of her new job.

The third step is to request what is needed. Bosses, partners, and colleagues can't read minds. We have to tell them what we want and need through a clear request. When Sally took her list of specific requests to Jim, he was pleased and relieved. He didn't have to guess at her needs or by when she needed them. Much of what she requested was immediately agreed to and other items were negotiated. In the end, Sally agreed to take on the new role as department manager.

Sally has taken responsibility for her own success in this new role—declaring what she needs to be successful and requesting both the tools and the support. She has stacked the deck— in her favor and for her success.



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