



PETRA PEOPLE

**WHEN CEOS LEAVE: 5 STEPS FOR SUCCESSORS
TO KEEP COMPANY CULTURE INTACT**



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

The “tone” of a company – how the business works, how people communicate, and the culture of the organization – is typically established from the behavior and actions of the CEO, founder and/or other top executives. When that champion leaves, there are always changes. Change can be a good thing, if it's done right. However, if the right preparations aren't made, it could be bad news for both your business and your culture.

If you're the incoming leader, you've got a big job ahead of you, and you're sure to be presented with challenges along the way. The first steps you take will be critical to ensuring that the company thrives and employees remain engaged and happy. Here are five things to remember to make the change more seamless and positive:

1. You're the new kid on the block

This seems obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people walk into a new position and “take over,” without any consideration of the folks who've been there for years. Take time to figure out how things worked before you got there. What's going well that you need to continue? What needs to be changed right away and what can wait? Listen to longtime employees and learn the history of the company. You'll gain their trust and loyalty along the way – which is imperative if you want to succeed. A great example of this is displayed in Bryce Hoffman's book, “American Icon” – the story of Ford Motor Company and how Alan Mulally changed its course.

2. It's the little things

Company culture can be stated through [core values](#) and core purpose, but the way a company lives out those values is what matters most on a day-to-day basis. Maybe it's been a Friday tradition to hold a happy hour. Or, maybe flex time during the summer months have been a way that employees have been encouraged to seek a better balance. To some, those things might seem trivial. I assure you they're not. Even – and especially – if you're looking to turn a company around, focus on smaller things that might have a larger impact to support or boost your company culture and the morale of your team.



3. Leave the past in the past

If you're a new leader coming into a volatile situation where other members of the team are vying for power or hashing old disagreements, don't engage, and don't take sides. As I like to say, [be the adult in the room](#). It's not your job to re-litigate the past or decide who's right and who's wrong. Let everyone know that it's a new day, and encourage the team to move forward in a positive way. You may be able to smooth some things over by providing a clear plan to move forward, but be careful not to be dragged into any old power struggles – it will undermine your message and lower your status among the team.

4. Focus on people first, then business

Whether you're replacing a CEO or other leader who was loved by the team, or you're coming in to add value to a company, focus on your people first. Get your people right and you'll be 99% there. The members of your team are the ones who'll be doing the work and helping you execute the vision of the company. Even if you've got all the numbers worked out and have a solid "plan," if your team isn't behind you, you've got no chance at all.

5. Be yourself

If you're entering a company following the exit of a high-profile leader, you've got some big shoes to fill. Resist any temptation to pick up where someone else left off. Instead, bring your [genuine](#) and best self to every situation. Be honest and be fair. Even if you don't always have good news, being authentic and transparent will help increase trust in your organization.

Change is almost never easy, but you can set yourself up for success if you take the time to prepare and listen. Your new company's best days might be just around the corner.

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THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

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