

## Article

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### Little Time for Orientation

There is a view that skilled executives can run any business. I don't know if this is generally true, but I have encountered leaders who could make major contributions to any organization. A key issue for new executives is the need to act quickly while lacking the industry experience?

A case in point. A few years ago I worked for a client who was in his 11th month as CEO. He was new to the industry. Earlier in his career he had successfully headed subsidiaries of two prominent Global companies, each in the same "high tech" industry.

The current business was no-tech and in trouble. The Board wanted results. But for nine months he was reticent to overturn the advice of 'experienced' subordinates. When we met for a strategic planning session, he was no longer deferring. He was determined to instill a new strategic direction and institute operational changes. In short, he was going to lead. He developed a plan but within a month the Board's patience was gone and they released him. In hindsight he would have moved faster. Post Script. Within the year he was heading a new company in a familiar sector and quickly making his imprint on the business, helping to drive sales, profits and industry awards.

James Thurber said that it is better to know some of the questions rather than all of the answers. Often that's true. But there is a balance between executives learning the environment and helping employees learn about the Strategic Direction. One thing is for sure. There is little time for orientation.

