



Roundtable Mentor,
Lisa Kimmel, President
and CEO of Edelman,
shared her perspective
with our team on how to
get off on the right foot
when you are promoted
among your peers.

Mentoring **MATTERS**

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I recently got promoted and my new team used to be my peers. I know that one of my new direct reports also applied for the job. How can I get off on the right foot as team leader without things being awkward?

It goes without saying that if you aspire to be in a leadership position, at some point you'll likely face a situation where you find yourself being promoted among your peers. This has happened to me twice in recent years. In both cases, I found myself suddenly managing several direct reports who were not only co-workers but confidantes – and yes, former peers.

It can definitely be intimidating and even awkward to suddenly skip a rung ahead of your colleagues on the proverbial career ladder. Both times this happened to me I had the same mixed feelings: I was excited about my role, but I couldn't help but wonder – at least initially – how my promotion might impact my working relationships.

Fortunately, on both occasions I moved through the transitions smoothly by following some key strategies for success:

Value your subject matter experts

Former peers may be your greatest allies when it comes to cultivating a team to support you in your new role. Particularly if you've been promoted to lead a large organization, it's not reasonable to expect that you'll suddenly have the same breadth of knowledge as your former peers who may have specialized in specific areas of expertise for many years. Acknowledge and embrace the strengths of your colleagues and let them know their position of strength in helping to advance the business is valued. You'll further their trust in your leadership by demonstrating how much you value their knowledge and support.

Don't be afraid to lead

As much as it's important to let others feel valued, it's just as important to establish your leadership. While there are different schools of thought on how quickly to implement change, I'm of the mindset that people want leaders to lead – and it's important to make your mark with some immediate positive changes rather than a "wait and see" approach, which employees may interpret as a fear of making mistakes.

Acknowledge that change is difficult

A promotion is a business decision, just like every other change that happens at your company. And change often makes people nervous – and even unhappy, particularly if someone else was really hoping for the promotion you ultimately secured. Acknowledge any concerns brought forward to you by your former peers, and then come up with an action plan to address them, even if you don't have all the answers. They'll appreciate your transparency, and you'll continue to build a foundation of trust.

Distance yourself from your former position

Transitions can be as long or as short as you want. Keep it short. If people keep coming to you with questions about things you were previously responsible for, re-direct them to your successor, even if you have the answer they need. Be a partner, not a micro-manager. Distancing yourself from your former position also give your replacement the leeway to make his/her own mark.

Promotions are great reasons to celebrate – but even more so if you're thoughtful about how best to take the lead.



Lisa Kimmel is Canadian President and CEO of Edelman, the world's largest communications marketing firm. In her role, she leads the agency's Canadian strategy development and execution, and drives national new business efforts. Her collaborative and authentic approach has fostered a Canada-wide culture based on innovation, teamwork and integrity.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.