FAST START PROGRAM GUIDE

Connecting Leaders and Their Teams Through Communication

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State of New Jersey

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this document is two-fold:

1) To share an overview of a popular approach to connecting teams with their new leader that is both safe, honest, and lends itself to open communication and sharing, and

2) To share content that can be copied and pasted into a customizable presentation for Development Facilitators/Consultants or HR Leaders to deliver in their respective organizations

Detailed instructions and suggestions on administration and "flow" of the process ("HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF FAST START") precede the actual bulleted slide deck, which includes <u>optional</u> questions. Please note, this option includes the use of a drawing/graphics approach to responding to some of the questions, which may not be suitable for all situations/teams/leaders.

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF FAST START

The Fast Start process, also known by many as New Leader or Manager Assimilation, is used in many organizations to build rapport and trust quickly between teams and new leaders.

Typically, this can be accomplished in a series of exercises that last for a half day, with a follow-up check-in scheduled within 3 to 6 months of the session to discuss progress, success, and newly-discovered questions and challenges.

There are three major objectives in utilizing Fast Start:*

1) To provide direct reports with the opportunity to "get to know" their new manager in a very short period of time.
2) To begin to build the basis for a longer-term working relationship between the manager and their team of direct reports, and;
3) To lay the foundation, very early on, for open communications, work planning and problem-solving between the manager and their direct reports.

The process itself consists of five sequential phases:

i. Data Collection
ii. Feedback to the New Manager
iii. Response Preparation
iv. Manager Response and Discussion
v. Follow-up

The process begins with the help of a facilitator, who is viewed by the new manager and the direct reports as an objective third party. The credibility of this consultant is very important to the process since they will gather highly confidential data from both the manager and the team. The willingness of the people participating to share such data can be enhanced significantly if the consultant is viewed as objective, trustworthy, able to handle confidences, and is competent in organizational development processes.

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF FAST START * (cont'd)

Phase One: Data Collection

This consists of an informal meeting between the facilitator/consultant and direct reports, usually lasting anywhere between two and four hours. Often this begins with the new manager opening the meeting and explaining that this process is important to them so that the team can quickly build rapport and accelerate a process of mutual understanding that often takes months to establish in the regular course of business. The manager implores that they expect candor, that confidentiality will be respected, and they encourage full participation.

The facilitator/consultant explains the whole process, what they can hope to achieve through it, how it will work, the role they play, and reinforces to everyone that all information shared will be treated with confidentiality.

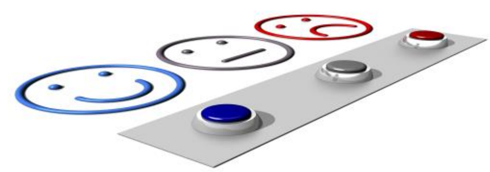
The facilitator then says they will cover seven basic questions (these can be modified, contracted or expanded depending on the team, the manager, the time and the situation), but essentially the key questions are as follows:

1. What do we already know about the new manager?
2. What don't we know, but would like to know about our new manager?
3. What are our concerns, both group and individual, about this person becoming our new manager?
4. What do we want or need most from the new manager?
5. What would we like the new manager to know about us, either as individuals or as a group?
6. What are the major problems we think the new manager will be focusing on during the first year? (in order of importance)
7. How are we going to help our new manager be successful?

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF FAST START * (cont'd)

Once the questions have been presented, facilitator does their best to go through one question at a time and capture on the flip charts all replies. Data collection offers an opportunity for the team to learn from one another about things they each have observed about their manager in the short time they have worked together that others may benefit from (e.g.--they answer their phone more at certain times of the day, family structure, openness to interruptions…)

Throughout this first part of the program, the facilitator/consultant must be cautious to help the group walk the fine line that separates an open, honest dialogue from a session filled with nothing but complaints. Data collected in this meeting is for the purpose of constructing a positive foundation on which this new team will be built. It is certainly an appropriate place to air old gripes and raise new concerns, but with the intent of moving the group ahead in a more positive way. Without discouraging data, the consultant can continue to remind the group that this assimilation process is intended to bridge the gap between the new manager and them, not to widen it.



<u>Phase Two: Feedback to the New Manager</u>

Now that the information has been collected, the facilitator can move into the second phase of the process: Feedback to the new manager. At this point, the team is dismissed and then in a one-on-one meeting with the new manager, the consultant reviews all of the group's responses to the questions .This phase is to help the manager understand the group's responses, identify big themes - but not to comment on them.

This feedback process should last anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes.
Once all the data has been reviewed, the new manager should take some private time to work with the facilitator, to reflect on the data and begin to formulate their responses to the information presented. It may also be necessary to gather some additional information not immediately on hand in order to answer some of the questions posed by the group. The more candid a new manager is, the more effective the session result will be. This is not to say that a manager should agree to change some things that are troubling the team but rather they be honest about a few things they may not be able to change.

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF FAST START* (cont'd)

Phase Three: Response Preparation

The new manager should be allowed sufficient time to prepare his/her response to the direct reports. However, faster the group gets together the better.
This is also an excellent opportunity for a new manager to offer information that the group may not have asked about, but might be important and useful to understand. This could be personal data such as a chronic health issue that often results in unexpected moods or irritation, or job related such as his/her overall strategy for that group.

Phase Four: Manager Response & Discussion

With flip charts or notes prepared, the New Manager candidly presents their response to the questions of, and information shared by, the direct reports face to face. It helps to have a good blend of candor, humor and reality. Often the manager and facilitator will circle similar themes or hot points that run across all the questions, and sometimes that is a good starting point, i.e., hit the big areas of interest soon. Other times I have seen as an ice breaker the manager talk about personal things first so a human connection can be established.

The facilitator and manager should encourage follow up questions by the team to the extent they are comfortable and to the extent the managers answers are unclear or feel incomplete. Establishing a dialogue is key. These meetings can run from one hour to five hours depending on the issues and intensity as well as how engaged the group wants to be in talking vs. listening. Once all topics have been covered and the manager and facilitator ask if there are any remaining items, its good to debrief quickly and ask everyone how they felt about the process.

Phase Five: Follow-up

Invariably, there will be a few issues raised in the discussion that will require follow up so those commitments should be made by the manager as to when they think they can get the answers or input that will help.
In addition, all actions should be captured and follow-up dates and owners assigned. Then, all the charts should be typed up and a follow-up session set for 3-5 months out where the charts can be opened and the group can get a new pulse on where they are with or without the help of a facilitator depending on the recommendation of the team.

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Fast Start: Getting Our New Team Up and Running!

DEPARTMENT/TEAM NAME:

DATE:

FACILITATOR

Fast Start Sessions: Purpose

- Get everyone on the same track: communicate goals, challenges, and offer an opportunity to ask questions and clarify.
- Learn your new leader's style and agree upon the best ways to communicate as a team.
- Reduce guesswork, misconceptions, and get us on the Fast Start to Success.
- Establish team's purpose statement, values and ground rules.

FAST START - AGENDA

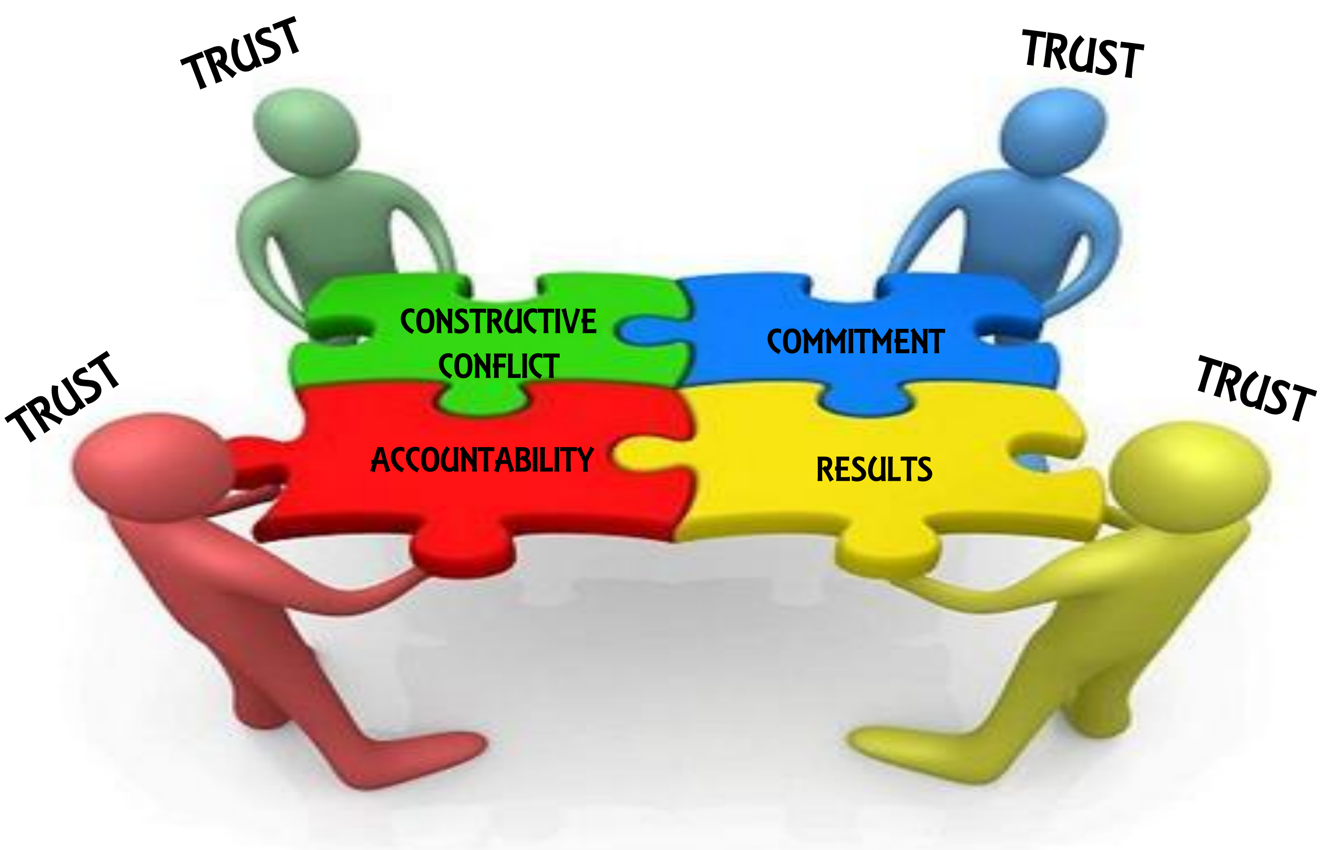
- Get to Know our Leader and One Another
- Identify Team Purpose and Ground Rules
- Drive Connection and Clarity
- Top 3 Goals/Top 3 Challenges
- Next Steps/Action Items Who Is Doing What

KEY MESSAGES

- We need to value each other and the special talents that each person brings to the team.

- To be successful, our key business priorities and goals must be collectively understood, owned and accomplished by working together as a team.

- Critical to attaining this accomplishment is for a team to embody five functions of behavior: trust, constructive conflict, commitment, accountability, and results.



Getting to Know Us: Individual Introductions to Our New Leader

1. On your flipchart piece of paper, please draw a cross in order to make the paper into 4 quadrants.

2. Use the quadrants to draw pictures to describe the following:
   Your job, your passion/hobby, a key strength you bring to this team, and something surprising about you that adds deeper insight into who you are.

3. You cannot use words; only pictures.

4. You have about 15 minutes to draw your 4 pictures.

5. Each of you will talk through your visual when we are all done with our drawings (10 minutes) and then share with the new leader during the regroup.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW?

- What do we already know about

  ____

- What are some things we would like to know? (e.g., communication style, open/closed door approach, meeting rules, sense of urgency, core strengths…)

- What should he/she know about us?

- What are our expectations of _________________ as our leader?

a. What are you getting that you need?

b. Are you getting anything that you <u>don't</u> need?

c. What else do you think you need to make the relationship successful?

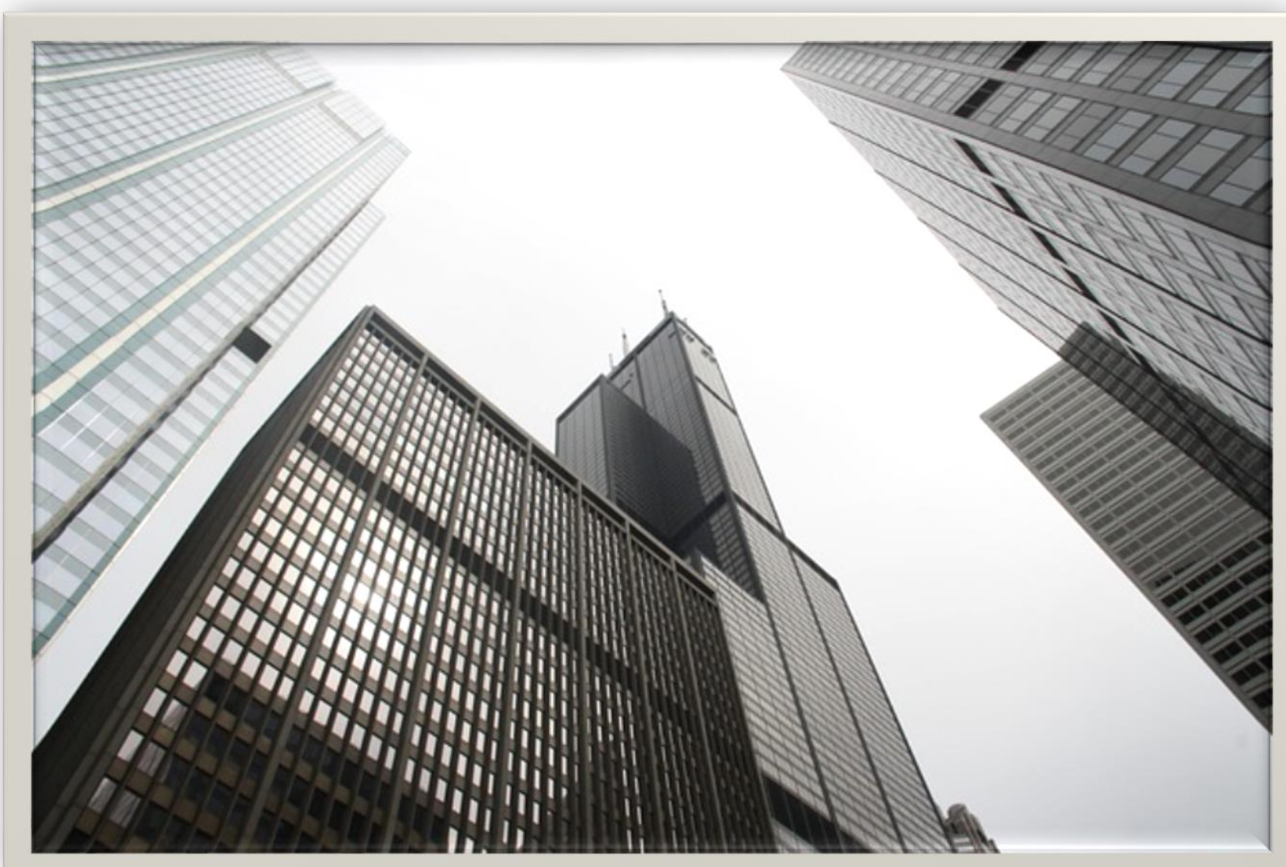
- What, if anything, do you think we could do differently as a team?

This is what we know/think about

- Our business

- What we're here to do

- What we want to be known for



How do we want to be as a team?

1) What is currently working well?

2) What can be improved or enhanced ?

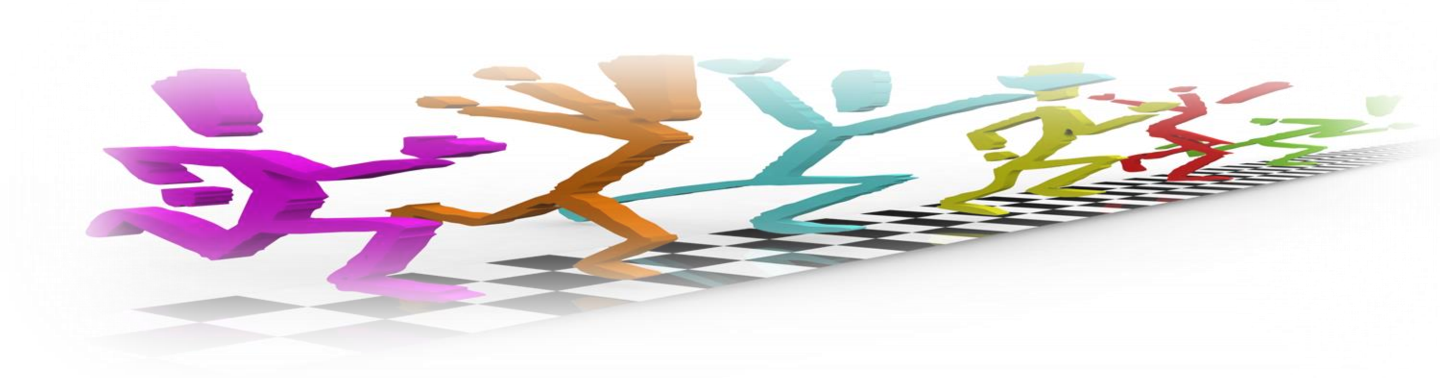
3) How are we comfortable making decisions?

4) How do we want to communicate (i.e., face to face, emails, etc.)

5) What operating principles do we want to have?

6) How do we keep our momentum going?

MOVING FORWARD:
OUR COMMITMENTS AND GOALS



Top 3 Team Commitments:

1.

2.

3.

Top 3 Challenges to be Overcome:

1.

2.

3.

Next Steps…