

Ideal First Month

[Author's note: As everyone's resume is different, everyone's Ideal First Month is different. This example is expansive, and yet realistic. It is also fully-formed. You can tell by reading that the writer put her heart into it. At nearly four pages, it isn't brief. You might think this level of detail is irrelevant. It isn't.

The famous inspirational leader, Earl Nightingale, wrote, "We become what we think about." So painting a clear picture of your future is essential. Over the years, many clients have told me, "This new job I'm in is exactly what I wrote in my Ideal First Month."

The industry is healthcare, and this female executive landed a position in a Fortune 500 company that was the "95-98% good fit." Promoted after five years, she is now a director.]

Day One

For me the perfect first day would be:

I wake up at 4:45am without an alarm because I'm so excited to get up and begin the day after a very restful night's sleep. It's a warm spring day and the birds are chirping quietly outside the window and all the trees are in bloom. I say a quick prayer for my family, friends and blessings on my first day, get up and go to an awesome boot camp class. Once I'm back home my kids get up without any problem and get themselves ready for school. We have breakfast, listen to some fun music together and I drop them off at school then drive my current car (Acura MDX) to the office in the Denver DTC (a relatively short drive) and there's surprisingly little traffic on this particular day and it moves seamlessly and without incident.

I arrive a little before 8:30am which has been agreed to with my new boss for my first day. I park in my new, designated parking space that's covered and has lots of space around it. Others from my office are arriving around the same time, having spent time also exercising, reading/ writing/meditating or spending time with their families prior to work. My office building is beautiful: lots of windows, airy and spacious, modern, clean and professional. Others from my building are smiling, friendly, making eye contact and saying good morning sincerely.

They are intelligent and conversational and representative of different generations and backgrounds. There are lots of millennials and Gen Xers, as well as individuals in their 50's. A few are in their 60's who could retire but just can't give up their passion for working with others and sharing what they know with all. People are professionally dressed in typical CO business casual. Many are carrying gym bags or arriving on bikes, and have HBR, Denver Business Journal and, in some cases Runners World and CO Parent Magazine, sticking out of their workbags. I am anxious to get there so I skip the free coffee bar having brought my own and I report directly to my boss's office.

My boss, Pat, has also just arrived and is thrilled to see me. We talk about our weekends, families and activities. We laugh at how crazy life is with busy families and kids and marvel at how there can be so many places everyone has to be at once. We also both completed a weekend warrior exercise challenge, including a long bike ride and run.

Pat has a folder prepared with my name on it and shares it with me. It has my first month partly mapped out with various meetings already scheduled on my behalf, including lunch and coffee meetings with internal colleagues, leaders, board members, as well as external customers, and important stakeholders.

My new office is beautiful: it's warm, inviting, fresh and bright with lots of natural light from the many large windows. It's on one of the upper floors of the building and has beautiful views of Colorado's Front Range. There is a large, round table for meetings with one to four people. The furniture is new, made of a warm, rich wood tones, and is plenty big to spread out and make neat piles for working on projects, reading materials, correspondence, etc. I also have plenty of file drawers for filing away important documents, and other storage. I have a large new computer, modern telephone with speaker and mute button and a really nice bookshelf to display my many books. There is also a console table where I can display pictures of my family and places on the walls to hang a dry erase board and my personal artwork, including my kid's drawings. There are two beautiful floor plants in my office that bring life and color into it.

One wall is painted a very tranquil, peaceful blue green color and accents the other warm cream-colored walls perfectly. I have a very comfortable desk chair that provides lots of back support and sits behind my large desk and faces the door so I can greet people as they enter. There's a small water fountain in the corner of the console table providing white noise, peace and tranquility. There is also a Bose radio for my use to play music during those early mornings or evenings I'm in the office, with a Vivaldi music mix already programmed. The carpet is understated, a deep, rich color of charcoal grey and clean looking.

I love my new office. It will be the perfect place to meet with other people and brainstorm together, as well as sitting alone in and thinking of new ideas, solving problems, and reading. It's warm and inviting and I, and others, can't wait to spend time in it doing great work. I even brought a bowl of chocolate to have on hand to share with others and to curb my occasional sweet tooth and it seems the idea is shared by others ☺ The office is technically enabled with well-placed outlets at the table, desk and console for charging devices during or in between meetings.

My new boss spends some time giving me his/her perspective on the organization and work. Pat shares some specific and valuable advice he/she was given when they started and insights identified along the way to equip me with and to ensure I'm highly successful. We discuss that I will have a large amount of flexibility and autonomy in my work. I am expected to be in the office, working with others and visible of course but I am also encouraged to work independently from home or remotely as needed to think, plan, work on projects, catch up on things, take a mental health day, etc.

My boss explains this is an important tenet of the organization and they feel like happy employees are productive and effective employees. I respond that this sounds great as I have been very effective in structuring how I spend my time. While I love collaborating and working with others across the entire organization as well as externally, I also value my time alone to think, plan, regroup, catch up, etc. We agree this will be a perfect fit.

As we continue to meet, others from the organization pop in smiling, warm and friendly to introduce themselves and say “hello.” They welcome me to the team and say repeatedly how glad they are that I’m there and really look forward to working with me. Everyone seems very intelligent, articulate and personable.

Pat also tells me that everyone in the company works hard to achieve excellent results and there are high expectations for the company and everyone there. Pat goes on to say that we are a team and we learn from each other and together. One reason the company is great is that they are risk takers and not afraid of sharing ideas or trying new things for fear that they will fail.

They do not sit back on their laurels and expect success to come their way. Pat then gives me several examples of new ideas that did fail and the valuable lessons they provided and how each person who contributed remained at the company and had benefited from the experience. The company also considers itself a learning organization and takes time to examine and reflect on each experience and apply those lessons to future work. Pat also emphasizes that integrity and trust are key values in the organization and that they wish to start our relationship on a solid basis of trust.

I respond saying I agree that both virtues are very important and trust is amongst the key attributes of a highly successful team/organization, if not the most important attribute. I added that I’m very glad I can trust him/her and assure Pat that I, too, can be trusted.

I am also introduced to my new team, which includes an executive assistant and project manager. Since we are a relatively new area of the company we will need to determine other staff that may be needed down the road. Pat also thrills me by saying I have full access to all of the organization’s resources and team members to support my and my team’s work.

My new boss has made a reservation for lunch nearby and after taking a tour of the beautiful building, and meeting some additional people we walk over together. The day has gotten even more beautiful and together we marvel at what a beautiful place Colorado is.

Once we’ve ordered Pat takes out six file folders and explains there are several key areas of work that will be my focus for the first few months. These include:

- 1) Following lunch one of the company’s largest national accounts based in Denver will be on site and Pat wants to introduce me. Amongst the attendees will be the VP of strategy, VP of CX, CEO, CFO and Medical Director. They are having a meeting to discuss a new direction the customer wants to take and Pat wants me to lead this.

Pat expects this to be a new best practice in the company as well as our industry and will provide countless benefits to our customers and, more importantly, to patients. I respond that I am very excited to learn more and thrilled the company has asked me to lead this.

- 2) Pat goes on to describe the second key area for me to focus on. This includes doing a comprehensive assessment of a current product that is getting mixed results. I will meet with all their customers in six major markets using this product at the leadership level

and conduct the assessment, provide insights into what is working and not working, and recommendations on future direction, and target markets.

A project manager, communication and IT SMEs, and clinical resource will partner with me on this initially, and I can add other resources as needed. I can utilize the company plane and driving service to ensure my travel is most efficient, as well as take advantage of deluxe accommodations in each city. These are key clients so there will be several opportunities to dine at top restaurants and also attend several key sports events, including the 20-- World Series. The results will be presented to the leadership team and board who are very interested in this work and my perspectives.

- 3) Both these projects have been recently discussed with the Harvard Business School and upon completion I will work with Clay Christensen and other key faculty in the business and health policy departments to discuss and summarize the results. As part of this partnership, I will also participate on a discussion panel at a national conference, as well as complete next year's Executive Leadership Program in Boston. I also have the opportunity to include any key members of my team in this work and program as well.
- 4) The company is stuck in a negotiation with a major health provider and would like me to review it and pave a way forward that will benefit both organizations. The company and board value the relationship and believe a fresh perspective will help identify the right set of tradeoffs and value propositions that will result in mutual benefits. I have access to a financial analyst and legal resources for this and any others as needed.
- 5) The company has recently formed a strategic advisory council and would like my participation. This group is representative of every major area in the organization and has the ear of the CEO and Board Chairman. This is a think tank of sorts and my boss explains I can provide valuable ideas and participate as a thought partner with other key leaders/contributors.
- 6) In my role I will represent the organization on two community boards of directors. Pat would also like me to co-chair a Women's Affinity Group that is just being formed at the company in order to mentor and support upcoming female leaders in the organization. Additionally, I will participate on an innovation and leadership advisory group that our organization supports. Finally, as part of this group I will be provided my own mentor.

We have a great meeting with the national account following lunch. These are smart, passionate, down to earth people who are eager to tackle these new areas together and I suggest several next steps which they all agree are spot on. We also discussed getting together for dinner with our spouses during an evening next month. Pat and I debrief quickly and call it a day around 5pm. I go home and we all decide to go to Mt Fuji for Japanese food, celebration and fun!

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