Civil Service College Singapore

Research Report:

Career Transitions

Challenges, Transformative Learning and Implications for Talent Management

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What are Transitions?

Transitions are changes that require us to transform how we perceive and interpret ourselves and the world around us, and to develop new priorities, learn new skills, behaviours and patterns of interpersonal reactions so that we can fit into the new roles.

In our personal and professional lives, each one of us faces many transitions, such as the transition from being an individual contributor to being a manager, the transition of joining a new organisation and the transition to parenthood. Common to these transitions is that they bring about a fundamental change in our roles and/or routines. Often, these are changes that require us to transform how we perceive and interpret ourselves and the world around us, and to develop new priorities, learn new skills, behaviours and patterns of interpersonal interactions so that we can fit into the new roles (Ibarra, 2004; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008; Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988). Thus, the significance of transitions is the subjective meaning attached to the objective changes, and the behavioural and cognitive changes that result. Hence, some researchers have defined transitions by referring to their impact on the individual. For instance, Avolio & Hannah (2008) defined transitions as 'trigger events [that] create a point of disequilibrium and heightened self-awareness that can lead the individual to challenge his or her basic beliefs and assumptions'. Similarly, Dotlich, Noel & Walker (2004, pg 2) described transitions, or what they termed 'passages', as events that 'take you from one place to another' in that 'you see the world and yourself differently after you've gone through the events and emotional states that define each passage'. Because of all these transformative changes, it is not surprising that senior human resource professionals perceived that 'transitions into significant new roles are the most challenging times in the professional lives of managers' (Watkins, 2009), and a study by DDI revealed that leaders themselves perceived making a transition to be among 'life's most difficult personal challenges' (Byham, Concelman, Cosentino, & Wellins, 2007).

The Transition Cycle

The literature on transitions generally highlights four stages in the transition cycle – preparation, encounter, adjustment, and stabilisation and consolidation.

The literature on the transition process (e.g. Nicholson, 1994; Nicholson & West, 1988) generally describes an initial encounter or approach, where the individual comes face to face with the contrasts between the old and new roles as well as the differences between the anticipated and the actual experience. For changes that are planned or anticipated, the encounter phase is preceded by a preparation phase during which the individual anticipates the changes and wonders how he will manage the new demands.

The encounter phase is followed by a period of adjustment, which is often emotionally and cognitively intense because the individual has to let go of a previous role and its accompanying beliefs and behaviours, and acquire a new role together with the unfamiliar beliefs and behaviours that are necessary for meeting the demands of the new role (Guillen & Ibarra, 2009).

Finally, there is a period of stabilisation and consolidation as the individual better fits into the new role, everyday routines are established, and there is little or no new learning apart from honing existing role-related skills (Guillen & Ibarra, 2009). Before long, this is likely to be followed by another preparation phase, as the individual gets ready for another transition.

Figure 1 presents the transition cycle diagrammatically:

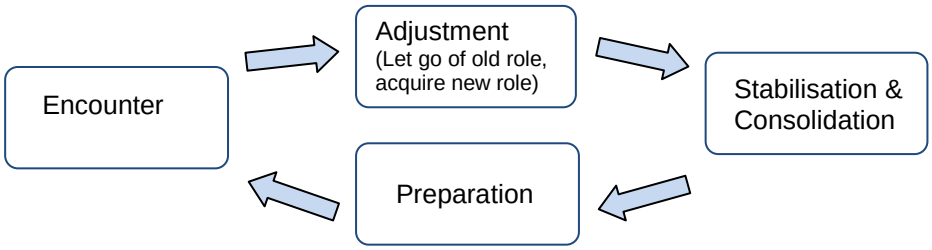

Figure 1: The Transition Cycle

Transitions Can Vary on a Number of Dimensions

Transitions can vary on a number of dimensions. While leadership transitions have been given a lot of focus in research, they do not present a complete picture of an individual's experiences during his working years. Other career-related transitions, as well as the transitions in his personal life, whether representing adversity or diversity, are important too and can contribute to leadership development and affect leadership effectiveness.

Transitions can vary on a number of dimensions which are not mutually exclusive. The key dimensions described in the literature on transitions (e.g. Dotlich et al, 2004; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Sargent & Schlossberg; 1988) are listed in Figure 2 below.

Dimension of Transitions	
Intensity:	- *degree to which the new role requires new learning because it does not permit the exercise of prior knowledge, practised skills and established relationships*
Surprise:	- *extent to which the actual experience is unexpected*
Desirability:	- *extent to which the transition represents a progress/opportunity for diversity (i.e. high desirability), or a regression/adversity (i.e. low desirability)*

Dimension of Transitions	
Work-related vs personal:	- *whether the transition is work- / career-related or arises from changes in one's personal circumstances, family life, or relationships*
Event vs non-event:	- *whether the transition arises from an event that actually occurred or an anticipated event that did not occur (e.g. being passed over for a promotion)*
Voluntary vs imposed:	- *whether the transition is one that the individual has volunteered for or is one that is imposed on the individual*

Figure 2: Key Dimensions of Transitions

Two Salient Aspects of Transitions: Work- or Career-Related vs Personal, Adversity vs Diversity

While transitions may vary in many different aspects as shown above, Dotlich et al (2004) highlighted two salient aspects of these experiences: whether they are work- and career-related or related to one's personal life, and whether the transition represents adversity or diversity. Thus, the various transitions that an individual is likely to face during his working years may be an adversity at work, an opportunity for diversity at work, an adversity in one's personal life, or an opportunity for diversity in one's personal life. This matrix is presented in Figure 3 and it is a useful way to classify most of the different transitions that an individual is likely to face during his working years.

	Career, Work	**Life, Relationships, Family**
Adversity	Career-related difficulties or negative events at the workplace: • Having to work with a bad boss • Having to work with competitive peers • Being passed over for a promotion • Significant failure at work • Losing faith in the system • Being part of a re-organisation • Losing a job / retirement	Difficulties and negative events in one's personal life: • Family problems • Death of significant others • Divorce • Personal upheaval, e.g. midlife crisis • Serious illness or physical challenge • Losing meaning in life
Diversity	Range of interesting, stimulating projects, assignments, and roles: • Joining a new organisation • Accepting a stretch assignment • Progression along the leadership pipeline • Working internationally	Breadth of life experience / life events: • Participating in a range of experiences outside work • Interacting with people of other cultures • Living in a different country • Marriage and/or family - finding a meaningful work-life balance • Developing and living a meaningful credo • Understanding and accepting your legacy

Figure 3: Matrix of Common Transitions (matrix adapted from Dotlich et al, 2004; list of transitions collated from Charan, Drotter & Noel, 2001; Dotlich et al, 2004; Ruderman & Ohlott,2000)

The transitions listed in Figure 3 above have been collated from a list of common transitions identified by various researchers and practitioners in leadership transitions. Charan, Drotter & Noel (2001) has written extensively about the discrete career stages and the critical transitions points in the leadership pipeline, where each passage represents a fundamental change in the skills and values that are important, and the activities that must be prioritised and allocated more time. However, from the literature on transitions, it is clear that the leadership transitions faced in an individual's professional life do not present a complete picture of his experiences. It is important to consider other non-pipeline, career-related transitions as well as the transitions in his personal life, as these transitions can also contribute to leadership development and affect leadership effectiveness. In the following section, we explore in greater detail the common transitions that Singapore Public Officers are likely to experience. We will look at the demands associated with the new role, and the new perspectives and skills that an individual requires to make a successful transition into the new role.

Career Transitions Related to Progression along the Leadership Pipeline

Each transition to a new position along the leadership pipeline represents different challenges and different opportunities for transformative learning.

Progressions along the leadership pipeline are the transitions in an individual's career that are most predictable. These are transitions that provide the opportunity for diversity at work and they are key to leadership development.

Managing Self as an Individual Contributor at Work

One of the first transitions that a new officer has to make is that of joining the workforce. In this transition, he is required to let go of his previous role as a student and assume the new role of an employee. Typically, most officers begin their careers as individual contributors where their **focus is on gaining professional or technical competence**, and value-adding in terms of their own work (Charan et al, 2001). Although an officer might have gained much theoretical knowledge or even practical skills during his undergraduate or postgraduate years, there are likely to be other cognitive skills and technical or professional expertise that he still has to develop in order to be effective on the job, and intellectual intelligence is a key focus at this stage of his career. To be an effective individual contributor, **he also needs to manage his time** such that he can complete his assigned tasks in a timely manner. In addition, **he has to come to value meeting professional standards in his work, and to value the organisation's beliefs** (Rhinesmith, 2010). Present-day work often involves collaborating with colleagues, customers and other stakeholders external to the organisation. Thus, the new officer **needs to develop the interpersonal skills** that will enable him to work effectively with others too (Rhinesmith, 2010).

Managing Others as a First-Time Leader

Much research on career transitions has focused on the transition from an individual contributor to a first-time leader. This is a significant transition because the qualities and behaviours that have helped the individual to succeed as an individual contributor are no longer adequate for him to succeed as a manager. From a career perspective, this is also a significant transition for many people because it marks their move into a leadership role.

The most significant and fundamental challenge for a first-time leader is to recognise that he has to let go of the emphasis on individual contributions. This may be challenging because he is still expected to do staff work, which is more similar in nature to an individual contributor's role. However, he has to **forge a new identity as a manager** and that includes learning to value managerial work, to value getting work done through others and helping subordinates succeed instead of succeeding through his own efforts (Charan et al, 2001; Dotlich et al, 2004; Rhinesmith, 2010). This transition may be particularly difficult for individual star performers and technical specialists who identify strongly with their technical competence and have succeeded thus far in their career because of their individual talents (Dotlich et al, 2004; Krembs, 1983). At this point in their career, if they try to be both a specialist and a manager, they are likely to suffer burnout (Krembs, 1983). However, once they have made the value and identity shift to managerial work, they are likely to become more open to developing the skills that are needed for them to deal effectively with the other demands of the transition (Charan et al, 2001; Krembs, 1983).

One of the most obvious role requirements of a first-time manager is that he is expected to **manage the team's performance** such that the team is able to achieve its goals. The skills that are important for a new manager to pick up include planning and assigning work, selecting people to fill positions in the team, monitoring and evaluating the work of others, and finding ways to develop team members' capabilities (Dotlich et al, 2004; Rhinesmith, 2010). Importantly, while managers have to drive performance, they need to learn to balance this with a **consideration of people's needs**. This could be difficult for high-performing individual contributors because they are often task-focused, have a high need for efficiency and impose high standards on themselves (Krembs, 1983), which may make them inclined to be overly focused on achieving results to the detriment of team morale. Beyond ensuring smooth operations on day-to-day tasks, the manager has to be proactive in introducing changes that will improve the team's performance (Hill, 2007) and to think strategically on organisational issues so that he can make better decisions that have the cooperation and support of others (Krembs, 1983).

A manager is also responsible for **building a positive team culture**. He needs to learn to inspire and influence others, and to empower them, so that they will be energised to deliver better performance. In addition, he needs to understand and communicate how the team's work fits into the larger organisational picture, so that the team members will have a sense of direction and purpose, and this will help them to be committed to the team's efforts (Derven, 2009; Folkman 2010; Hill, 2007). Furthermore, his role requires him to manage relationships among team members, as well as to **build networks with other key people** within or external to the organisation. Thus, he has to learn the interpersonal skills to handle

a range of situations and a range of people with different backgrounds and agenda (Derven, 2009; Hill, 2007).

Taken together, the different demands of the job mean that the manager must learn to **balance the amount of time spent on completing their own work versus the amount of time spent on guiding subordinates** (Charan et al, 2001). If the new manager can demonstrate competence in the above job requirements, and also **demonstrate strength in character** through showing the right intentions and walking the talk, then it would be easier for him to create trust and establish credibility among his subordinates, peers and supervisors, and be accepted in this new role (Folkman, 2011; Hill, 2007).

Learning to lead has often been described as a process of learning by doing and then reflecting on the experience. Although a 2005 study by the Corporate Executive Board, a global executive and professional network, found that as many as 60% of first-time managers underperform in their role (Gallo, 2011), the early lessons about leadership in this transition, such as building team culture and leading change, will help the individual become a better leader in the future (Dotlich et al, 2004). Conversely, skipping this transition or not fully learning the key lessons from this transition can hinder success in subsequent positions up the leadership pipeline (Rhinesmith, 2010).

Managing Managers

Charan et al (2001) identified the second turn in the leadership pipeline to be the transition from being a manager of others to a manager of managers. At this point, the officer is required to **work within a larger sphere of diverse functions and levels of the organisation** (Kovach, 1986). Cognitively, this requires him to consider how his team is able to add value in a way that is aligned to the work targets of the larger unit. He has to be a change agent driving and implementing transformations, and he needs to learn to obtain resources for his team and allocate these appropriately. He also needs to recognise the interdependence of different work teams in the organisation, find ways to connect and align his work team with others, and devote time to coordinating responsibilities with his peers. He may even need to influence others in the organisation over whom he has no authority (Charan et al, 2001; Guillen Ramo & Ibarra, 2008; Rhinesmith, 2010).

As a manager of managers, the individual is managing a larger team, and leadership ability becomes more important than technical competence because his **managerial functions become more complex**. Fundamentally, he has to value getting the desired results by getting the first-line managers to manage their staff. The skills that he needs to develop include learning to select people who will make good first-line managers, and he needs to recognise that brilliant technical experts do not always make the best managers; he has to consider their leadership interest and potential. He also needs to focus on guiding and developing the first-line managers he is overseeing, and this includes learning to influence and communicate important information to the first-line managers to help them set work goals for their subordinates that are aligned with the broader organisational direction, learning to coach them on managing others, learning to assess their work, and learning to create energy within the team (Charan et al, 2001; Rhinesmith, 2010).

Managing a Function or Department

When an officer assumes the position of a Director, he is faced with another key transition point in his professional career. Now managing a function or department, he has to take on a new level of responsibility and **manage some areas that may be outside his own area of expertise**. He is also required to **see his function or department from multiple perspectives**, and he has to consider if plans and proposals can be carried out technically, professionally or physically. In this position, he has to develop a **longer-term perspective** of his function and think of how he can develop his talent pool and implement strategies that will improve the future of the department, setting goals that are far ahead. **Breadth of perspective** is also important as he has to consider how his function or department is working towards the overall goals of the organisation. Thus, his focus is to delegate responsibilities to his managers of managers so that they can ensure smooth running of the operations, while he organises and implements plans for the future (Charan et al, 2001; Rhinesmith, 2010).

In addition, the officer has to **value being a member of the organisation's executive team** and part of the larger cadre of leaders within the Singapore public service, which requires him to learn to work across boundaries, find new ways to collaborate with peers and integrate teams and be a strategic partner beyond his function or department. There is a steep learning curve with this transition, and the officer needs to have the maturity and relatively strong ego to accept that he may not know everything and that he has to be open to instruction, and he has to avoid over-emphasising areas which he previously specialised in (Rhinesmith, 2010).

Becoming a General Manager

While Charan et al (2001) broke down the higher levels of the leadership pipeline according to whether the individual is managing a business unit, group or enterprise, these distinctions may be less meaningful in public sector organisations. Thus, following from Rhinesmith (2010), we will look at these higher levels of management collectively as general managers. Given the complexities of the demands on the general manager, Rhinesmith (2010) identified this as the time of greatest possible achievement and greatest vulnerability, and Gabarro (2007) estimated that the taking-charge process can take at least two years, with alternating phases of intense learning and intense action.

Firstly, being responsible for both cost and revenue, the general manager needs to be skilled at **developing a dynamic and economically viable service model**. He has to learn to set the direction for the organisation by identifying priorities that are critical to the mission of the organisation and then get his team to focus on them and obtain or deploy resources accordingly. He has to develop a focus on long-term strategies and future goals and balance these with more immediate needs, and this requires him to learn to pay attention to risks and opportunities, and analyse issues and reflect on how to make trade-offs between profitability and longer-term sustainability (Charan et al, 2001; Rhinesmith, 2010). At this level of management, the problems faced by the general manager usually do

not have a single correct answer, but are likely to be complex problems or paradoxes where there are two or more 'right' solutions that are both viable to a certain extent, but which may lead to negative consequences if any one solution is pursued to the extreme at the expense of other solutions. Thus, it is important for the general manager to develop a clear set of personal beliefs and values for the organisation which would guide him in identifying the optimal solution in such situations, and he has to learn to balance these paradoxes by continually monitoring them and readjusting the solution (Rhinesmith, 2010).

Another demand of a general manager is that he has to **maintain oversight of different functional areas**, including areas in which they have no experience. Therefore, he must adopt the new mindset of valuing all functions without showing preferential treatment towards his own functional background, and learn to recognise and make use of various staff functions to pursue the goals for his business. At this level, it is not a matter of how much he personally knows about any particular function, but rather how well he is able to rely on his staff to provide accurate assessments of what is happening in their respective functional areas and to provide honest input on the organisation's overall strategy and decisions. Hence, it is vital for a business manager to learn to **assemble a strong leadership team** of direct reports and trust and accept their advice. Moreover, as he no longer has all the answers to all the problems, the emphasis is now on being able to ask the right questions and to listen and reflect on the answers (Charan et al, 2001; Rhinesmith, 2010). In other words, part of the challenge here is that he has to learn to handle staff who may be managing upwards, and leverage on their capabilities.

A general manager is also required to **shape the soft side of the organisation**. He has to spend time fulfilling ceremonial duties and to use his leadership position's visibility as a platform to communicate with and energise the organisation. Thus, he has to value articulating and shaping the organisational culture, values and beliefs, and learn to be effective in communicating to a diverse audience (Charan et al, 2001; Rhinesmith, 2010).

Beyond working with his staff, a general manager has to **build important networks** that can help to advance his personal and professional goals (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007). While this would be helpful earlier in his career, it is particular critical at this point in time because of the range of people he has to work with and rely on in order to succeed. Ibarra & Hunter (2007) identified three non-mutually exclusive networks that a general manager has to create. The first is an operational network consisting of good working relationships with the people who can help him complete tasks and achieve work goals. To function effectively at this level, he needs to value developing a broadened sense of community. Hence, besides his staff, this network may include superiors, peers, the board of directors as well as key internal players and external stakeholders with whom he has to ensure coordination and cooperation (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007; Rhinesmith, 2010). The second critical network is a personal network with people who can provide new perspectives, contacts or information that would help them to mature in their thinking and advance in their careers. The third network, which is the most time-consuming to establish, is a strategic network of local and overseas partners outside his direct influence and beyond his immediate control, who can provide information, support or resources that will help open his eyes to new business possibilities and stakeholders that he needs to involve.

Creating networks may be a particular difficulty for officers who are strong in their technical or functional areas, and who have a negative mindset about networking. Thus, a key shift for an individual experiencing this transition is to have a positive mindset about networking and recognise that networking can be effective and ethical, and to devote time to creating his networks. He also has to pick up the skills that will enable him to set up effective networks with a diverse range of people, such as knowing how to find common ground with others and finding opportunities to give to and receive from his network (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007).

Other Career-Related Transitions

Other transitions faced at work, whether opportunities for diversity (such as joining a new organisation, accepting a stretch assignment and retirement), or adversities (such as having to work with a bad boss and bad peers, being passed over for promotion, losing faith in the system and dealing with failure), present other challenges and opportunities for transformative learning.

As mentioned previously, it is clear that the leadership transitions faced in an individual's professional life do not present a complete picture of his experiences. It is important to consider other non-pipeline, career-related transitions as well.

Joining a New Organisation

Obviously, a transition that a new officer has to make at the start of his career is that of joining a new organisation. This transition poses a few demands on the officer. Firstly, he needs to **understand the scope of his job and identify if there are any knowledge and skill gaps, and then acquire these knowledge and skills** so that he can function effectively, and set goals that would demonstrate he is growing and producing (Dotlich et al, 2004). Beyond focusing on the immediate task, he **needs to be able to understand his supervisor**. Specifically, he needs to learn to read his supervisor and to understand his goals and priorities, so that he can be an asset in terms of helping his supervisor to achieve his goals (Dotlich et al, 2004). In addition, he **needs a good understanding of how things are done in the organisation**. This requires him to learn to quickly diagnose the organisational culture through observation, reflection and talking to others (Dotlich et al, 2004). Finally, he needs to learn to quickly **build a network of co-workers** throughout the organisation, so that he can get the necessary support for their work (Dotlich et al, 2004).

The knowledge and skills acquired during this transition will continue to be important throughout the officer's career because in the Singapore public service, it is not uncommon for officers to be rotated to different departments or be seconded to other ministries or agencies every few years. Even though these are all organisations within the public sector, there is no homogeneous culture across these organisations. Thus, each time an officer makes a transition to a new organisation, or even to a different department within the same organisation, he would have to let go of a familiar culture and reliance on an established

network of resources, and learn to work within the new culture as well as work with new bosses and colleagues. This requires a certain degree of emotional intelligence.

Accepting a Stretch Assignment

By definition, a stretch assignment is one that requires the individual to move out of his comfort zone and take on a new role that can potentially broaden his current capabilities. Because of the learning potential offered by stretch assignments, the Singapore public service, similar to many other organisations, often makes use of stretch assignments to develop and groom leadership talent. Different kinds of assignments help to hone different skills. The stretch assignments that are common in the Singapore public service include job rotations to different portfolios or across functions, organisations and sectors; involvement in boundary spanning events that require working with others in the organisation, with other organisations or with external stakeholders; involvement in new initiatives and special projects; and leading organisation change (Yip & Wilson, 2008). Besides these assignments, even promotions to a higher position in the leadership pipeline can represent a stretch assignment as the new requirements may be significantly different and there will be performance gaps. Thus, accepting a stretch assignment is a transition that an officer has to face repeatedly during his career.

Regardless of the tasks given, **the greatest demand posed by a stretch assignment is the significant competence gap** that the officer has to struggle with. This can be a humbling and stressful experience because there is a tremendous amount to be learnt in a short time and there may be tremendous pressure to succeed (Dotlich et al, 2004). During this transition, the officer has to be able to recognise and accept his limitations, and then find a new way to be effective. This may include learning to trust his own instincts and not merely relying on experience, as well as learning to rely on the expertise of those more experienced than him (Dotlich et al, 2004).

This transition may be particularly challenging for those with a performance goal orientation, as they are more focused on demonstrating a certain performance standard and being judged favourably. In the face of challenges, they tend to experience counterproductive reactions, such as feeling anxious and victimised, and may exhibit maladaptive, helpless behaviours or perform worse (e.g. Button, Mathieu & Zajac, 1996; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980; Dotlich et al, 2004). On the other hand, individuals who engage in tasks with a learning goal orientation are focused on learning and improving, and as a result, they are likely to view stretch assignments positively and be motivated to work hard to succeed in their new role. In support of this, Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh (2009) found that managers with stronger learning orientations gain more from their experience in a stretch assignment in terms of the managerial competencies they gained.

Having to Work with a Bad Boss or Bad Peers

Bosses often have a large effect on an individual's work experience. Bosses assign work, manage performance, and generally act as a conduit between the organisation and the individual. Not surprisingly, research has consistently shown that bosses have a huge impact on employees' satisfaction and commitment (e.g. Gallo, 2011; Folkman, 2010).

Unlike the other transitions described above, the transition of having to work with a bad boss or bad peers does not require the individual to actively assume a new organisational role. Nonetheless, the individual is still required to personally redefine his implicit role because having to work with a bad boss or bad peers poses certain challenges for the individual. First, he needs to let go of his reliance on his boss and peers to motivate him to meet work goals and objectives. Instead, he has to **make the shift towards discovering an inner motivation to achieve and excel**, and this inner drive will be increasingly important as he assumes more important leadership positions where he has to depend more on himself and less on others (Dotlich et al, 2004).

Secondly, working without the protection of a boss or the support of peers means that the individual has to **learn to solve problems independently**. In other words, he has to give up the role of being the boss's protégé or being part of a team where others will look out for him. He also has to figure out the organisational system himself, which requires him to develop political savvy and the ability to network with others in the organisation (Dotlich et al, 2004).

Thirdly, this adversity presents a good opportunity for the officer to **learn to manage difficult interpersonal relationships**, which would stand him in good stead when he himself has to manage a team and work with a greater range of individuals. There is also evidence that while working with a bad boss or bad peers can be a miserable experience, it often triggers the individual to **define his own values** and what it means to be a good boss or a good peer. For instance, in a study conducted with Singapore Public Sector Leaders, 21% of the interviewees indicated that bosses who were negative role models had a developmental impact on them by causing them to promise to themselves never to behave in a similar way with their own staff (Yip & Wilson, 2008).

Being Passed Over for Promotion

To many officers, being promoted is a core aspect of career progression. When an officer sees that his peers in the same cohort are promoted but he is not, he has to deal with the transition of being passed over for promotion, and this may be a transition that he experiences more than once during his career. The challenge with the transition is that **he has to maintain his sense of self-worth despite the setback**. Although it is easy to feel like a failure at this point, especially compared to his more successful peers, he must recognise that his identity and self-worth should not be defined by a single negative event at work. The important values shift for the officer is that he has to learn to take a sense of perspective about all aspects of himself and review his definition of success, recognising that

his job is not the essence of his identity and that success is defined by more than just promotions (Dotlich et al, 2004). In addition, he needs to find ways to motivate himself to continue to work hard despite the setback. **Learning from the mistakes** he had made that contributed to him being passed over for promotion, and **learning to be resilient**, are both important for the officers during this transition (Dotlich et al, 2004).

Losing Faith in the System

Dotlich et al (2004) described losing faith in the system to be about losing faith about the business world in general, and about the organisation and its senior leaders specifically. For Singapore Public Officers, losing faith may be about losing faith in the public service, losing faith in the particular organisation that one is working in, losing faith in one's immediate leaders in the organisation or, more broadly, losing faith in the public service leaders. This may happen because they experience a disconnect between their ideal and actual experience, or because they have witnessed or personally endured a series of disillusioning events (Dotlich et al, 2004). Thus, while their previous ideal of the public service and respect for the public sector leaders may have motivated them to work hard, they now **need to discover a new sense of purpose in what they are doing and more personal reasons for working towards organisational goals**. This will help them to gain greater belief in themselves and be more personally committed to what they are doing (Dotlich et al, 2004). Not everyone will go through this transition and if it does happen, it could be at any point in time during an officer's career.

Dealing with Failure

While no one sets out to fail, failure is an inevitable part of the leadership journey and researchers have pointed out that the paradox of failure is that it actually helps to create more successful leaders (Dotlich et al, 2004). Dealing with failure is a transition that all officers are likely to face at some point in time in their career, especially after they have started to manage a function or department, as they then have greater autonomy to make decisions, and mistakes are likely to have greater impact. Thus, if their decisions lead to adverse outcomes, such as failing to meet major organisational expectations, it also means they have to accept responsibility for the failure and find a way to deal with it. Dotlich et al (2004) pointed out that while some failures are public, some failures could be private and self-perceived, such as when an individual has failed to achieve a career goal or meet certain expectations he has set for himself.

As with some of the other adverse transitions an officer may face during his career, a key challenge with this transition is that he has to **maintain his sense of self-worth despite the setback** and not let the failure define him as a person or a leader, or to blame external factors and assume no responsibility for the failure. The important shift in perspective for the officer is that he has to **treat the failure as a learning opportunity**. He has to examine how things went wrong, and consider how his approach, actions, decisions or values may have contributed to the failure. This reflection will help him gain greater insight into his

strengths and limitations, and help him understand what he might do differently in similar situations in the future in order to be more effective (Dotlich et al, 2004).

Retirement / Planned Exit

While an officer may take several temporary exits from his work role throughout the course of his career, a final transition that he will face in his career is an exit transition—a planned and permanent exit from his role. It may be resignation, or retirement which is mandated by employment laws or initiated by the officer himself. Retirement is a unique transition as the officer leaves a particular organisation or role without necessarily entering into another work role. As an individual's role in the organisation sometimes defines him in terms of providing regular social interaction, a sense of purpose as well as meaning, an officer experiencing this transition may experience a sense of loss. In some instances where the role defines the individual so definitely, he may experience physiological deterioration and psychological depression (Louis, 1980).

In essence, the challenge in coping with this transition is to **identify a new role**—whether in one's personal life or in a new work context—**and a new purpose in life**. For instance, some retired officers take on fellowship positions in the public sector or seek jobs in the private sector, so that they can continue to develop themselves and contribute their talents to a meaningful cause. Others may choose to play a more active role in the family, taking care of grandchildren; and some others may choose to spend time pursuing interests and hobbies that they had little time to indulge in during their working years.

Unique to the Singapore public service is that under the guidelines for leadership renewal, some officers hold a fixed term appointment. Deputy and Permanent Secretaries, for instance, both are 10-year fixed term appointments. This means that high-flying officers who reach these positions in their mid-30s will have to retire while in their mid-40s, which may make the transition more difficult for them as they still have many productive working years ahead of them and may be ambitious in achieving more in their career.

Transitions in Personal Life

Transitions in an individual's personal life, such as finding a meaningful work-life balance, facing personal upheavals or mid-life crisis, and letting go of amibition, also provide challenges and opportunities for transformative learning.

In addition to the career-related transitions described above, an individual is also likely to face transitions in his personal life during his working years.

Finding a Meaningful Work-Life Balance

Early in their career, officers are likely to be able to devote much time and energy to their work, and they may find it acceptable to spend an inordinate amount of time at work as it helps them to get ahead in their career. However, starting from their late twenties, family commitments may begin to surface. Officers may marry and start a new family and young children may demand a lot of time and energy, elderly parents may begin to suffer health problems and become more dependent. When such events occur, the individual needs to consider how best to negotiate the competing demands of work and family on his time. He may decide to continue to spend much time on his work and find alternative solutions for managing his personal life, or he may choose to set some limits to when he works or how much overtime he works, decide to work part-time either temporarily or permanently, or take a period of leave from work. What is important is that he bears in mind the trade-offs and consequences of his choices. Dotlich et al (2004) noted that balance means different things to different people and each individual has to define for himself a personally meaningful balance. Thus, this transition offers a good opportunity for individuals to **identify and consolidate their personal values, define for themselves what success in life means, and also to develop appropriate support systems in the family for their work**, and those who are able to handle the transition effectively emerge with a surer sense of their identity and purpose (Dotlich et al, 2004).

Facing Personal Upheaval / Midlife Crisis

Life is not smooth-sailing and invariably every individual faces personal upheavals at some point or other of his life. Such personal upheavals could include a wide range of disasters, crises and pain, such as the death of a loved one, physical illness or disability, divorce or family problems, and financial or legal difficulties. An individual experiencing this transition could feel particularly vulnerable and experience negative emotions such as anger or sadness. To cope with this upheaval, he has to **learn to accept and be authentic about his negative emotions, learn to accept fate and move on without bitterness or guilt, and to seek support from others where necessary** (Dotlich et al, 2004). The other critical shifts that are required with this transition often include **a change in worldview and a revision of priorities in life**, together with **a greater sense of empathy and connection with other people**. For instance, when an individual witnesses the death of a loved one, he may realise that death cannot be overcome with achievement or material gains, and thus may revisit his purpose in life and moderate his task-oriented behaviours, choosing instead to put in more time and effort to build strong relationships with other people.

Some of these upheavals are particularly likely to occur around mid-life (approximately from the mid-30s onwards), which, according to Levinson's life stage development model, is also the period of life when individuals start to feel that what has been satisfactory thus far in their life is no longer inadequate. They are likely to reflect on where they have been and what they have accomplished, and to re-evaluate their personal goals and what they still hope to do (Hermans & Oles, 1999). This is also the time when they question their purpose in life and regardless of the career success they have experienced thus far, they are likely to find their work less compelling or rewarding (Leider,

2008). Some may feel stagnant or that they have reached a plateau and realise that their talents are not being fully utilised. As a result, they may feel discouraged considering that their efforts have been worthless or that they have outgrown their jobs, organisations or professional areas (Louis, 1980). Such feelings may make them feel disengaged from their jobs. Thus, a key challenge with midlife crisis is to **understand one's calling**, which will help bring about a renewal of purpose and passion in work (Leider, 2008).

Letting Go of Ambition

At some point in the later stages of his career, an officer may realise that he is operating at peak effectiveness because he is in a position where his passion and strengths are a perfect match for the demands of the job and all his energies are focused on the job. This is when he is likely to experience the transition of letting go of ambition, where he finds that he no longer has the desire to seek to move further up the organisational hierarchy. This is not because he has reluctantly accepted or is resigned to the fact that he has already reached the highest organisational level that his potential or organisational politics allow him to achieve, but because he has gained clarity about what gives him greatest satisfaction at work (Dotlich et al, 2004).

A critical shift in this transition is the officer's definition of career success. If it is no longer meaningful to measure success by organisational position or power, then it is important to identify alternative metrics, such as progress towards a valued goal or the legacy that is left behind. This may prompt him to focus his time and emotional energy on doing what he does best and becoming an expert in his area of interest and specialisation. As he is now more dedicated to his work rather than to his career, others may see that he is less likely to operate with a personal agenda, and his objective advice and support might be more readily sought by others. Thus, this transition also represents an opportunity for the officer to **become focused on developing other people**, because he no longer views others as competition for higher positions or desirable assignments and is more likely to gain satisfaction from the success of others (Dotlich et al, 2004).

The Impact of Transition Success and Failure

A transition that is successfully managed can be powerful triggers for transformative self and leadership development. On the other hand, transition failures lead to great costs for the individual and the organisation.

Research has consistently shown that on-the-job experiences are critical for leadership development and transitions can be powerful triggers that stimulate transformative self and leadership development as described above. However, the range of challenges faced means that not everyone is successful in making a transition. By one estimate, over 75% of high-potential leaders experience significant to moderate problems when they move into a new role (Shaw & Chayes, 2011). At the same time, 70% of senior human resource professionals agreed that success or failure during the transition period is a

strong predictor of overall success or failure in the job (Watkins, 2009). Thus, transitions are critical periods for the individual.

At the individual level, the cost of transition failures includes stress and burnout or a sense of stagnation, derailment and career dissatisfaction (Dotlich et al, 2004; McCauley & Lombardo, 1990). At the organisational level, the cost of a leader who fails to adjust to a transition includes organisational inefficiencies, failure to complete important initiatives or meet important organisational goals, as well as adverse impact on the engagement and development of subordinates reporting to the leader (Byham et al, 2007). Thus, from both an individual and an organisational perspective, it is important that an officer successfully copes with transitions.

In fact, beyond merely preventing transition failures, organisations are likely to be interested in transition acceleration, which is about how to reduce the time that the officer takes to reach breakeven point and begin to contribute more value to the organisation than he has taken from it while going through the adjustment and stabilisation and consolidation phases of the transition process (Watkins, 2003). Depending on the level of seniority and the sectors studied, this time to reach breakeven point is estimated to range from six to nine months from the start of coming into the role (Chari, 2008).

Organisational Strategies for Facilitating Transitions

Organisations can do more to facilitate transitions, through providing clarity about role requirements and competence gaps, positive organisational messaging about transitions, and encouraging personal reflection. Supervisors and others can also provide practical support, emotional support, as well as feedback and guidance.

Rather than leaving transition success to chance, or adopting a 'sink-or-swim' approach where individuals are thrown into the deep end of the pool and then assessed on their potential based on their ability to muddle through and make the best of the situation—an approach which Watkins (2003) aptly termed a 'Darwinian' model of leadership development—, organisations can devote more effort and resources to actively help their staff manage transitions and become net contributors sooner. This is particularly true for officers who are transiting to new job roles that are planned by the organisation.

1. Provide Clarity about Role Requirements and Competence Gaps

Clarity about Role Requirements

Transitions failures often occur because people do not understand their roles when they move to a new position (Charan et al, 2001; Hill, 2007). Without this information, it will be difficult for them to make sense of their new environment and adjust accordingly. Thus, in preparation for a transition, organisations can provide information that would help the officer understand the nature of the role, the job content, how the role fits into the organisational context, and what others expect of him in this role (Charan et al, 2001; Ibarra

& Barbulescu, 2010; Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988). This is particularly important for staff who have hitherto been focused on carrying out technical or specialist work (Krembs, 1983). In some organisations, such as Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway and General Electric, after the employees have assumed a new work role, a structured developmental programme is provided to offer guidance on what changes and challenges they are likely to face in their new roles and how they can manage the transition in a systematic manner (Riordan, 2008; Watkins, 2003).

Clarity about Competence Gaps

Another key challenge for individuals going through transitions is gaining competence in meeting the demands of a new role. Individuals often feel vulnerable and incompetent when they are making a transition because the demands of the new role will always differ from the demands of the previous role, and the beliefs, knowledge and well-honed skills that have helped the individuals to succeed in the previous role are no longer adequate and in some cases, the current capabilities may no longer be useful. Besides a steep learning curve, individuals undergoing a transition are likely to be under pressure to deliver results quickly (Chari, 2008). Yet, during times of stress, individuals are even more likely to fall back reflexively on the skills and strategies which have been tried and tested in the past, even though they may no longer be effective (Berglas & Baumeister, 1993). At this point, by providing clarity about role requirements and an accurate assessment of an officer's current strengths and limitations, organisations can help the individual to identify what needs to be learnt to close the competency gap. Broadly, career-related transitions may require the individual to close skills gaps in fulfilling new responsibilities as well as knowledge gaps in terms of technical or business knowledge, customer or market knowledge, organisational norms and power-relations, procedures or approaches for completing work tasks (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007; Isopahkala-Bouret; 2008; Sargent & Schlossberg; 1988; Shaw & Chayes, 2011). In the preceding section, we have already provided a more detailed description of the demands and challenges typically faced in various transitions, together with the new competencies that are required.

2. Provide Positive Organistional Messaging about Transitions

Organisational messaging on the transition could also influence staff's perceptions of the transition. According to Schlossberg (1981), adaptation to a transition is the interaction of three sets of variables, namely, an individual's perception of the transition, the characteristics of the individual, and the characteristics of the pre- and post-transition environments. Positivity means that the individual perceives the transition as a positive event and is ready to embrace the challenges and risks and make the necessary adaptations. More specifically, perceiving the transition as an opportunity for greater learning and growth would help him accept a higher level of challenge during the transition (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). Bunker (2008) similarly pointed out that people who adopted a learner response to a change are more likely to be comfortable with the change and to have a high capacity for change. Thus, organisations could emphasise transitions as positive events that provide opportunities for learning and growth, which would encourage greater

positivity in their staff. Such positivity is particularly essential when the pre- and post-transition environments are significantly different, which represents a more intense transition that requires a greater degree of new learning.

3. Encourage Personal Reflection

Another organisational strategy for facilitating transitions is to provide staff with the time and space for personal reflection, and to guide them to do this if necessary. Beyond a cognitive understanding of the new role requirements, the individual needs to reflect on what the transition means for him at a more personal level. A transition often challenges an individual's sense of identity because questions about who he is, who he is becoming, what his values and ideals are, and how he matters and belongs to the group or community are likely to surface during this time. To make sense of the situation, the individual has to engage in identity work, where he revisits his self-identity and makes readjustments where necessary (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Louis, 1980). This examination of identity not only applies to work or leadership identity, but may also extend to one's personal and family identities (Musselwhite & Dillon; 1987). Thus, a successful adjustment to a transition means that the individual has internalised a new role identity and reworked his life story such that he can meaningfully link who he is and who he will become (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Essentially, internalising a new role identity is an important part of the transition adjustment process because the discoveries and reflections that the individual makes during this time help him to acquire new perspectives about how he can contribute and add value in his new role, and these transformations in his thinking will bring about sustained behavioural changes (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Ibarra, Snook & Guillen Ramo, 2008). To the extent that this new identity is accepted by others, it would also facilitate his social integration (Ibarra & Brabulescu, 2010).

4. Offer Support from Supervisors and Others

Practical Support and Guidance

Supervisors have a key role to play in guiding their staff through transitions. For one, they could provide the necessary environmental support for their staff to learn and grow in their new roles. For instance, supervisors could ensure that a new first-time manager no longer receives requests for technical work, and is recognised for his general management skills instead (Krembs, 1983). They could also clarify job roles and expectations, help to emphasise the right values and priorities, provide resources and offer advice (Charan et al, 2001), which may include pointing out the challenges of the situation and the key relationships that have to be managed (Watkins, 2003; Watkins, 2009).

In addition, supervisors could help their staff to deliver results by working with them to map out key priorities and strategies in the coming months and set appropriate performance standards, and by monitoring their goal progress (Shaw & Chayes, 2011). Though it is important to strategise about longer term goals, it is equally important that there

are some immediate focal points where the individual can quickly achieve tangible results. Securing such early wins in his new role would help establish his credibility and set up a virtuous cycle which would facilitate further success (Watkins, 2003).

Furthermore, supervisors could help their staff to develop a learning agenda which would help them plan how they could best address the competency gaps (whether it is through tapping on the knowledge of specific persons, hands-on experience, critical analysis, or other methods) (Shaw & Chayes, 2011; Watkins, 2003). However, Hill (2007) pointed out that supervisors play the dual conflicting roles of being responsible for both developing and evaluating their staff, and this might limit the extent to which their staff are comfortable turning to them for help. Hence, peers and other seniors with whom an officer has an established, positive relationship could be tapped on to provide emotional support as well as serve as role models or offer additional insights or alternative perspectives that can help him cope with the situation (Callister, Kramer, & Turban, 1999; Dotlich et al, 2004). An alternative strategy for organisations is to set up coaching or mentorship arrangements for those transiting into a new role, to help them understand the wider systemic issues, and to support them in their learning and development.

Feedback, Encouragement and Emotional Support

Providing useful feedback and encouragement is another form of support that supervisors could offer their staff to help them develop and succeed in their new roles. In fact, a study by DeRue & Wellman (2009) showed that social support mechanisms, such as having regular feedback from their supervisors or peers, improved people's ability to learn from extremely challenging work experiences. More broadly, supervisors could simply be more aware of the difficulties and challenges that their staff may face in going through during a transition, be more understanding of their staff while they adjust to the transition and be more tolerant of mistakes made in the learning process.

Implications for Talent Management in the Singapore Public Service

The implications of the research on transitions are that 1) selection for or promotion to a higher-level position should be based on the demands of the position, rather than the ability to generate results at the previous level; 2) indiscriminately fast-tracking officers could lead to developmental gaps and subsequent performance problems; 3) a well-structured onboarding process by the organisation can facilitate transitions; 4) building greater awareness of transition issues at the individual level can help officers handle transitions.

This review of the literature on transitions has helped us gain greater awareness of the typical transition process, the challenges that are faced in transitions, the critical shifts that are required in various transitions and the general strategies that the organisation can utilise to facilitate smooth transitions. These findings will inform our understanding of the issues to consider when selecting, promoting and developing leaders.

1. Broader Considerations in Managing Leadership Progression

Selection for or Promotion to a Higher-Level Position

From a talent management perspective, job performance is influenced by a combination of selection and development strategies. Selection focuses on choosing the individual with the most suitable capabilities for the job, while development focuses on enhancing the competence or expanding the capacity of the individual. The findings of this literature review suggests that it is important for recruiting managers to have greater awareness of the qualities that might need to be considered before officers are selected or placed into new organisational roles. As Charan et al (2001) noted, the ability to generate results at one level should not be the main selection criterion for a higher-level position. Instead, the demands of the higher-level position, together with the specific skills and work values that are important, have to be considered as these may be very different from the preceding level.

Fast-Tracking

Charan et al (2001) further noted that there will always be a performance gap when someone is appointed to a new leadership level and officers vary in the time they take to develop and reach full performance, being ready to progress to the next leadership level only when they demonstrate excess capacity for their existing role. Thus, skipping or incomplete development at one level could hinder success at the subsequent levels as essential skills, perspectives and relationships that are needed at higher levels are not developed (Kovach, 1986; Rhinesmith, 2010). The implication is that organisations that practise fast-tracking, including the Singapore Administrative Service, need to be aware that not all officers can be accelerated to the same extent and that some might need to spend more time in their existing role. Otherwise, these officers might be set up for future failure.

2. Establish a Structured Onboarding Process for Officers in New Job Roles

Both research and anecdotal evidence from practitioners suggest that a well-structured onboarding process can facilitate transition success. This process may include providing clarity about the requirements of the new job roles, possible challenges and competence gaps. Another key component could be developmental programmes that are designed to help the officers gain the necessary competence to better handle the demands of the transitions. A key focus of the developmental programes should also be to help the officers internalise a new identity as that will facilitate a fundamental change in values and worldview, which would provide the impetus for sustained changes in behaviours. In addition, the involvement of supervisors would be a crucial aspect of the onboarding process since they play a key role in guiding officers, as well as providing feedback and support. As managing a transition is a very individualised process, coaching and mentorship could be

offered as part of the onboarding process as well. More specifically, coaches and mentors could offer alternative perspectives, feedback and support, encourage personal reflection, and act as a sounding board for the officers while they are adjusting to their new job roles.

3. Build Greater Awareness of Transition Issues at the Individual Level

Researchers note that different work and life experiences offer different learning opportunities (McCall, 2010; Ruderman & Ohlott, 2000), and even transitions that represent an adversity, such as failure at work or loss of significant others, can facilitate learning and development and bring about greater leadership maturity (Dotlich et al, 2004). Ultimately, individuals need to take responsibility for their career and their personal lives, and one of the ways to enhance transition success is by building greater awareness in staff of the possible transitions they may face during their working years, the challenges involved in these transitions, and the strategies they can adopt to better manage these transitions. This will help them to be better prepared and better equipped to handle the transitions, and is particularly essential for transitions over which the organisation has little control and can offer little meaningful support.

Future Research Questions

While this literature review has provided useful insights into the nature of transitions, the findings are largely based on studies in the western context and it would be useful to have a more in-depth understanding of officers' experience of transitions in the Singapore public service. Possible areas for further research include collecting qualitative and/or quantitative data on:

1) What transitions are most difficult for officers at various organisational levels in the Singapore public service and why?

2) What aspects do they struggle with most during the various transitions?

3) What personal or organisational strategies and interventions facilitated or hindered their ability to manage the transitions?

4) What sources of support did they rely on during the transition process, what support was provided, and what was the impact of the support?

5) What personal qualities or characteristics are the strongest predictors of success in managing transitions?

6) Given that officers who are fast-tracked move into new positions up the leadership pipeline relatively quickly and thus face more frequent transitions, what is the impact of fast-tracking on leadership effectiveness and leadership development?

These findings would help in the design of more relevant onboarding processes and/or support systems that would more effectively help officers to manage transitions.

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Annex: Summary of Demands and Challenges of Various Transitions and the Critical Shifts Required

Career Transitions Related to Progression along the Leadership Pipeline

Managing Self as an Individual Contributor at Work	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Working effectively independently	• Acquire cognitive skills, technical or professional expertise • Learn to manage time and complete assignments in a timely fashion • Learn to value professional standards and organisation's beliefs
Working effectively with others	• Develop interpersonal skills to work with others to achieve common goals

Managing Others as First-Time Leader	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Loss of professional identity and shift from emphasis on individual work	• Learn to forge a new identity as a manager • Learn to value managerial work and getting work done through others • Learn to value ensuring the success of subordinates while keeping in view personal success
Managing performance and task achievement	• Learn to plan and assign work, fill jobs, coach and measure the work of others • Learn to find ways to enhance the group's performance • Learn to think strategically on organisational issues • Learn to balance people and tasks • Learn to allocate time towards managing and guiding subordinates
Managing relationships within team and building networks with key people	• Learn interpersonal skills to handle different situations and different people
Building team culture	• Understand how job fits into larger organisational picture • Learn to influence, inspire and motivate others
Establishing credibility with subordinates, peers and supervisors	• Demonstrate character • Demonstrate managerial competence • Demonstrate influence

Managing Managers	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Working within a larger sphere of diverse functions of the organisation	• Learn to ensure team's work is aligned with broader goals of the unit • Learn to obtain resources for team and allocate these appropriately • Learn to think beyond own team and connect their team to others • Learn to coordinate responsibilities with peers • Learn to work with others in the organisation over whom one has no authority
Managing managers	• Learn to value leadership skills more than technical skills • Learn to value getting results by getting managers to manage • Learn to select people to be first-line managers, assign managerial and leadership work to them, measure their progress and coach them • Learn to create energy within the team

Managing a Function or Department	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Taking responsibility of a function or department	• Learn to value and manage areas outside one's expertise • Learn to adopt a longer-term and broader perspective • Learn to develop and implement strategies that enable team to meet future needs • Learn to develop talent pool
Being part of the executive team	• Learn to find new ways to collaborate with peers • Learn to work across boundaries and integrate teams

Becoming a General Manager	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Developing a viable service model	• Learn to identify mission-critical issues • Learn to focus on longer term strategies and goals without losing sight of short term profitability and needs
Managing paradoxes	• Develop moral intelligence – clarify personal beliefs and values for the organisation • Continually monitor paradoxes and revisits solution
Managing different functional areas	• Learn to value all functions, including those that are less familiar • Learn to build a strong team • Learn to trust and accept the input of staff • Learn to ask the right questions and reflect on the answers
Shaping the soft side of the organisation	• Learn to value articulating the organisational culture, values and beliefs • Learn to communicate clearly and effectively to a diverse range of people
Building critical networks that will provide information, support and new perspectives	• Learn to adopt a positive mindset about networking • Learn to value and devote time to networking • Learn skills that will help him build effective networks

Other Career-Related Transitions

Joining a New Organisation	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Understanding job responsibilities and identify knowledge and skill gaps, if any	• Acquire job-relevant knowledge and skills • Learn to set appropriate work goals
Understanding boss's agenda	• Learn to read the boss and work with him
Understanding the organisational culture, how things are done in the organisation	• Learn to quickly diagnose the culture through observation, reflection and talking to others
Building a network	• Learn to build a coalition that stretches throughout the organisation

Accepting a Stretch Assignment	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Significant competence gap	• Learn to accept initial incompetence and not feel like a victim • Learn to be aware of competence gap and find a new way to be effective • Learn to trust own instincts and not merely on experience • Learn to rely on others with greater experience and expertise

Having to Work with a Bad Boss or Bad Peers	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Finding other ways to motivate yourself to meet work goals and objectives	• Discover an inner drive to achieve and excel
Working in a system without the protection of a boss or others	• Acquire greater ability to solve problems independently • Learn to be political savvy • Learn to network with others in the organisation •
Managing the interpersonal difficulties	• Learn to define own values of leadership, and how not to be a boss or a peer • Learn to manage difficult relationships

Being Passed Over for Promotion	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Dealing with self-identity and sense of self-worth	• Refuse to allow negative event to define self • Learn to take a sense of perspective about all aspects of self
Maintaining performance	• Learn from mistakes • Learn to be resilient

Losing Faith in the System	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Loss of extrinsic motivation to work; overcoming negativity	• Learn to discover intrinsic motivation to work and a personal sense of purpose

Dealing with Failure	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Accepting responsibility for a failure	• Learn to accept appropriate responsibility for failure • Regard failure as a learning opportunity and identify learning points
Maintaining sense of self-worth despite setback	• Learn to put the failure in proper perspective and not let it define him as a person • Learn to find other ways of defining self-worth

Retirement / Planned Exit	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Maintaining a sense of identity and meaning despite loss of work identity	• Learn to be positive about developing a new sense of identity • Learn to identify a new purpose in life

Transitions in Personal Life

Finding a Meaningful Work-Life Balance	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Finding a personally meaningful work-life balance	• Identify and consolidate personal values and definition of success • Learn to develop support systems in the family

Facing Personal Upheaval / Midlife Crisis	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Overcoming vulnerabilities, doubts and negative emotions	• Learn to accept and be authentic about negative emotions • Learn to accept fate and move on without bitterness or guilt • Learn to seek support from others where necessary
Finding a renewed purpose for life and work	• Learn to understand one's calling in life and revise one's worldview and priorities accordingly

Letting Go of Ambition	
Demands / Challenges	**New Perspectives and Skills Required**
Defining success	• Learn to define success in alternative ways, and not just by organisational position or power
Adopting a new work role, e.g. as developer of others	• Learn the demands of the new role and consider he can value-add in that capacity