

"How to Handle Sudden Success"

Working Woman
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Moving into a top spot—and the spotlight—means that whatever you do is closely scrutinized, not only by your subordinates but also by the chairman of the board. What you do and how you say it, even how you look, reflects not only on yourself but on the company. In a sense you are the company. To the hostile journalist. To the Japanese team that wants to do a deal. To the industry organization that wants you to speak at its next annual meeting.

Learning on the job is not something you are expected to do. You're beyond that, they think. You may know better: Let's say that you have the social skills down pat—you were raised in an embassy and have been giving speeches since you were president of your college class—but your way with a budget is less than edifying. Or you've got the skills but lack specific knowledge of the industry or its products.

At this stage, experience is not the best teacher. You need to find an expert who will—for friendship or a fee—help you master skills in which you are weak. Here are some ideas on how to go about getting the help you need.

BUSINESS COACHES

If the problem is more than communications, a business coach may be in order. Dee Soder, Ph.D., president of the Endymion Company (precursor to CEO Group) in New York, is an executive-assessment and -counseling specialist who orients her efforts to your specific goals, be they managing subordinates more effectively, reaching one's potential or adjusting to the image one presents to the world. (Note Soder was only business coach mentioned—this was before Fortune coined term “executive coach.”)