MOVING INTO TOP MANAGEMENT: EXPERIENCES OF MARKETING EXECUTIVES IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

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Abstract

This paper examines the factors that might contribute to the ease with which marketing executives who are promoted to senior general management positions in charitable organisations adjust to the occupancy of top management roles. Thirty-seven individuals with marketing backgrounds who currently held top general management positions in large UK fundraising charities were interviewed using a frame-worked occupational autobiographic narrative approach. The research was informed by aspects of newcomer adjustment theory, notably uncertainty reduction theory. Social and personal considerations were much more important determinants of the ease of assimilation than technical job-related matters. Role ambiguity constituted the main barrier to smooth adjustment.

Key words: Marketing executives, newcomer adjustment, emotional intelligence, fundraising charities.

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Introduction

Although the difficulties experienced by marketing executives when seeking to obtain senior general management positions are well-documented (see Doyle, 2000; Baker and Holt, 2004; Gray, 2004; Hadden and Duckworth, 2005; Bennett, 2009; Bennett, 2011a; Davies and Ardley, 2012 for reviews of relevant literature), the factors that facilitate or inhibit the easy *assimilation* into top general management roles of marketing executives entering senior management for the first time has not been investigated. The research reported below examined this issue in a sector, large fundraising charities, where the promotion of marketers to the highest level of an organisation's senior management might, for reasons discussed in later sections, be regarded as problematic. The study was based on newcomer adjustment theory, especially aspects concerned with uncertainty reduction. According to Kohler, Rohm, de Ruyter and Wetzels (2011) the process of adjusting to a fresh and unfamiliar role consists of task and social transitions whereby a person gains knowledge and learns the behavioural patterns expected of the new position. Feldman (1981) and Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo and Tucker, (2007) suggested that the adjustment process comprises three elements, namely (i) obtaining role clarity, (ii) acquiring feelings of self-efficacy in respect of the new role, and (iii) gaining social acceptance.

Role clarity means understanding what exactly is expected of a person in a fresh position (Kohler et al., 2011), the job tasks and priorities attached to the role and the special demands and requirements of the work. The absence of role clarity may affect detrimentally a person's sense of 'fit and assimilation' into a new role (Saks and Ashforth, 2000 p.46). Role clarity allegedly reduces anxiety, with consequent benefits for performance (Kohler et al., 2011). It can be helped by the presence of formal induction procedures, precise organisational configurations, regular reviews, and clear statements from an organisation's CEO (Saks et al., 2007).

Self-efficacy involves an individual's self-belief in being able to master the duties attached to a new position (Bandura, 1977). A newcomer with substantial self-efficacy in relation to a higher level job will believe in his or her ability to accomplish specific tasks associated with the role (Lu, Siu and Cooper, 2005) and to fulfil comprehensively and competently all its requirements (Rigotti, Schyns and Mohr, 2008). High self-efficacy has been found to have many benefits, including a willingness to initiate tasks and to persevere with them when problems are encountered (Luthans and Peterson, 2002); to seek more challenging, complex and difficult assignments (Applebaum and Hare, 1996); to resist unhelpful external influences and to be less prone to experience stress (Saks

and Ashforth, 2000). As regards stress, failure to adjust to a new occupational role can result in a 'high anxiety-producing situation' (Katz, 1985 p.137). Prior expectations of the role may have been unrealistic; the individual might be plagued with doubts as to his or her capacity to cope with the new position. According to Saks and Ashforth (2000), stress experienced at or soon after the occupancy of a higher level position might be especially severe for people with low self-efficacy. However this might be less important among people with high self-efficacy.

Social acceptance: Social acceptance occurs when a person feels liked, accepted and appreciated by his or her new peers, thus helping the individual to adapt to the new peers' collective norms and values (Kohler et al. 2011). Feelings of social acceptance can lead to reduced uncertainty about the newcomer's ability to complete a fresh role, hence improving the individual's sense of self-efficacy. It may also diminish the newcomer's stress levels (Saks and Ashforth, 2000). Social acceptance, according to Ashforth and Saks (1996) can exert an extremely important influence on 'person-change' resulting from a change in role (p.156). Planned induction and mentoring can assist a person gain social acceptance, as described in a later section.

Research question

As little is known about the variables that might help an individual fit into a top management role following promotion, it is instructive to enquire as to whether factors known to facilitate *appointment* also improve a person's ability to adjust to a new senior management position. Additionally, newcomer adjustment theory itself suggests that certain considerations may ease assimilation.

Conceptual framework and literature review

Relevant variables discussed in prior literature are examined below.

Knowledge and experience of general management: Marketers have often been criticised for their (assumed) lack of general business knowledge (especially in relation to finance – see below) (for details see Baker and Holt, 2004; Turner and Miller, 2007; Bennett 2009). Specifically, marketers have been accused of concentrating on task-centred micro-marketing issues while ignoring the bigger picture (Doyle, 2000), of failing to recognise the contributions of other business functions (Hadden and Duckworth, 2005), of not 'thinking as business people first and marketing experts second' (Gray, 2004 p.32), and of focusing on *execution* rather than grand strategy (Tylee, 1996). It is relevant to note in this connection that marketing executives' work experience tends to be specialist in nature and to involve marketing rather than wider managerial duties (Bennett, 2011b). Typically, according to Simms (2003), marketers progress their careers through taking *essentially similar* jobs at higher levels in different organisations, possibly leading to the development of competencies that are not easily transferred to other areas (Dickmann and Harris, 2005) and hence to a 'narrow mind set focused on familiar policies' (Geletkanycz and Black, 2001 p.7). Hekman, Bigley, Steensman and Hereford (2009) argued that the manner in which a marketer *identifies* with membership of the marketing profession will affect the individual's organisational perspectives and behaviour. A strong identification with marketing might influence how a marketer interacts with managerial colleagues and how the individual perceives his or her role as a senior manager (cf. Davis, 2002).

Knowledge of the finance function: Whilst the situation pertaining to the charity sector has not been documented it is known that, within businesses, a person's possession of an accounting or finance background greatly facilitates the individual's chances of occupying a senior management position. An analysis of the top 100 FTSE companies completed by the recruitment company Robert Half (2013) revealed that 52% of their CEOs had an accountancy or financial management background.

Just eight per cent came from marketing or advertising. Ten of 18 new FTSE 100 CEOs appointed during 2013 were former financial managers. Top managers with finance backgrounds might enjoy similar advantages in charitable organisations. Charity recruitment websites routinely cite financial experience (especially of financial planning) as a desirable skill for candidates for senior charity management positions.

Elite social status: In 2012, 29% of the CEOs of the UK's top 100 FTSE companies were graduates of the universities of Oxford or Cambridge (Robert Half, 2013). A survey of 209 marketing executives who had attained senior positions in British companies completed by Bennett (2009) revealed that nearly two thirds of the sample had been privately educated (75% of individuals in the highest roles) and that a third had attended a 'top 20' British university. Arguably the possession of certain elite credentials (e.g., having gone to educational institutions that cater for people from upper-class backgrounds, membership of elite clubs and societies, and operating within elite social networks [Kirchmeyer, 1998]) helps accelerate a manager to a top management position (Useem, 1984; Palmer and Barber, 2001; Westphal and Milton, 2002; Dornhoff, 2002). It could be, moreover, that elite credentials ease a person's assimilation into a senior role *after* appointment, given that so many existing top managers are themselves likely to possess elite credential. An elite newcomer might already be 'in tune' with the norms and values of existing senior managers, and may already have influential connections and belong to important social networks (Dornhoff, 2002; Westphal and Stern, 2006). Only about eight per cent of the UK population are privately educated (Balton, 2012), overwhelmingly from the top end of the UK income distribution (see Biggs and Dutta, 1999), and two-thirds of these privately educated pupils go on to attend leading universities [Paton, 2013]). Hence the fact that a person has been educated privately is commonly used as a proxy to indicate high social class.

Planned induction: Organisations can deliberately and systematically 'socialise' an individual into a senior management job (cf. Chao, Kelly, Wolf, Klein and Gardner, 1994). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) defined organisational socialisation as a process that 'entails the learning of a cultural perspective --- for interpreting one's experiences in a given sphere of work' (p. 212). It can facilitate newcomer adjustment by helping to equip a person with the knowledge and skills needed for a new higher level job and to determine how an individual 'learns the beliefs, values, orientations, behaviours, and so forth necessary to fulfil a new role and to function effectively' (Ashforth and Saks, 1996 p.149). Socialisation might involve a timetabled series of activities designed to give a person a new occupational identity (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

The newcomer could be assigned a 'trusted organisational insider' to mentor the individual, to serve as a role model and help and 'groom' the person to function effectively in his or her new and unfamiliar senior management role (Bauer et al., 2007 p.714). A mentor can introduce a newcomer to top management norms of behaviour, attitudes and networks (Michel, 2007) and provide valuable emotional support (Seibert, Kraimer and Liden, 2001). Formal peer mentoring, according to Allen, McManus and Russell, 1999), can be highly efficacious in reducing stress. Campbell (1997) suggested that mentoring by a non-specialist senior manager is especially useful for helping a functional manager to focus on broad managerial issues.

Top management's attitudes towards marketers: The qualities of marketing executives have not always been held in high esteem by the top managers of large organisations (see Bennett, 2009). For example, a study of 81 non-marketing senior executives completed by Baker and Holt (2004) found that a large majority of the respondents regarded marketers as 'unaccountable, untouchable, slippery and expensive' (p.557). Hadden and Duckworth (2005) suggested that marketers have 'very different personalities from those who are board members', with the result that marketers might find top management board room cultures unappealing, even alien. Possibly marketing executives are more likely to be accepted by other senior managers in organisations that formally measure direct

connections between specific marketing tasks and overall profitability (Baker and Holt, 2004; McDonald, 2006). Harrington (1996) observed how non-marketing directors in organisations that closely measured marketing performance had significantly more favourable perceptions of the value of marketing than those in firms where measurement was absent.

Ability to cultivate relationships with peers: Bennett (2009) reported a substantial number of empirical studies which had found that individuals with high emotional intelligence exhibited better chances of advancing to top management positions. It is a matter of considerable interest therefore to establish whether, once promoted, a freshly appointed senior manager with high emotional intelligence has a better chance of easily fitting-in with his or her senior management peers. Salovey and Meyer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as a set of skills 'relevant to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself and in others, the effective regulation of emotion in self and in others, and the use of feeling to motivate, plan, and achieve in one's life' (p.185). Emotionally intelligent individuals, according to Goleman (2002), are better able to manage personal relationships, are emotionally flexible, able to play on their strengths, aware of how other people see them, and hence are capable of interacting successfully with others. The emotionally intelligent individual knows how to improve his or her attractiveness to new colleagues and how to 'gain favour' (Kumar and Bayerlein, 1991 p.619), when to conform to the opinions of colleagues and when to validate their opinions (Gordon, 1996).

Research method

A qualitative research methodology was applied consisting of a frame-worked autobiographical narrative interviewing protocol designed to elicit information from elite participants. Interviews began with open ended invitations to participants to present autobiographic narrative accounts of how well they felt they had 'fitted in' to their new senior management roles and of the events and occurrences that had facilitated or created problems for their absorption into the *milieu* of top management (cf. Bamburg, 2006). Consequent to the conclusion of the open ended part of an interview, the participant was led back to aspects of the issue not already mentioned and was invited to discuss *specific* themes and topics related to the research agenda. All the respondents were asked to rate on a scale between one and seven how easily they believed they had adjusted to their new management positions. This frame-worked section of the interview procedure was relevant given that the study had a clear thematic focus and since frame-worked interviewing methods (see Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid and Redwood, 2013) facilitate the identification of communalities and differences in qualitative data. At the end of the interview the participant was asked to complete a short questionnaire containing 14 items measuring the person's degree of emotional intelligence. These items were based on Schutte et al's (1998) emotional intelligence inventory focusing on the 'regulating emotions in others' dimension of emotional intelligence. As the interviewees were members of the main management boards of large UK charities (many of which are in effect substantial multinational enterprises), the elite status of the participants had to be taken into account. Thus, following the advice of Aberbach and Rockman (2002) and Welch Marschan-Piekkari, Penttinen and Tahvanainen (2002) on the conduct of elite interviews, great care was taken to demonstrate the interviewer's professional credentials and standing in the academic world, to draw attention to the interviewer's institution and the notable people associated with it, to explain in general terms why the questions were being asked, and to emphasise that no-one else in the interviewee's organisation was capable of participating in the enquiry.

To validate the accuracy of the interviewees' responses the researchers requested the participants' permission to approach the chief executives of their charities and ask a few simple questions about how easily a person's CEO had believed the individual had fitted into a senior management role, assuming the CEO had been in post when the interviewee had taken a senior management position.

The criteria for inclusion in the sampling frame for the investigation were that an individual should currently occupy a main board level position in a large charity, should have moved into a top management position within the last four years, and should have a marketing background and have been employed as a marketing executive prior to entering senior general management. Individuals moving sideways from a senior management post in one organisation to a senior post in another were not considered. A period of four years was selected on the grounds that a participant might not remember events accurately if they occurred considerably more than four years ago. Two participants were recruited from the Advisory Board of the authors' home university and six more from contacts in a marketing professional body with which the authors were affiliated. The websites of the UK's largest (by income according to Charity Commission data) 200 charities were scoured for information on the identities of their top managers and likely prospects were contacted by letter or email. A further set of contacts was available from lists of people who had participated in previous studies of charity management completed by the authors and their associates. Individuals who, when approached, agreed to take part in the research were asked to snowball the request for participation to anyone else they thought might satisfy the abovementioned selection criteria. Eventually, 37 people agreed to be interviewed. Twenty-nine of the interviews were conducted face-to-face at the respondents' premises; eight were completed via Skype and follow-up email correspondence. The interviews covered a person's perceptions of role clarity, self-efficacy, social acceptance, stress associated with the new position, and the extent of the individual's marketing self-identity. They also explored the interviewee's experience of general and financial management, social status, whether the person had undergone a planned induction programme, organisational attitudes towards marketing, and the charity's use of marketing metrics.

Findings

When asked what had *helped* a person adjust to occupying a senior management role (rather than simply working as a marketing executive), the participants overwhelmingly (and without cue) discussed *social and personal considerations* rather than technical issues or particular occupational duties. Only two of the 37 interviewees mentioned their job expertise in relation to easy (or less easy) absorption into their new roles. Helpful social factors that were frequently mentioned included the participants' employment of interpersonal skills to secure acceptance (mentioned by 23 of the respondents), especially the outward display of self-confidence (18 mentions) and determination (15). The value of engaging in flattery towards new peers was referred to in some way or other by 12 of the respondents; 'being friendly' by eleven. Eleven of the participants stated that it was useful to express openly and forcefully that they *'shared the same values'* and/or interests as new peers; and seven respondents mentioned the utility of recognising *'who are the big personalities'* in the hierarchy of an organisation. The need to change one's perspectives was noted by in some way by twelve of the respondents, e.g. by *'being prepared to break with the past'*, to *'prepare oneself mentally for the new role'* and to *'decide who you are and what you want to be'*. Mentoring was frequently mentioned as a valuable activity. Factors to do with mentoring and other considerations covered by the closed sections of the interview schedule (see the Appendix) are discussed in later sections.

Many of the issues that allegedly *hindered* a person's assimilation into top management involved role ambiguity (see below for a further discussion of this matter). The most common complaint was that the new role was not as had been explained at the interview for the appointment (eleven mentions) or was *'not clearly defined'* (ten mentions). Examples of role ambiguity often related to social or pseudo-social factors, such as *'not knowing when to be formal and when to be casual'* (five mentions); *'not understanding new social norms'* (eleven mentions), and *'not being "in" on cliques outside marketing'* (five mentions). Eight of the interviewees commented how it was necessary, in the words of one individual, to *'get to grips with a different sort of atmosphere in* (top) *management meetings'*. Also it was dangerous to be *'too open'* with new colleagues (eight mentions)

or to become involved in *'dog eat dog'* competitive rivalries among new senior management colleagues (seven mentions).

Specific problematic issues arising during transitions referred to by the respondents included having to deal with (external and internal) complaints unrelated to marketing (eight mentions); and having to supervise non-marketing staff (in terms of not knowing about the latter's work and not wanting to alienate these individuals (eight mentions). *'I had to learn how to inspire belief in the entire organisation, not just the value of its marketing'* stated one of the participants. *'I had to set performance standards for the charity as a whole, not just for marketing'*, observed another. Becoming a member of the top management meant, in the words of one of the interviewees, having to *'create a sense of direction and commitment among everyone in the charity, not only my own department; I had to help create an overarching organisational purpose'*.

Responses to closed questions

The interview transcripts were perused independently by two academics to ascertain the proportions of the sample falling into various categories with respect to the 'closed questions' within the interview schedule. It emerged that 27 of the participants could be said to have experienced a significant amount of role ambiguity during their transitions into top management. Eleven of the interviewees had been formally mentored after appointment; seven had undertaken a planned induction programme. 'High' social status was defined in terms of a person having been privately educated at school and having attended a university ranked in the top 30 institutions listed by the 2014 *Times Higher Education* university league table.) Twenty-one of the 37 participants (57%) met this criterion. Eight of the remaining 16 participants had attended university; three of them at a 'top 30' university. Fourteen members of the sample reported that they possessed wide ranging general management experience prior to their new appointment; eight stated that they had extensive experience of financial management. Twenty of the 37 interviewees indicated that they possessed a strong marketing professional identity; 12 respondents scored in the top third of the aggregate scale used to measure emotional intelligence. Close examination of the transcripts identified 16 individuals whose comments suggested especially high self-efficacy.

Role clarity/ambiguity

A common complaint regarding role ambiguity was that many of the respondents had to assume responsibility for attaining targets in unanticipated and unfamiliar areas thus creating confusion concerning the criteria to be applied to their performance appraisals. Twenty-seven of the 37 participants (73%) mentioned this matter in some way or other. Examples of concerns included having to supervise activities outside of the marketing area and thus having to establish '*what "success" in these other areas actually looks like'* and '*having to cut costs and let people go in departments I knew nothing about'*. Role uncertainties extended to 'unknown' value systems. Ambiguities concerning values were common. Fourteen participants made remarks about initial uncertainty regarding the values they were supposed to expound in their new roles. One person explained the issue as follows:

'It turned out I was expected to subscribe to (organisational) values I had never heard about. Values seem to be different at this (senior management) *level. I mean we are supposed to "project" values I did not know we actually have'.*

It appeared that role ambiguity was less of an issue among the participants who (i) had undergone some form of mentoring and/or planned induction programme; (ii) were of high social status; and (iii) possessed wide-ranging experience of general management. Eight of the eleven respondents who had been mentored and five of the seven who had experienced planned induction indicated that

mentoring and induction had caused them to be better informed about the definitions and parameters of their new roles. Only eight of the 21 high social status participants mentioned significant issues concerning role uncertainty. This outcome might be due perhaps to existing senior executives (many of whom would themselves be of high social status) being more inclined to discuss with a high social status newcomer candidly and extensively all aspects of the latter's role, including 'unofficial' and complementary dimensions. Only six of the 14 people with wide-ranging experience of general management mentioned the occurrence of substantial role ambiguity during their absorption into senior management, suggesting that this past experience endowed these individuals with more realistic expectations about unplanned 'role extensions' and with greater ability to seek out information concerning relevant matters.

Self-efficacy

Feelings of self-efficacy were generally high among the sample members who, in the main, believed they had fully mastered their new roles within one or two months of appointment. Expressions of perceptions of self-efficacy were evidenced by statements such *as 'I soon had a firm handle on the case – it took me only a short while to get things sorted'; and 'Within a month I felt totally on top of everything'*. Six of the 16 sample members who had self-efficacy scores in the top third of the spectrum had experience of the finance function (eight people in the sample possessed such experience); ten had wide-ranging general management experience; nine had been mentored (82% of the mentored group); five had undertaken a planned induction programme (i.e., 71% of the people who had completed an induction programme); eleven were of high social status; and eight exhibited high emotional intelligence (representing two-thirds of the 12 respondents categorised as being of high emotional intelligence). The importance of general management experience derives perhaps from managers who possess such experience having acquired the abilities to switch easily from one managerial area to another and to coordinate the activities of teams involved in different and varied kinds of work (Gregory, 2005). . Arguably, high emotional intelligence helped a person to balance the conflicting interpersonal demands of a top level job and to take tight control over the human aspects of work environments. High social status might have facilitated a sense of self-efficacy due to feelings of confidence gained from more extensive communications with high social status peers who already occupied senior positions.

Social acceptance and emotional intelligence

Connections were visible between the interviewees' reports of how well and quickly they had become accepted by their new peers and (i) their degrees of emotional intelligence, and (ii) their social status. Fifteen of the 21 high social status participants and eight of the 12 people scoring in the top third of the emotional intelligence scale reported easy and rapid social acceptance by their new peers. The finding concerning social status is not surprising, perhaps, in view of the fact that most of the participants noted that the pre-existing top managers of their charities mainly comprised people of high social status. An emotionally intelligent person will have capacities to understand the moods and current emotions of existing top managers, to assess how the latter feel and hence to employ this information to induce new senior management colleagues to be supportive of the recently promoted person (cf. Gardner and Stough, 2002). Interactions with new top management peers should be smoother consequent to an emotionally intelligent individual's abilities to respond flexibly to changes in colleagues' moods and to build supportive social networks (Kerr, Garvin, Heaton and Boyle, 2006).

Non-influential variables

Certain variables that prior literature has suggested could affect newcomer adjustment in the present context did not figure prominently in the participants' responses. The variables in question were as follows.

Stress: None of the interviewees reported having experienced dysfunctional levels of stress during their transitions into top management. Individuals who did comment on stress mentioned relatively minor issues such as '*being stressed that new peers will not understand the* (marketing-related) *language I use'*. Collectively, the people making these (relatively unsubstantial) remarks did not exhibit any particular characteristics. Thus it was not the case that stress was lower the higher the degrees of role clarity (Kohler et al., 2011), self-efficacy (Katz, 1985; Saks and Ashforth, 2000) and social acceptance (Saks and Ashforth, 2000).

Attitudes towards marketing among new peers: No meaningful evidence of anti-marketing bias within the sample charities emerged from the interviews. Whilst negative prejudice against the marketing function has been observed in previous studies (see for example Marchand and Lavoie, 1998; Bennett and Savani, 2004; Bennett, 2009), criticisms of marketing now seem to have disappeared, due perhaps to competition for donations having intensified, with a consequent increasing recognition of the need for marketing. *'We are all marketers now, even the most hide-bound trustees see this nowadays'* one of the interviewees commented.

Marketing professional identity: Similarly, a person's possession of a strong professional identity as a marketer (rather than as a general manager) did not constrain an individual's satisfactory absorption into top management. Twenty of the interviewees stated that being a marketer meant much more to them than being a senior general manager. None of the 20 indicated that this constituted a problem. On the contrary, a majority (12) of the group of 20 suggested that a marketing professional identity represented an *asset* when dealing with new senior management peers. More and more charities have become heavily marketing oriented, a couple of the participants observed; and the task cultures of modern organisations favoured marketing.

Use of metrics: Marketing metrics were employed extensively within the present sample as integral components of organisational performance management systems. Interviewees reported the general use of a broad range of metrics due, some of the interviewees alleged, to greater demands for accountability (mentioned by 12 people), the increased employment by charities of professionally qualified managerial staff (eleven mentions), the application of strategic approaches to marketing (seven mentions) and growing interest in measuring brand equity (six mentions).

Twenty-three of the chief executives in charge of the 37 interviewees were in post when the latter had been recruited and agreed to take part in short telephone conversations intended to validate the participants' assessments of how readily the latter had adjusted to their new senior management positions. The chief executives were asked to indicate how well the newcomer in question had fitted-in to a top management role (7=very well; 1=not very well), and to specify a couple of things that may have helped and a couple of things that may have hindered adjustment. There was a broad correspondence between the chief executives' views on these matters and those of the interviewees: the Pearson's-R for the seven-point 'how well did the person fit in' scale was 0.84. The two main items mentioned by the chief executives for the 'what helped' category were also mentioned by the interviewees in 77% of cases; while the two main items specified in respect of 'what hindered' were reported by the interviewees in 72% of cases

Discussion

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed the adoption of two contrasting types of approach to coping with newcomer adjustment among the sample members. One group of (13) respondents

appeared to follow a 'learning-doing' approach; another group (comprising 15 people) seemed to have a 'doing-learning' orientation.

Learning-doing

Individuals in this cluster had apparently sought to adjust to their new senior management roles in steady and evolutionary manners, obtaining advice and information in the first instance, and acting only after careful reflection. *'There's no point in charging in like a bull in a China shop'* one of the members of this category stated. *'You have to learn the ropes before you do anything of substance'* she continued. *'You have to learn to walk before you can run. You can't expect to frame and resolve serious* (top management) *problems without careful consideration and planning',* another commented. *'I needed to learn not what to think about these new responsibilities but rather how to think; how to interpret contexts before making decisions'* opined a further member of the group.

Seven of the individuals in the learning-doing group had been mentored (representing 64% of the mentored newcomers). Possibly, the experience of being mentored induced people to be more circumspect in their approach and to understand that success in a top management role requires a large amount of learning and reflection. Half of the learning-doing individuals possessed strong marketing professional identities. This finding is not surprising, perhaps, considering that participants high in this characteristic might have felt they needed longer and more structured learning processes to enable them to transfer their orientations away from marketing and towards more general management. Five of the learning-doing group had high emotional intelligence (42% of the high emotional intelligence individuals). Arguably, emotionally intelligent people have a greater willingness to study, assess, reflect upon and craft (at length) responses to managerial situations, many of which will have interpersonal dimensions

Doing-learning

Members of the doing-learning set tended to act first and learn lessons later. *'The buck stops with me and I like to take the bull by the horns'* stated one of these respondents. *'I never shy away from conflicts, even when I am unsure of myself',* commented another. *'You learn to be a top manager by being a top manager'* opined a third. These individuals had seemingly preferred to implement their ideas immediately following appointment, rather than search for advice and information from others. Eight of the 16 individuals high in self-efficacy fell in the doing-learning set, reflecting perhaps their greater self-confidence. Doing-learning respondents were generally less likely to report role ambiguity: only four of the 27 individuals who had noted the presence of role ambiguity belonged to the 15-strong doing-learning category. It seems therefore that people who felt confident about the parameters and expectations of their roles were more inclined than others to be immediately proactive in those roles. Additionally, the interviewees who reported that they possessed extensive experience of general management were more likely to favour doing-learning approaches (five out of 14 of this group of people). Such individuals may have possessed more realistic perceptions of their fresh top management roles, leading to greater willingness quickly to engage in decisive actions.

A model emerging from the results of the study is presented in Figure 1. According to the members of the current sample, different sets of considerations affected each of the three elements of the adjustment process. Mentoring, planned induction, and the possession of high social status influenced all three dimensions: emotional intelligence impacted on self-efficacy and social acceptance; experience of general management affected role clarity and self-efficacy, and the latter was influenced by experience of finance. Collectively the interviewees suggested that role ambiguity constituted the major barrier to easy adjustment to occupancy of top management roles (cf. Saks and Ashforth, 2000; Kohler et al., 2011). However, formal planned induction (especially

mentoring) greatly assisted newcomers in clarifying the expectations and contexts of their new positions. Possession of extensive experience of general management frequently contributed to an individual's degrees of role clarity and self-efficacy (again substantiating much prior research concerning this matter). However, such experience did not seem to facilitate social acceptance. Experience of general management seemingly encouraged individuals to adopt a doing-learning approach. People with experience of financial management were also likely to exhibit high self-efficacy (cf. Doyle, 2000; Bennett, 2011a). High emotional intelligence contributed to feelings of self-efficacy among a number of the respondents; a result compatible with the findings of other studies (e.g. Dulewicz and Higgs, 1999; Langley, 2000; Carmeli, 2003).

Limitations and further research

As the participants in the study needed to satisfy certain narrowly defined criteria and to work in a single sector the sample was necessarily small. Also it was not possible to explore the effects on operational performance of varying degrees of ease of newcomer adjustment. This represents an interesting area for further research. Other opportunities for future research in the field include a quantitative survey of a larger sample of organisations covering a number of sectors (commercial as well as non-profit), and functional specialisms other than marketing; a detailed examination of the effects on an individual's managerial performance of the person's adoption of a doing-learning approach; and an exploration of the *negative* factors associated with high self-efficacy.

Managerial implications

On the basis of the outcomes to the study certain *personal* tactics might be said to improve the ease of absorption of a marketer newly entering senior general management. In particular, recently promoted individuals might seek to develop their emotional intelligence, e.g. by carefully observing other managers' non-verbal communications, by analysing factors that contribute to making favourable impressions on others, practicing empathy, and so on. Some of the respondents mentioned the need to take care vis-à-vis levels of 'openness' when communicating with new colleagues and the desirability of displaying the 'right' values. Such matters might be better resolved by people who are aware of the importance of emotional intelligence. *Organisational* tactics for facilitating managerial newcomer adjustment include the provision (if they do not already exist) of sound mentoring and planned induction systems, clear job descriptions that avoid any possibilities of mismatches of expectations, well thought out organisation structures, and readily accessible information systems. Some of the interviewees also mentioned the need for clarity in respect of the sorts of organisational values (a number of which might be tacit and informal) they were expected to uphold. To help newcomers who do not possess widespread experience of general management and/or of finance, charities could devise programmes to assist freshly appointed senior managers from specific functional fields such as marketing to help deal with this particular shortcoming. For example, a newcomer with a purely marketing background could spend short periods shadowing executives in other functions (e.g. finance), possibly within commercial businesses that sponsor the charity involved. Completion by newcomers of short courses in general management may also be worthwhile. Government and private charity support organisations obviously have a potential role to play in providing relevant short courses and planned experience programmes.

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FIGURE 1. AN EMERGING MODEL