



HANS SMELLINCKX

100 DAYS
TO MAKE
YOUR MARK
AS A CEO

Lannoo
Campus

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*In the heat of the kitchen,
every chef is both a leader
and a mentor, harnessing the
symphony of clanging pans
and roaring flames to craft a
harmony of flavours, with a
team that follows the rhythm
of success as their recipe.*

Dear CEO, why should you read this book?

Once upon a time ... is a good start to any book, especially if you were brought up on fairy tales. But running a business is not a fairy tale. If you are new to or junior in your role, you will be happy for any help within reach. I want to give you the best possible help.

In the past, CEOs were primarily strategic leaders, but this role has changed completely. In a fast-changing world you need to be so much more. Not only a beacon for your company, safeguarding the profitability of the company, but also emotionally equipped to guide four generations in your company. You will need to adapt to stay relevant. This book is designed to help you surge forward in pursuit of your goals or at least to help you think about your personal ambition.

That is the main reason I wrote this book. I have had more than twenty years of experience helping companies to grow through the people who work in them. This has been as a consultant with Markies Consulting BV, a company I co-founded. Even as a representative of my own company, I know how awkward, uncomfortable and lonely it feels when you start a new job as CEO at a company. You need to strike a balance every day between working on strategic insights, mental perseverance, emotional intelligence, people management and business acumen.

Let us shake off that feeling together, and enable you to feel more confident and secure in your professional environment and thrive. Like a chef in a kitchen, I will give you the ingredients and the methods you need to prepare your dish. Do not be afraid to veer off the beaten path, to create your own style and flavour your work with your own experiences. The best successes result from you creating a ripple in life in your new role. You will notice that people will be your most important motivator and biggest challenge. Make change happen. Push boundaries. Press forward. Carpe diem. Seize the day!

Some authors thank their family, friends and half of the business world for their support in writing their books, but I will not! It takes too much time and space and let us be honest, it would bore you to the bone. This book is about your journey, not mine.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. If you get stuck, do not hesitate to contact me, even if it is just to have a coffee and share your thoughts.

Hans

Introduction

Being a first-time CEO is not easy. You suddenly find yourself on top of the world with everybody looking at you. It feels like you are expected to be a fairy princess with a magic potion or to have the power to turn everything into gold. There is a lot of pressure to make everything happen and also the fear of screwing it up. When developing growth initiatives as a CEO, it is crucial to prioritise learning and insight. Your own learning and your own insight of course. Gaining a deep understanding of your customers and your new company dynamics is your primary task.

Like an American president, we will start by focusing squarely on your first 100 days in the job. This is your honeymoon period. This is the time to ask questions, to discover a lot and to create a path for the future. But it is also a time when you face challenges that you cannot always solve immediately. What kind of leader do you want to be? How do you ensure that your team believes in you and collaborates with you to make the necessary changes? These are issues you need to consider from day one, not only for yourself but also for your organisation.

In this book, I provide you with a concrete step-by-step plan for your first 100 days. We will delve deep into who you are as a leader, what skills you need to succeed in a rapidly changing world and how to create a culture where innovation and collaboration are central. Whether you are dealing with technological disruptions, the need to keep your company agile, or the challenge of earning

and maintaining your employees' trust, this book provides you with the tools to be successful.

But the book is not just for you as a CEO. It is just as valuable for people at all levels of the organisation. For anyone who works directly with the CEO or regularly engages with the top of the company, this book offers insights into the challenges and expectations the CEO is confronted with daily. The information and advice in this book can help you be better prepared to ask the right questions and contribute to strategic discussions. The better you understand the CEO's challenges, the more effective you can be in supporting their leadership and building a company that is ready for the future.

Leadership today is about more than just a title. It is about who you are, how you present yourself and how you handle the continuous changes that come your way. You must be able to exude confidence but also be open to feedback. You must know when to delegate and when to take action yourself. Above all, you must be mentally flexible enough to face every challenge, no matter how big, with calmness and confidence.

In this rapidly evolving world, the CEO who is willing to continually reinvent themselves, who embraces new technologies, and who understands how important trust and connection are, will ultimately be the one who creates sustainable success – both for themselves and for their company. This book helps you find that balance and define your leadership. This guide shows you the fundamentals for the first 100 days as a CEO, split into 8 phases:

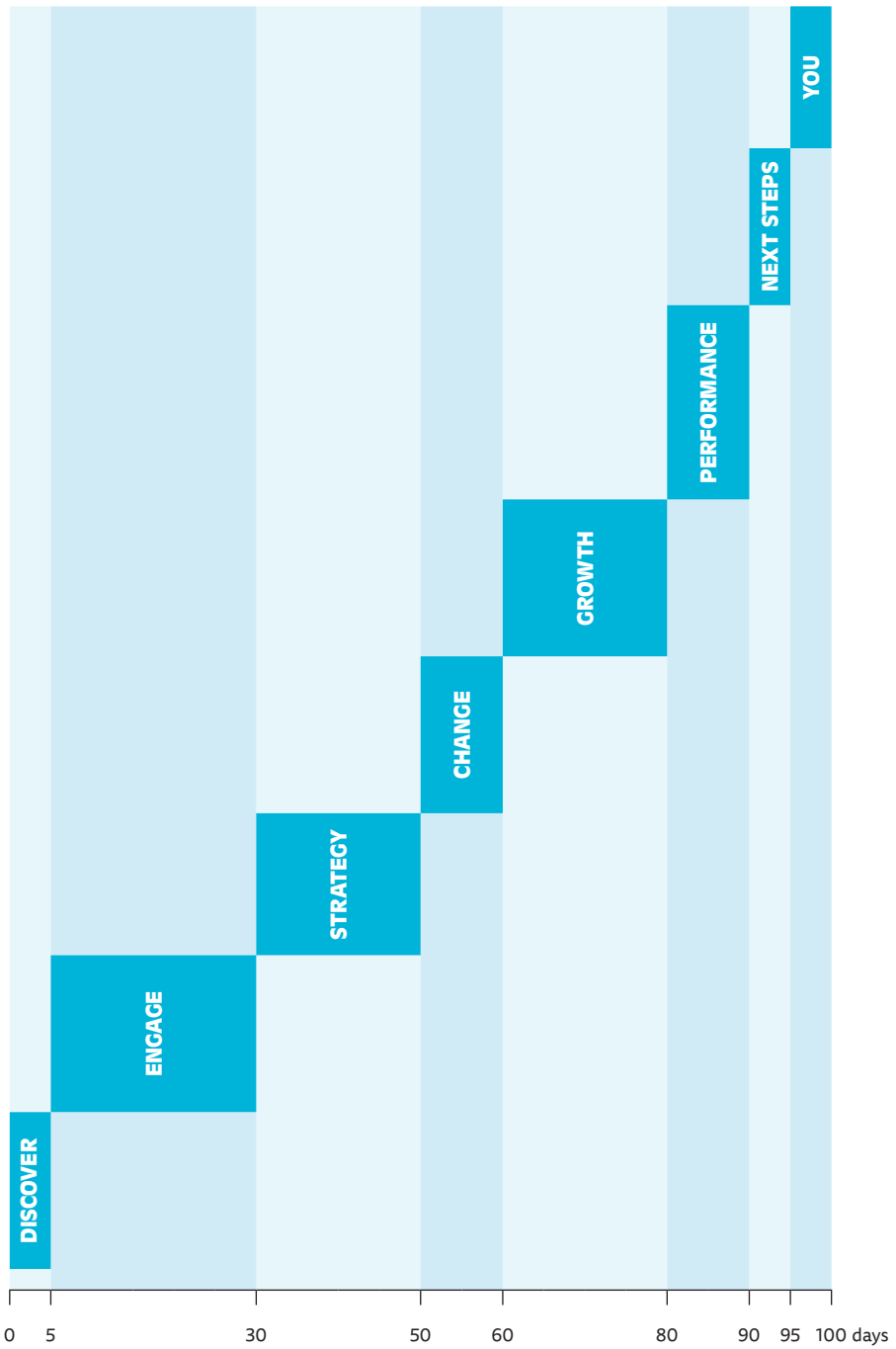


Figure 1.

Phase 1 – Discover (5 days)

In this first phase, the emphasis is on self-reflection and introspection. The goal is to thoroughly understand yourself as a CEO before fully immersing yourself in the company. This involves contemplating your values, motives and personal ambitions. Questions like ‘What is your perspective on life?’ and ‘How well do you know yourself?’ help establish a strong foundation for authentic leadership. You will also set personal goals for the first 100 days.

What is in it for you? This phase focuses on self-awareness and discovering your own leadership style. It is crucial to understand your strengths before applying them to the organisation.

Phase 2 – Engage (25 days)

This phase focuses on building relationships and understanding the organisation from different perspectives. This entails listening to employees, customers and suppliers to gain a clear picture of the organisation’s dynamics and external expectations for the company. It is also about engaging with your team and getting to know the company culture and structures.

What is in it for you? Building trust and relationships is essential for a CEO. By listening and being involved, you learn about the organisation and develop stronger connections with both internal and external stakeholders.

Phase 3 – Strategy (20 days)

Here we begin the strategic thinking exercise. This phase focuses on formulating the company’s mission, vision, and strategy. As a CEO, you must consider the company’s core values, how you create value for customers, and which growth strategies you wish to implement. It is also the time to ask yourself, ‘What is the “why” of the organisation, and how can I optimise the business structure?’

What is in it for you? This is the phase where you, as a CEO, determine your strategic direction and ensure that the organisation aligns well with its mission and objectives.

Phase 4 – Change (10 days)

This phase emphasises implementing change. This may involve assembling the management team, demonstrating leadership and deciding whether to adjust the organisational structure. Important questions such as, ‘How to create a scalable company?’ and ‘How to prepare the organisation for change?’ are also addressed.

What is in it for you? This phase is about implementing strategic changes and leading the organisation through transformations. It is about ensuring that your team follows the vision and embraces changes.

Phase 5 – Growth (20 days)

The growth phase focuses on boosting the organisation’s commercial performance. This includes improving sales and marketing strategies, analysing customer data and identifying new growth opportunities. You must ensure your company’s operation is data-driven and focused on scalable growth models.

What is in it for you? Growth is a core priority for every CEO and in this phase, you work on expanding market share, optimising sales channels and maximising the value proposition.

Phase 6 – Performance (10 days)

This phase emphasises measuring performance and adjusting the organisation based on data and key performance indicators (KPIs). It involves managing performance, having a growth dashboard and aligning rewards with outcomes.

What is in it for you? This is the phase where, as a CEO, you measure progress, optimise performance and ensure your organisation stays on track to achieve the set goals.

Phase 7 – Next Steps (5 days)

In this penultimate stage, you look ahead to the future. You plan the next 100 days and set your goals for the coming months and years. This phase is about consolidation and planning, building on the successes of the past 100 days.

What is in it for you? This phase marks the point where, as a CEO, you not only reflect on what you have achieved but also create a plan for further growth and success.

Phase 8 – You! (5 days)

The final phase focuses entirely on the CEO as a person. It involves strengthening your image, evaluating your social network and ensuring that you are balanced both professionally and personally as a leader. It also involves looking at your long-term goals, both for yourself and for the organisation.

What is in it for you? This phase reminds the CEO that personal well-being and a strong network are essential for sustainable long-term success.

Each phase is meticulously designed to help you, as a CEO, approach your role holistically, from self-reflection to strategic execution and ultimately personal balance. Together, these phases ensure that you are focused not only on the operational side of leadership but also on the personal and human aspects. This makes the book a comprehensive guide to modern CEO-ship.



PHASE 1

DISCOVER

(5 days)

In this first phase, the emphasis is on self-reflection and introspection. The goal is to thoroughly understand yourself as a CEO before fully immersing yourself in the company. This involves contemplating your values, motives and personal ambitions. Questions like 'What is my perspective on life?' and 'How well do I know myself?' help establish a strong foundation for authentic leadership. You will also set personal goals for the first 100 days.

What is in it for you? This phase focuses on self-awareness and discovering your own leadership style. It is crucial to understand your strengths before applying them to the organisation.

What is your perspective on life?

Stop! We do not want to talk only about business. A successful CEO is one who knows not only their business but also themselves. This is probably the most difficult chapter of all, as it pushes you to open up, to reflect on the past, the present and the future.

*'If you want to change the world,
start with yourself.'*

— MAHATMA GANDHI

How well do you know yourself?

Before we start cooking, the protagonist in the kitchen is of course you! You are – as the French say – the chef d'orchestre! Time to start opening up. This section is intended to prepare you mentally for what is coming. It will be hard. You would not be reading this book if you expected it to be easy. So put on that piece of music you love the most - the one that energises you. Then start filling in your Life Canvas...



'Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle.'

– STEVE JOBS

Life Canvas

WHERE YOU CURRENTLY STAND	WHAT YOU LOVE TO DO	YOUR GOAL FOR THE NEXT 100 DAYS
WHAT YOU HATE DOING!	YOUR PERSONAL 3-YEAR GOAL	YOUR PERSONAL 5-YEAR GOAL