



## Set your accountabilities in context

Leadership Dimensions

Sharing the vision

Developing capability

Holding to account

As part of your new role, you take up accountabilities that drive the actions of you and your team. As you plan the actions that are needed to deliver required outcomes, take time to research the context for each accountability.

You will be in a better position to make the judgments your new role requires, if you understand

- how outcomes were delivered in the past
- what in the near-term could impact your outcomes
- what in the longer-term could impact your outcomes

### What to do

1. Develop a structured plan for gaining the insights you need by using this tool
  - to **prepare a short list of questions** that target the information you seek
  - to identify the **most likely sources or experiences** that will deliver the target information
2. Discuss, explore, analyse and review your plan further by following up with meaningful conversations and practical investigation.

During your conversations, you will gain insights that you know you should keep in mind. Be sure to **add them to your reflection tool** so that you benefit long-term from their value.

### Tips for conversations and interviews

*I keep six honest serving men  
They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are **What** and **Why** and **When**  
And **How** and **Where** and **Who**.  
Rudyard Kipling<sup>1</sup>*

1. **Ask open-ended questions** that require a descriptive or narrative answer - not simply a **yes** or **no**. For example, *What are your expectations of my availability to you and my current team as I transition to my new role?*
2. **Be systematic**. Prepare and use the same script and questions in one-on-one meetings with people of the same level, such as direct reports and peers. Then you can compare answers more easily and avoid being over-influenced by those you speak to first.
3. As you gather insights, **start formulating hypotheses that you can test in further conversations**. Michael Watkins recommends a "cyclical learning process in which you collect information, analyse and distil it, develop hypotheses, and test them."<sup>2</sup>
4. **Make sure that the questions you ask don't imply your own values**, preferences or pre-judgments. For example, *You had the resources you needed. Why couldn't the team complete the project successfully?*
5. **Take care not to** get so interested in what you are discussing that you fire off questions too fast and **turn the interview into an inquisition**.

<sup>1</sup> Read the full poem, *I keep six honest men*, at [http://www.kipling.org.uk/poems\\_serving.htm](http://www.kipling.org.uk/poems_serving.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Michael Watkins, *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels*. Harvard Business School Press, 2003. p.49