

Episode 108: What should a CMO do in their first 100 days?



Whether it's as a CMO or another role, your first 90 to 100 days are very important. That's a more general view of how to approach your first days on a job. A friend, John Ellett, recently published "The CMO Manifesto", we look at it in this episode.

1. The Benefits of A Manifesto

I have to say I like the idea of having a manifesto – “a public declaration of intentions, motives, or views.” In any role, I think it's good to say what you are going to do and then do it. If you have a team of any size, this can help unify and focus them. The book has 13 elements to its manifesto but that may be too many for most people. My advice is to try and limit your focus to 3-6 big issues. You can often combine multiple smaller issues into larger combined ones. Unlike most politicians, you are probably going to be held to what you offer.

2. Getting to the right list

The trick is not just having a list but getting to the right list. This is where the book “The First 90 Days” works well with John's book. Both make the point that you can't guess, you have to listen and ask questions. I knew a guy who took over as a senior Executive and didn't listen to his new team. He came in believing he knew all the answers and thought he could just repeat past successes. It took him a few months to find out many of his assumptions were wrong. He should have spent time asking questions and then building the assumptions. Then he would have had the chance to test the assumptions and build his manifesto from those.

3. Starting at the beginning

The 1st point of John's manifesto may seem obvious but it's vital to think it through. The issue is that you are not in this job to maintain the 'status quo'. He talks about change for 'the positive' but why else would you make changes. You may have to explain that to the team – for many, change is never good. The trick, as the chapter outlines, is linking the your expectations and your actions. As important, are the expectations you have of others. Don't miss a chance in your first days to start setting those correctly.

Bottom Line: John's book offers us both a helpful approach and is a great guide to the issues you should consider when you take up a new CMO role.