

9 Example Scenarios

When Performance Traps Can Emerge and Actions to Take in Response

First-Time Manager or Supervisor

Trap: Difficulty letting go of control, over-reliance on technical skills, or struggling to trust others with tasks.

Warning Signs: Excessive check-ins, reluctance to assign important work, team frustration due to lack of autonomy.

Tactic: Delegate a critical, specific task and commit not to intervene unless asked for help.

Excelling in a Role but Lacking Visibility

Trap: Believing great work will automatically get noticed; under-communicating contributions and outcomes.

Warning Signs: Work is high quality but rarely acknowledged or connected to bigger goals; minimal involvement in broader team discussions.

Tactic: Proactively share updates that tie your contributions to business impact, and schedule periodic check-ins to align your work with team or organizational priorities.

Moving from an Operational Role to a More Strategic Role

Trap: Continuing to focus on day-to-day execution, difficulty stepping back to see the bigger picture, or undervaluing long-term planning and influence.

Warning Signs: Spending most time on urgent tasks, limited input into broader business strategy, or being perceived as tactical rather than strategic.

Tactic: Align with senior leaders on long-term goals; identify areas where your work can shape cross-functional or enterprise-level outcomes.

Leading a New Team

Trap: Assuming past leadership approaches will work, underestimating team dynamics, or neglecting early relationship-building.

Warning Signs: Misaligned expectations, lukewarm engagement, or inconsistent performance across the team.

Tactic: Conduct individual 1:1s with each team member focused on expectations, motivations, and working preferences

Being Hired into a New Organization

Trap: Assuming prior success factors apply, overlooking cultural norms, or moving too quickly to implement change.

Warning Signs: Early resistance from key stakeholders, unintentional missteps in communication, or low initial traction on priorities.

Tactic: Conduct a 30-60-90 day listening tour with stakeholders to understand context, culture, and pain points before proposing major changes.

Transitioning from Leading a Functional to a Business Area

Trap: Over-reliance on functional expertise, underestimating business complexity, or failing to integrate cross-functional perspectives.

Warning Signs: Focusing too narrowly on your former function, difficulty prioritizing business-wide goals, resistance from other departments.

Tactic: Schedule regular cross-functional meetings, seek mentorship from experienced business leaders, and expand understanding of the broader business.

Returning to a Role After a Career Break

Trap: Overcompensating to prove value, underestimating changes in technology or culture, or avoiding help for fear of seeming unprepared.

Warning Signs: Reluctance to ask questions, high stress from self-imposed pressure, or a hesitancy to engage in strategic discussions.

Tactic: Proactively schedule re-onboarding conversations to gain context on key shifts, and identify a peer mentor to accelerate reintegration and build confidence.

Managing or Leading in a Matrix Organization

Trap: Lack of clarity in decision rights, failure to communicate across dotted-line relationships, or misalignment of objectives.

Warning Signs: Conflicting directives, stakeholder confusion, delays in decision-making, or unclear accountability.

Tactic: Use a framework (e.g., RACI) to clarify roles and decision ownership across key initiatives and relationships.

Managing Organizational Restructuring or Downsizing

Trap: Underestimating emotional impact, over-focusing on logistics, or lack of transparency in communications.

Warning Signs: Rumors, disengagement, low morale, or resistance to change.

Tactic: Create a communications plan that includes frequent updates, acknowledges concerns, and provides space for feedback and support.