

ACTION plan

Some news directors like to create a formal action plan with clear priorities and deadlines, which they share with the general manager. Here's a pared down version of the plan one veteran news director drew up for his first two months in a new job:

Week 1 Observation

- ▶ Spend time observing how the newsroom functions, how scheduling works and what systems are in place.
- ▶ Conduct anonymous written survey of all newsroom staff (see "Newsroom Surveys," page 39).
- ▶ Meet with the morning and evening crews to spell out expectations.
- ▶ By the end of the week, meet with the reporters as a group.

Week 2 Individual meetings

- ▶ Meet separately with each staff member to discuss roles and get feedback on what works and what needs work.
- ▶ Spend a lot of time with the assignment editors.

Week 3 Feedback

- ▶ Meet with the staff in a large group to discuss their 360 comments.
- ▶ Begin individual meetings with reporters that will be scheduled once a month to go over their work.
- ▶ Begin newscast critiques in the afternoon meeting that will be held weekly.

Week 4 Reinforcement

- ▶ Monitor progress on goals set out during Week 1.
- ▶ Hold full staff meeting at end of week to see how everyone thinks things are going.
- ▶ Start working with graphics to improve and standardize the look of the newscasts.

Week 5 Morning show

- ▶ Work the morning shift for several days to see how the show is planned, the workflow of the staff, and where improvements can be made.

Week 6 Fine tuning

- ▶ Begin full newscast reviews that will be held bi-weekly with producers.
- ▶ Sit down with producers and look at the competition.

Weeks 7 & 8 Monitoring and accountability

- ▶ New systems are in place. Everyone should have a clear idea of what is expected. Those that aren't up to speed will need reinforcing and must be aware that they will be held accountable.

“Train your staff so that they can do the job without you. Then trust them to do it.”

Kathleen Choal • KVOA-TV • Tucson, AZ