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Back down to Earth after the boss returns

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The scenario: Your immediate supervisor is returning to the job after an extended leave. It means you will no longer be the acting department head and will have to revert to your former second-in-command status. How do you make the adjustment in terms of your ego and desire for responsibilities?

Instead of viewing this situation as a step back, view it as a step aside, with potential for two steps forward from there. Keep your professional future in mind by concentrating on the few areas outlined below.

Shine as a leader. This is your opportunity to show what you are made of. The way you handle this change can determine whether people see you as a true leader. “Leader” is not a title. A leader is a person with certain special characteristics. Great leaders stay focused despite setbacks. They look for opportunities, and do not dwell on perceived misfortunes. Leaders take pride in their work and put effort into contributing to all aspects of a company’s success. One way to show leadership and stay positive in the face of your change in status is to apply renewed energy to your own work. Build on your reputation as a valuable employee by producing the best results you can, no matter what the task is. Make it known that you are a supportive and helpful resource for others in your workplace.

Expertise versus experience. Both of these are good, but expertise is a bit better. Expertise means that you have not only experienced something, but that you have learned from the experience and developed skills to apply to other situations. Experience is a subset of expertise. How do you gain expertise? Ask for more training. With your boss back, maybe you can take time off to upgrade some of your management skills. A communications course, a marketing seminar – take your pick. Not sure what to do? Perhaps you can hire a career coach to help you take an objective look at your opportunities for growth.

Honour your desire and drive for responsibilities. We all have core values that make us who we are. If you desire greater responsibility, you likely possess the values for growth, knowledge and challenge. Don’t wait around for someone to hand you something to do – go out and get it. Take on a new assignment or initiate a new project. Collaborate with your returning boss, who is an important ally. If you performed well in his absence, he can delegate some of these responsibilities back to you, keeping you in the forefront for future promotions. Remember too that you can find fulfillment outside your workplace by applying these same values to your personal life. Why not consider a volunteer opportunity? Giving back through volunteer work is a win/win: you can feel good, enhance your job skills and gain acknowledgment with your employer.

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Inspiring the Purpose Within

Cassandra Gierden’s work in career evolution, creativity and life coaching has been recognized in many major media outlets, including the Toronto Star, Vancouver Sun and Calgary Sun. In a 2006 Canadian Living magazine series, Cassandra worked as a life coach with a family and their coaching team. Through Prophet Coaching, which she founded in 1999, Cassandra and her associates coach clients across North America on leadership and managerial development. Her own leadership skills are evident in her role as past president of the Toronto Chapter of the International Coach Federation and holder of an ICF Professional Certified Coach designation. When not coaching clients or teaching, Cassandra enjoys many outdoor pursuits at her new home on B.C.’s famed Sunshine Coast.

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