

AFTER OUR SESSION, I INITIALLY FELT LIKE HIDING IN A DARK ROOM FOR SEVERAL DAYS. BUT INSTEAD, I DID AS I WAS TOLD AND DID MY HOMEWORK. GOOD DECISION. I HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED ANY TRAINING AS POWERFUL. I CANNOT THANK YOU ENOUGH.

MANAGING DIRECTOR

JOB SURVIVAL KIT: THE FIRST 12 MONTHS



PETER BOTTING

THE SURVIVAL KIT

HOW TO READ THE ROOM,
BUILD TRUST, AND AVOID THE
SILENT CAREER KILLERS THAT
GET PEOPLE “MOVED ON”
WITHIN A YEAR.

Starting a new job is one of the most high-stakes social experiments you'll ever participate in. You're entering a system that already has history, habits, and hierarchies — and none of them were designed with you in mind.

Most people who fail in the first year don't fail because of skill.

They fail because they didn't read the room. This guide helps you do exactly that.

Decode the unwritten rules of survival and growth during those crucial first 12 months.



THE HIDDEN TRUTHS ABOUT YOUR FIRST YEAR

Onboarding tells you what to do.
Survival is about learning how things
really work.

The gap between those two realities is
where new hires either rise quietly or
vanish without notice.

Here's what no one tells you during
induction.



DON'T PROVE YOURSELF TOO FAST

What you think it means:

Show initiative, make an impact, and prove they made the right hire.

What it really means:

You'll step on toes, threaten egos, and look like you're trying to outshine everyone. Observe first.

Earn trust slowly. Impact that arrives too soon looks like arrogance, not brilliance.



THE REAL JOB ISN'T THE JOB DESCRIPTION

What you think it means:

You were hired to perform the duties listed on paper.

What it really means:

Those tasks are camouflage. You were hired to fix unspoken problems: gaps, inefficiencies, or people politics too delicate to describe publicly.

Find out the real reason they needed someone new.



PICK YOUR ALLIES EARLY AND CAREFULLY

What you think it means:

Be friendly with everyone and stay neutral.

What it really means:

You can't. Factions already exist. Some smiles are strategic fakes. Watch who influences meetings, who speaks for whom, and who disappears when things go wrong.

Align with credibility, not popularity.



SILENCE IS STRATEGY

What you think it means:

Contribute in every meeting to show engagement.

What it really means:

Half the people talking are anxiously volunteering for problems they don't understand. Listening builds intelligence.

Speak when your comment adds clarity, not clutter. Early silence reads as thoughtful, not timid.



YOUR BOSS HAS TWO JOBS

What you think it means:

They manage you and guide your career.

What it really means:

They're juggling upwards politics, downward performance, and sideways diplomacy.

Understand their priorities, pressures, and pain points and you'll earn protection that can't be taught or bought.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS HAVE A SHELF LIFE

What you think it means:

Week one defines everything.

What it really means:

Week one buys curiosity; month three builds credibility.

People will forgive early mistakes if you learn fast. Consistency over time beats any “great first impression.”

Momentum matters more than novelty.



DON'T CONFUSE VISIBILITY WITH VALUE

What you think it means:

You need to be seen doing great work.

What it really means:

Visibility without results looks like self-promotion. Results without visibility look like invisibility.

The trick? Deliver first, document quietly, then share outcomes when they align with the team's success, not your ego.



CULTURE FIT IS THE HIDDEN KPI

What you think it means:

If you perform well, you'll be fine.

What it really means:

Culture trumps competence. Failing to adapt to tone, humour, or communication style gets you quietly excluded.

You don't have to conform, but you do have to calibrate. Always.



LEARN THE UNWRITTEN RULES

What you think it means:

The employee handbook tells you how things work.

What it really means:

The real rules are invisible:

- When people actually answer emails.
- Who signs off decisions unofficially.
- Which calendar invites are optional but socially mandatory.

Decode these fast and you'll survive most things.



REPUTATION MOVES FASTER THAN YOU THINK

What you think it means:

You'll have time to prove yourself.


What it really means:

You're being judged from Day 1.

People form opinions before you've even logged into your system.

Every "small" touch moment (your tone, follow-up speed, attitude to feedback) compounds into a narrative.

Control it early, or it controls/defines you.



YOUR REAL GOAL ISN'T SURVIVAL, IT'S SUBTLE POWER

What you think it means:

Keep your head down, avoid mistakes, last the year.

What it really means:

You're not there to survive. You're there to earn autonomy, credibility, influence.

By Month 12, you should have moved from new person to trusted operator.

Survival is just the first test: ownership is the real one.



ATTENTION NEW HIRES: HOW TO ACTUALLY SUCCEED

1. Observe Before Acting

Your first 60 days are reconnaissance. Every organisation has its rhythm. Learn it before you dance to it.

2. Build Quiet Capital

Help others succeed before asking for support. Reciprocity beats networking every time.

3. Communicate Like a Local

Adopt the internal dialect. The same word, “urgent,” “strategic,” and “collaborative”, can mean wildly different things in different companies.

4. Show Growth, Not Perfection

People respect visible evolution more than flawless entry. Admit small mistakes and fix them fast, it builds trust.

5. Think Long Game

Your career trajectory depends less on immediate performance and more on who wants you in the room when decisions are made.



ATTENTION MANAGERS: HOW TO KEEP (AND GROW) YOUR NEW HIRES

1. Define Reality, Not the Job Description

Be transparent about what success really looks like in the first year. Clarity prevents churn.

2. Create Psychological Safety

New hires won't surface problems if they fear being labelled "difficult." Safe voices spot risks early.

3. Recognise Outcome Learning, Not Just Output

Celebrate early progress, not perfection. Growth curves start steep: reward movement, not mastery.

4. Model the Culture You Preach

If you want adaptability, show it. If you want collaboration, practice it. People copy behaviour, not policy.

5. Remember: Retention is Cheaper Than Replacement

Support in the first 12 months costs less than recruitment in the 13th. Protect your investment.



FINAL THOUGHT

Your first year is not about surviving .

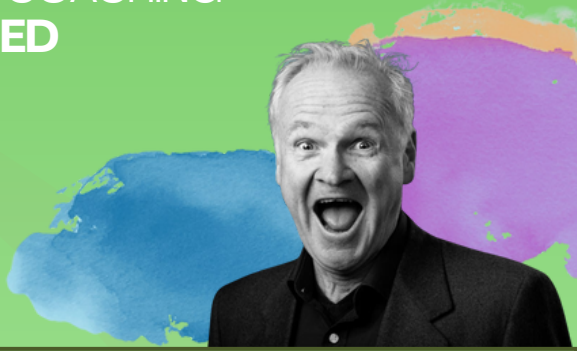
It's about studying the system, earning trust,
and positioning yourself to thrive.

Learn fast. Speak wisely. Deliver consistently.

And never forget: what's unwritten matters
more than what's announced or claimed.

EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW COACHING
FROM **6-TIME TEDMED**
AND SXSW
SPEAKER COACH

Peter Botting



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