

The Davies' Doctrine:

LEADING BEYOND YOUR LEVEL OF CURRENT COMPETENCE

A More Optimistic Viewpoint

One of the realities of performing well in your current position is that you will likely be rewarded with a promotion. When taking on these new roles, be cognizant of the Davies' Doctrine, which is the concept of getting promoted to and leading beyond your "Level of Current Competence." This is analogous to, but more optimistic than, Peter's Principle (which focuses on reaching a level of incompetence).

From the Davies' Doctrine viewpoint, it is not accurate to believe you will be totally incompetent for any position to which you are promoted, but **you will likely develop partial areas of incompetence that need to be overcome.**

In academia, for example, being promoted to department chair may include responsibilities, such as the budget, for which you are not trained. You can overcome this by either negotiating for a business manager who has the fiscal training or by acquiring the skills yourself, perhaps through an MBA program or accounting classes.

According to Peter's Principle, everyone in a hierarchical organization gets successively promoted until they reach a level of incompetence, after which they will no longer get promoted.

For example, a car salesperson with great persuasion and communication skills gets rewarded for their success by being promoted to floor manager. However, this new role requires different skills that the salesperson is not fully competent in, making them unlikely for further promotion.

PETER'S PRINCIPLE

(as viewed by Dr. Laurence Peter)

VS

DAVIES' DOCTRINE

(as viewed by Dr. Dele Davies)

According to the Davies Doctrine, a person retains their existing skills, but will have partial areas of incompetence that need to be overcome before they can be promoted.

Therefore, the car salesperson would still have strong communication and persuasion skills, but they need to master other areas in which they are not yet competent, such as conflict resolution and scheduling.

Additional Resource

Peter, L. J. & Hull, R. (1969). *The Peter Principle*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

TIPS TO EXCEL AND SHINE BRIGHTLY IN YOUR NEW ROLE

1

BE AWARE OF YOUR WEAKNESSES

Know the competencies needed for your new position. Your biggest risk is denying or having a blind spot to these areas of incompetence, in which case, you are destined to follow Peter's Principle.

2

DON'T LET FEAR HOLD YOU BACK

Do not let your concern about Peter's Principle stop you from moving to the next level. It's natural to have doubts and anxiety about the new challenges you will encounter. However, it doesn't mean you're the wrong person from the job, merely that you have areas to grow.

3

TAKE PROACTIVE MEASURES

Seek measures to rectify those for which you are incompetent. A few good questions to ask yourself include:

- » Where will I get reliable information about the array of skills needed for my new job?
- » How will I prioritize a learning plan that will prepare me for these skills?
- » Who can give me honest and constructive feedback about my current skills?
- » How will I navigate my own feelings of incompetence?



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