

FANCY A PLACE IN THE C-SUITE?

NINE LIVES CONSULTING 

Career Navigator



One measure of success in the business world is the position you hold and its attendant responsibilities and authority accompanied by above average rewards.

Where once there were very limited roles in the C-suite category; CEO, CFO, COO, in the last 20 years, societal pressures and changes in attitudes and legislation on responsibilities and transparency have transformed business management structures to produce a C-Suite level role for almost every discipline employed in organisations.

Recent advertisements indicate the following CXO positions exist:

- Culture, Data, Digital, Diversity, Engineering, Environmental, Executive, Experience, Financial, Green, Happiness, Information, Investment, Legal, Medical, Operating, People, Revenue, Risk, Safety, Strategy, Sustainability, Technical and many more to come.... the students of today will have around 10 roles in their career, about half of which don't yet exist.

TAKING ON A C-SUITE ROLE CAN BE A MOST FULFILLING EXPERIENCE FOR PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT QUALIFICATIONS, ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS AND PASSION

These roles are complex and continue to evolve with changes in community expectations, the legal framework and the increasing sophistication of shareholder and stakeholder needs and demands.

The methods for recruiting C-suite roles also continue to evolve, with an increasing emphasis on more rigorous assessment.

If one of these is your goal, what do you need to have in place to achieve it?

From our observations in providing Outplacement and career guidance to all levels, it comes down to two issues:

MINDSET AND SKILLSET

To win such a position, you need to convince the selection panel:

1. That you are a capable leader, skilled in your field and can perform the functions required of the role.
2. Your unique offering will “fit-in” and assist the organisation to achieve its goals and aspirations.

It is only a viable proposition if you match the organisation and its needs on three core issues.

To ensure it is the most appropriate role and organisation for you and a worthwhile place to invest your efforts...

- Values must match, otherwise you cannot maintain genuine commitment.
- Commercial offer and aspirations must match your needs and those of the organisation.
- Organisational Fit – your personality and working style must be a good working match with the Chairman, the Board of Directors and the Senior Executive team.

So, how do you prepare for a future move into the C-suite?

Mind-set. Think like a senior manager.

- You address all your functional tasks with a focus on achievement and learn all you can. Ensure where you can that each role you take adds to your “knowledge store”.
- Always strive to achieve the best outcome possible on relevant and significant tasks. A famous sportsman when asked how he kept being rated world’s number 1, said “I train like I’m number 2”.
- You think about all the functional and related issues as if you were in your boss’s shoes. I.e., You think as if you were the boss.

Skill set. Ensure you understand the:

- risks,
- technology and
- societal trends for each element of your chosen field of expertise. (See diagram over page).

THIS MEANS YOU....

- Develop a system of staying in touch with developments in the market and legislation and compliance matters.
- Build and maintain an effective and well-connected network. We can't over-emphasise the importance of working the network.
- Develop a modern and relevant leadership style and philosophy.
- Develop, through achievement successes and your network, a reputation for effective leadership and know-how. Become one who is known to help others out.
- Become cognasent of the broader issues in senior management.

There is more to the role than just the functional tasks. The diagram below indicates the breadth. You need to identify those aspects that are relevant to your chosen path and industry and develop a good working knowledge and understanding of those issues.

- Plan to be a diverse leader, i.e., one who has a great diversity and broad experience in disparate roles, companies and geographies. It is rare to get to a C-Suite role the top by doing limited roles in the one department of the one company. It can be challenging to leave one's comfort zone for an unknown company, department, with a new boss and new colleagues, but it brings rewards in the long run.



If you deal with issues as if you are the boss and perform well in your role, your reputation will serve you well in your pursuit of your career objectives.