getting a seat at the table

the ultimate handbook for the road to leadership.



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Is a seat at the executive table in your future? If you aspire to join top management in your company or a different one, and you are willing and ready to put in the effort to do so, there's no reason why you can't work your way up the corporate ladder to the top rung. However, sweat equity is not enough to win one of the coveted seats among the C-suite; you'll need to make good decisions, demonstrate leadership skills and motivate the people around you to elevate performance. With a little luck along the way, you too can get a coveted invite to the boardroom.

Having ascended through middle management and with your eye now on executive opportunities, your career is rocketing into executive leadership stratus. To continue on this trajectory, you'll need to focus on some important personal and professional developments, including reassessing your career goals, nurturing important relationships in your network, polishing your professional brand and identifying opportunities that are right for you at this point in your career. By diligently navigating all these areas, you'll become well-positioned to land the executive role suited for you.

Where your career takes you is within your control. By leveraging the exceptional decision-making skills you've exhibited so far in your professional life, you can map out a journey filled with learning and rewards. Remaining focused may be your biggest challenge, as being in your current management position requires constant attention and diligence. However, you should also prioritize your own professional needs to remain steadfast to your goals.

As a global leader in the world of work, Randstad has supported the ambitions of countless executive leaders in their professional journey. We've compiled this digital handbook to help you better focus on the challenges on the way to the boardroom. We've asked our own executive leaders as well as those who work with the C-suite of some of the world's largest organizations for their advice on getting ahead and staying ahead. Our practical tips and market insights will enable you to make choices that take you down the right path. We wish you the best of luck and hope the advice offered here will help you become the leader you aspire to be.



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refining your professional goals.

As a seasoned professional in today's dynamic world of work, you've demonstrated all the skills inherent in a great leader: people management, market foresight, political savviness and consistent communications. As you now navigate into the executive ranks, it's time to reassess your goals — both professionally and personally. While this may seem unnecessary since you've journeyed thus far in a successful career, moving into the C-suite requires a careful re-examination of what you aspire to be as a leader. This means being brutally honest about the roles you desire and the timeframe in which you want this to happen.

Aspiring to be a C-suite leader is not the goal of every professional. Those holding the title understand it requires immense personal sacrifice, dedication, the ability to absorb useful criticism while deflecting others and being accountable to the executive board and shareholders. Such intensifying pressures have led the median tenure of CEOs to fall to just five years, according to one study. As digitalization and automation transform most industries, leaders are expected to have a vision for taking their business into the next decade and beyond.

But maybe joining the C-suite is not your goal; you may seek out a leadership position working more closely with a functional team in sales, operations or product development, for instance. This still requires clearly defining your goals, whether those are related to financial compensation, job satisfaction, specific professional achievements, personal desire or others. Whatever it is you hope to achieve, regularly reassessing your goals will ensure a clear path to them.

A common approach is to adopt the SMART model of goal-setting (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound). This can help you better reach your aim within the timeframe you desire, according to CEO magazine.

While the SMART methodology is often set up to reach business results, you can apply the same principles for steering your career. Once you have applied this to align your goals, it's time to consider some critical questions.

One of these is determining what kind of organization is right for you, according to Katherine Graham Leviss, the founder of XBInsight, a U.S.-based talent assessment and executive coaching company. While most professionals envision a career path filled with increasingly important roles at larger and larger organizations, this may not be the path for everyone.

As she points out, leaders at large companies focus on their particular domain of expertise, whether that's finance, regulatory, HR, marketing, operations or others. Within their silo, they may have support teams focused on tax compliance, for instance, or benefits administration. However, a smaller business offers more hands-on experience across a function. For example, a chief marketing officer may be involved in all aspects of digital marketing, trade show coordination, content creation and other tasks. You may prefer this diverse work experience to leading teams that oversee specific services. By being clear about what kind of role will satisfy your professional goals and desires, you become more engaged and productive, she adds.

"You have to define these goals and be a self advocate. Executives often aren't as proactive as they should be when it comes to regularly revisiting their professional goals," she said.

Life changes and opportunities

Two reasons why you may want to reconsider your professional goals are unexpected opportunities and personal life changes, which may lead to a realignment of your priorities. Very often opportunities will steer you to career moves you otherwise wouldn't consider — whether that's taking on a role outside your comfort zone or expanding responsibilities in your current situation. When that happens, you should map an alternative route for your career because additional doors have been opened to you.

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Changes in your personal life will also have a significant impact on career decisions, so make sure you reconcile your professional needs with your personal ones. For instance, family obligations may require you to scale back hours in the office or limit your job mobility. On the other hand, as many senior executives are also empty nesters, they may find freedom to change locations and take on better roles. How your personal circumstances affect your goal assessment will differ from anyone else, so there is no magic formula for making the right choice. However, keep in mind that sacrificing personal satisfaction in favor of career ambition is not sustainable, and this is one of the key causes for professional burnout.

Determining your professional goals is not a one time exercise. Just as you would in any business, reassessing objectives based on current conditions and future outlook will help you better attain the outcomes you desire.

three tips to help you refine career goals.

consult trusted confidants

These can be mentors, colleagues, career coaches, friends and family members. As you move higher up on the corporate ladder, you will want to maintain relationships with trusted individuals who you have historically sought out for advice. At the same time, don't forget to develop relationships with new advisors who can provide a different perspective.

assess personal circumstances

Life changes often force us to reprioritize the goals we set earlier on. Your professional goal is a convergence of intellectual desires and personal needs. Placing too much emphasis on one area may force you to have regrets elsewhere later on, especially as you pursue a senior leadership role. Carefully weigh the balance necessary to satisfy all of your needs and guide your professional journey accordingly.

be specific about your goals

"I want to be CEO" might be a nice-sounding objective, but you should be able to answer why or what kind of leader you want to become. This will clarify your objectives — for instance, you desire to lead a global sales organization because of your strong business development skills and insights into many different markets.



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Senior leaders typically possess superior management skills, but in a rapidly evolving technological world, they may trail the adaptiveness of peers who grew up in the post-digital world. As you look to move into the executive ranks, are you taking steps to ensure you are in step with the latest innovation?

Skills development is one of the most important tasks you need to undertake regularly to fortify the leadership skills required to drive your business forward. Without it, you risk becoming irrelevant and ineffective. This is especially true as you seek a senior-level position, which more than ever calls for astute and keen judgment that can come from continuous training. Additional professional certification will also enhance your resume in the eyes of prospective employers.

"Great leaders know that learning never stops, whether you're the CEO or just starting out in your career. Today you need to be curious, adaptable and agile so learning and development opportunities – formal and informal – are especially critical for senior-level leaders to regularly examine and update their skills and practices. In the age of digital and data disruption, keeping up and staying ahead is key to driving strategy, effectively executing and leading high-performing teams with the latest management techniques and innovations," says Louisa Wilson, chief marketing officer for Randstad Sourceright.

A recent study cited by Chief Learning Officer magazine showed that many leaders are not ready to shape strategy, build a high-performance culture and enhance organizational talent. These gaps may be addressed through more upskilling at the executive level.

Training can occur in several settings. Your company may provide programs aimed at fast-tracking high-potential individuals. Often, these are affiliated with succession planning for executive talent, but this can also occur at all levels of an organization. In-house programs help employers ensure they have a pipeline of qualified individuals who can move up when transitions occur.

Companies often also put their top performers through executive training programs at accredited universities such as Stanford, Whaton, IMD and Iese Business School of Spain. These organizations will help you build knowledge in finance, marketing, management strategy and other important topics you will need through your executive career.

As someone seeking to move into a leadership role, make sure you use every opportunity available to you through your employer. Not only will it help make you a more effective manager but it's usually free of cost to you. Better yet, your employer will likely provide the time off to attend these programs.

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Additionally, you may look to acquire new skills on your own. In assessing your market value, you may find a skills gap that keeps you from the ideal job. Perhaps it's furthering technical knowledge about your industry or you need additional professional accreditation. Whatever the gap, personally investing in upskilling will likely result in tremendous returns for your career. In some cases, your business may offer tuition reimbursement. Even if it doesn't, the knowledge you gain can be applied to roles you take on later in your career.

Beyond formal education, you can gain greater skills simply through work experience, by learning from mentors and participating in industry activities. Consider volunteering to take on additional work responsibilities that may broaden your understanding of the business and its operations. Mentors can offer lifelong advice on a range of topics ranging from managing people to winning consensus among stakeholders. Participating in trade councils and events may provide a better perspective on the trends driving your business.

Enhancing your skills can occur in a number of ways. The key is to actively seek out opportunities that will make you a better leader and keep you current to today's dynamic workplace environment.

three tips to help you enhance leadership skills.

identify your weaknesses

We all have weaknesses, but to be a better leader, consider what remediation steps are needed to help you overcome these gaps. Once you have developed a plan, make time to develop additional skills to overcome your deficiency.

follow a T&D regimen

Make sure to regularly enroll in some type of training and development activity. As a senior-level leader, your time is stretched thin but by committing to a regimen, you are making learning a priority in your career.

listen to a mentee

You may already participate in a mentorship program to help younger talent develop their skills, but the relationship may be mutually beneficial. Seek the opinion of those you mentor because they may help you learn something new about your business and yourself.



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elevating

your leadership brand.

In today's post-digital world, branding is more important than ever. Whether that's a corporate, product or employee brand, winning the attention of your audience is becoming harder and harder as the noise level around them escalates. The challenge is the same for your personal brand, as you compete with other top talent for desirable career opportunities. Only when you are recognized as a legitimate subject matter expert will you rise to the top of the group.

However, many senior leaders overseeing the transformation of their business often fail to consider the transformation of their personal brand, in part because they lack the skills to comprehensively promote and stand out in the noisy environment. Because they haven't grown up in the digital age like the Millennials and Gen Z workers that report to them, they don't always understand the dynamics of professional social networks and how best to leverage these channels. Furthermore, they often don't perceive the value of marketing their personal brand because it's a long cycle rather than a quick win. Regardless if you are comfortable with actively promoting your brand, it's a necessary exercise to help accelerate your climb to the top.

Why should you actively promote your personal brand? Not only will this help your career, your company will benefit as well, which in turn will further elevate your value. According to Sylvia Ann Hewlett, the founding president of the Center for Talent Innovation, a strong brand will help you to attract a sponsor to advocate on your behalf. And those with a sponsor are 23% more likely to move up in their career than those without. When your expertise is widely recognized in your line of business, you're much more likely to find open doors, whether that's a customer's or a peer's. Furthermore, you'll likely to create more career opportunities with a strong personal brand.

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However, be mindful of two important considerations: your personal brand is a perception of your leadership competencies, which means you need to reinforce the perception with real achievements. An unsupported brand is quickly found out, and it takes just one or two failed roles to leave a permanent stain on your record. Additionally, there are ways to promote your brand but you can't influence all the factors that affect it. In some cases, you can try to mitigate negative episodes but this isn't always successful. Building a network of contacts who perceive you in a positive manner will help buffer you from detractors.

Just as any good marketer will do, monitoring your personal brand is an important task that should be performed regularly. You can do this by following news feeds, chats and other online forums relevant to your field and industry. A number of services offer similar services, but be judicious in selecting one because, ironically, some have spotty online reviews. In any case, engaging in a professional tool can save you time and frustration.

To be perceived as an industry leader, you should strive for visibility among peers. Because fellow executives have so little time to spend on personal learnings, consider building an audience with highly relevant and impactful content they can use on a regular basis. This may be in the form of a blog, postings on LinkedIn, instructional videos on a YouTube channel, Facebook shares or other channels. (If you desire to be a top influencer on LinkedIn, check out its list of Top Voices for 2017.)

However, be judicious about the content you share because your brand depends on it. If your posts or blogs offer no real value, your voice will be seen as part of the noise, says Monika Hryniszyn, the HR Consultancy Director or Randstad Poland. "I really value content, but I have seen a few people who are very active on LinkedIn who I would never hire," she adds, characterizing these individuals as self-promoters who don't seem to have any significant accomplishments on their CVs.

In addition to an online presence, participating in industry events as a speaker or facilitator will raise your profile within your industry. Not only does it further your professional skills but it also enhances the visibility of your organization. And despite living in a digital world, in-person networking still has tremendous value.

three tips for elevating your leadership brand.

activate a content strategy

Develop a content strategy that achieves your end goal, which may be used to broaden your network, facilitate business development, help educate internal and external audiences or just to create buzz for yourself and/or your organization. By clarifying what you want to achieve, you'll be able to map the steps that support of your strategy.

look to join boards

Whether it's a non-profit or a global business, the boards of many organizations will help demonstrate your leadership abilities and help you in networking with other senior-level peers. Furthermore, it will help prepare to become a member of the C-suite by honing your management skills.

listen to the noise

Sometimes you don't want to filter out the noises of the market about yourself. Stop to listen and monitor regularly and learn from what is said about you and your business. This will help you more quickly address any potential problems that may arise.



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As you move into the executive realm, keep in mind that searching for the right opportunity and leveraging your network take on a different dimension from your days in middle management. Your brand now plays a stronger role, knowing the right people is invaluable and relationships with recruiters will grow more strategic as they will guide you to the right roles. Engaging with those who can help your search is more paramount than ever. At this point in your journey, relationships more than anything else will propel you forward.

If you are serious about taking on a role in the C-suite or another senior level position, you should be crystal clear about your desires and your capabilities. This means starting by refining your career goals, which we covered in Chapter 1. Once you have done so, identify the strengths that qualify you to become a high-level leader. Do you have in-depth business development skills? Are you an expert in operations? Is regulatory compliance your area of expertise? When you've answered the questions that define your leadership, you can focus on your job search and networking efforts.

how to begin

Undoubtedly, you have been approached by recruiters in the past, but at the executive level, the dynamics are different. Depending on the strength of your personal brand, which we discussed in chapter 3, you may have a few or many headhunters knocking at your door seeking a phone call. Be mindful that in today's talent-scarce marketplace, there may be many offers that are just a bad fit for you (we'll cover this in the last chapter). As you start to work with a number of recruiters, identify those who are most aligned to your experience, industry and professional goals. Your success rate will be optimal by choosing wisely. (The Wall Street Journal provides these tips for how to interact with recruiters.)

You can do this by asking for successful recent placements they've made. Some quick research on these individuals will tell you about their background, their tenure at these companies, the level of management they fall into and their area of expertise. If their qualifications are closely aligned to yours, the recruiter may have a good understanding of your unique circumstances and goals. Beyond this, the interpersonal relationship is key. Do the two of you have natural, purposeful dialogue that clearly conveys what each expects of the other? Does the recruiter maintain regular communications even when he doesn't have a role well suited for you? Is there a strong level of mutual trust of each other? At the executive level, the relationship should be strategic rather than transactional, meaning both of you are seeking a long-term collaboration over the course of your career.

"Executive recruiters are heavily focused on relationships," says Liz Price, a Talent Management Partner at Tatum, a US-based executive services firm specializing in placing senior level professionals into both interim and permanent career opportunities. "Developing relationships with recruiters who are well-recognized in your industry will benefit you throughout your career. Although a recruiter may not have an opportunity that's right for you today, that relationship ensures they will be keeping you in mind and will know what is a great fit for you when it comes up."



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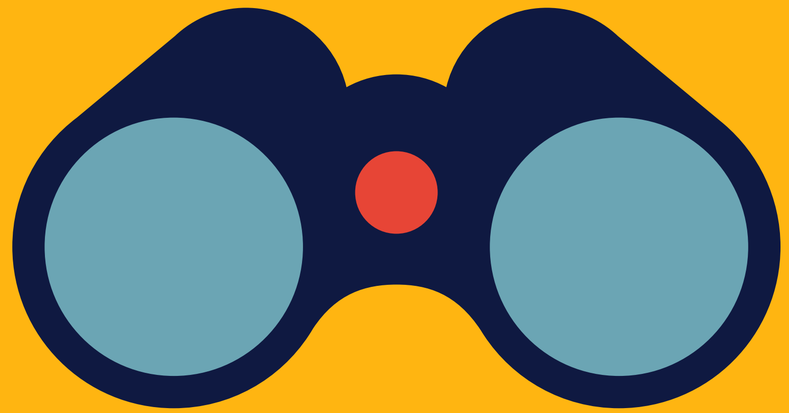
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Turning to executive recruiters is one way to find the right roles for your career, but so is working your network. This can be close colleagues you've worked with over the years, customers who have relied on your services, peers within a professional association, vendors, mentors and others with whom you have a close relationship.

LinkedIn is one of the most important channels for staying in touch with your network so make sure you regularly share content and reach out to your network to ensure they keep you top of mind for any opportunities that come their way. Make sure you maintain an updated LinkedIn profile, connect with as many relevant and valuable members as possible to create the widest network and be selective in who you accept as contacts. Executives receive many requests to connect, and often these are no more than sales solicitations so be judicious who you let in your circle. (See LinkedIn's Executive Playbook for more tips).

Your search for the right position shouldn't be rushed because it's important to select a role that will keep your career trajectory forward. A misstep could set you back significantly and cost you precious time in your career development.



three tips for firing up your search and networking efforts.

develop strong relationships

Whether it's an ongoing dialogue with a recruiter or staying in touch with former colleagues, when you have strong relationships with your network, opportunities seem to come more readily. The key is staying visible as you reach new accomplishment and goals.

create a dynamic LinkedIn profile

Many senior leaders dismiss the need for a robust profile because they don't see the value of it. However, being a top influencer is not only good for your career but for your company as well. Keep your CV updated and invite comments and interactions with your postings. If necessary, hire a professional social media advisor.

target desirable employers

We all have a set of employers we'd like to work for, so set your sights on the ones that you'd like to join in the near and distant future. This will help you establish some tangible goals and take actions that move you closer to your dream job.

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Everybody loves a winner. That's especially true of employers. When you join a great organization, the upside seems limitless. World-class businesses are admired and feared by competitors. Securing an executive role with one of these leaders elevates your worth immeasurably and makes it easier for you to move onto other great companies. Most importantly, it serves as a training ground to sharpen your skills.

On the flip side, ending up at a failing company can damage your reputation for years to come. Such an experience will follow you to your next employer and potentially cast doubt among your colleagues about your ability to lead. In some cases, it may doom your career permanently. So how do you determine which career opportunity is right and which ones should be passed over?

Earlier in your career, choosing the right employer was less risky. As a mid-level manager, you were part of a larger team led by more senior decision makers. Blame for poor management and performance rested on the shoulders of those executive teams while you were insulated from the finger-pointing. But now that you are seeking to join the leadership team, it's imperative you choose a sound employer who will provide the resources, culture and encouragement to help you succeed. Also critical is ensuring its corporate mission aligns with your personal mission. Without this, your tenure will not be long. (Harvard Business Review offers these tips on managing career risks).

thorough research is mandatory

Even before you agree to an interview with a prospective employer, do some thorough research on the organization. In today's highly transparent workplace, you can find out almost anything about a company. Employee review sites such as Kununu offer an in-depth look at many organizations, with both positive and critical comments that can help you make better-informed decisions. What is the workplace environment like? How satisfied are the people who work there? Did job applicants have a pleasant experience? The insights these sites offer can serve as the foundation upon which additional data can affirm or refute about a potential business.

Even if you are satisfied with your initial research results, don't stop there. Nothing is more authentic than hearing the opinions of people you trust as well as the employees who work at a prospective employer. Connect with those in your network who currently or previously worked at the company. Tap their knowledge and ask pointed questions about factors that are important to you, such as C-suite culture, management practices, work pressure, the involvement of the executive board and other topics that will impact your employment there.

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Ask the recruiter or hiring executive to give you access to employees for their input. Don't ask if they think their employer is great or if they are happy there. Naturally the ones you will be speaking with represent the most content of the workforce. Rather, ask specifically about culture, management expectations, training opportunities and other indicators of how the business treats its employees. Form your own opinion rather than relying on the words of advocates.

Meeting the rank-and-file workers is important but so are one-on-one sessions with top leaders, says Valentina Sangiorgi, the chief HR officer for Randstad Group Italia. "Meeting the top management is, in my opinion, crucial to understanding the culture and represents a chance to find nourishment for your leadership skills. You'll learn what their approach is to problems. How do they lead innovation? Do they care about their clients and their market? Do they have a adaptive mindset or a fixed one? I would suggest to not only meet your future boss but also other senior leaders," she recommends.

By conducting interviews with the workers of prospective employers, gathering insights from online review sites and seeking the opinions of your network, you will have ample evidence to help you embrace or reject the opportunities that come your way.

three tips for vetting prospective employers.

check all available sources

Aside from employee review sites, there is a wealth of public information on just about every company. Publicly traded companies make documents such as annual reports and other supporting filings available through the investor relations section of their web site. Some private companies also compile annual reports and outlooks, but even those who don't may offer up press releases and additional content about their business online.

longevity a telltale sign

Although C-level tenure is becoming shorter, assess the longevity of leaders at companies you are considering joining. Short stints for key positions may indicate instability and lack of continuity in leadership while longer tenures could suggest a more engaged and satisfied executive staff.

financial health is critical

This should be obvious but not everyone thinks to check a company's balance sheet to determine financial health. Stock price might be an indicator but knowing whether a company is adequately solvent will relieve you of some difficult decisions.

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When you are being interviewed for an executive position, be prepared to bring your A+ game because only the most astute and articulate candidates will make it past the scrutiny of the C-suite and board. So when you are called in to sell yourself, make sure you are well prepared for some tough questioning.

Take everything you know about interviewing and throw out about 90% when an executive leadership position is on the line. That's because conventional questions will be tossed out. Instead, the hiring manager — likely the COO, CEO or even the management board — will want concrete ideas of how you will drive outcomes in the position being considered. That means investing significant time and effort in preparation, with an emphasis on researching the employer's business and challenges, according to Jim Link, the chief HR officer for Randstad North America.

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"You should go in with deep knowledge of that company, including their market position, their approach to marketing, who their main competitors and so forth. You have to spend time to understand aspirationally where the organization wants to go. Never go in underprepared," he cautions.

The preparation will help you develop ideas for addressing some of the employer's most difficult challenges and relating examples of your own accomplishments to their current circumstances. The board will likely expect real-life solutions you plan to implement in the role being considered so make sure you have strategic ideas that will resonate with the interviewers. Typically there will be several rounds of interviews with different leaders so form your ideas in the context for the area of responsibilities for each.

According to these tips from Monster, amplifying your presence will help with leaving a strong impression about your leadership style. Your should exude confidence but not arrogance. Be open to new ideas and suggestions but also be steadfast in your personal and professional convictions. Remember, good leaders should not be unwilling to hear others with good ideas, but ultimately make decisions that he or she deems to be the best solution.

Link adds that executives need to reinforce the idea that they are experts at some things but not all. "You should be recognized for your leadership in a pivotal part of that job, but employers understand that some areas you may need further upskilling, which will come as you settle into that role," he added.

Two-way conversation
One way to demonstrate great communication skills is to conduct the interview not as a series of answers to the hiring executive's queries but as a conversation between two leaders. You should have as many questions as answers, which will help you better understand whether the role is right for you. Find out what the expectations are for the role, how it will evolve in the future, what possible paths upward from the role are and what the circumstances in which the last employee left were.

Of course references will be asked for so make sure you have a robust portfolio of colleagues willing to support the version of the leader you have painted yourself as. Those in executive positions will be most compelling but others who may be recognized in your field, including your own direct reports, offer the prospective employer your people management skills. Remember, this is a key performance criteria of any good executive — the ability to motivate the people on their teams.

The executive interview is a series of challenging discussions meant to highlight your strengths but also call out your weaknesses. You must prepare well to make the right impression but also think quickly on your feet as there will surely be unexpected types of questions thrown your way.

three tips for ensuring interview success.

ask the recruiter for insights
If an executive recruiter has progressed your candidacy to an interview, they likely believe you have the skills and experience to take on the role. They also have insights into what the hiring manager is looking for so consult the recruiter for a preview of what will occur at the interview.

flattery will get you somewhere
Let's face it, executives tend to have an ego and are happy that others recognize their accomplishments. As part of your pre-interview research, accumulate intelligence about the people who will conduct the interview and let them know how impressed you are with their own achievements.

enlighten and impress
Want to really leave a strong impression from your interview? Gather some unique intelligence about the employer's business competitors that can be used to gain an advantage.



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You've found the right role with the right employer and just completed a highly successful series of interviews that have led to a job offer landing at your feet. It's time to celebrate and sign the contract! But wait, before you do...

There are many factors to consider prior to accepting a role, so take a moment to assess whether the offer is right for you, and if not, what additional negotiations are needed to satisfy your requirements and those of the employer. More than ever you need to make some difficult decisions because in today candidate's market, another opportunity is probably around the corner if you're not already considering several offers. You need to choose wisely not only to satisfy your financial needs but also determine whether the role has a future migration path upward.

Aside from professional concerns about a job, you may have personal considerations that will influence your decision. For instance, candidates with young children may be limited in their ability to travel (yes, there are many younger C-level leaders, as Kraft Heinz recently demonstrated). You might prefer to live in certain areas of the world or stay in your current location. Whatever your personal desires are, don't discount them when selecting an offer.

is compensation the determining factor?

Undoubtedly, executive compensation is growing faster than that of lower ranked workers. Take CEO pay, for example, which CNBC reports is growing 70 percent faster than the stock market. That means for the senior levels you desire, overall compensation should be significant depending on your industry and business. But how do you know if your particular offer is fair and on par with market practices?

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Services such as PayScale offer market intelligence to help determine your value, and Randstad also published salary guides based on industry. There are many additional resources to help determine whether you will be adequately compensated in a new role. However, at the executive level, salaries is just a small part of the overall package. The most lucrative portion is likely stock options and grants, which can exceed salaries by several times. So when comparing several offers, do the math to fairly compare them side by side.

Another consideration is the existence of the pay gap among male and female leaders. According to one pay study of more than 300 CEOs at public companies, the highest-paid male CEO in 2017 earned $99 million while the highest-paid female CEO made $32 million. So if you are a woman moving into a senior leadership role, make an extra effort to ensure your compensation offer is equal to male peers.

Beyond compensation, there are many other factors that will enter into your decision-making process. For instance, will the employer give you autonomy to lead in the manner you want, free of interference and limitations? Does the line of succession offer you a clear path toward the corner office? Will you be able to bring in trusted direct reports who share your vision, strategy and tactics for execution? In other words, will you be provided resources and latitude to achieve the goals you say you want to pursue?

If you're not getting the most important rewards from a prospective employer, it's a good time to test their willingness to compromise for your leadership. If the company is willing to meet you halfway, it's an encouraging sign. However, if there is little budge, it might be time to move on to another offer.

three tips for assessing and selecting offers.

clarification is paramount
Make sure you fully understand what is being offered to you because executive compensation packages are typically more complex. Review all the elements contained in the agreement to ensure you are getting what you desire.

don't be afraid to ask for more
Did the employer forget to offer relocation services as part of its offering? Do you need more vacation days? Will there be a signing bonus? Don't be afraid to ask about perks that can boost the overall employee value proposition.

learn how to say no
If you decide not to accept an offer, do so in a professional way that won't burn your bridges for the future. Not only will it open up the possibility for future roles at the company but you will build greater trust with recruiters.

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