

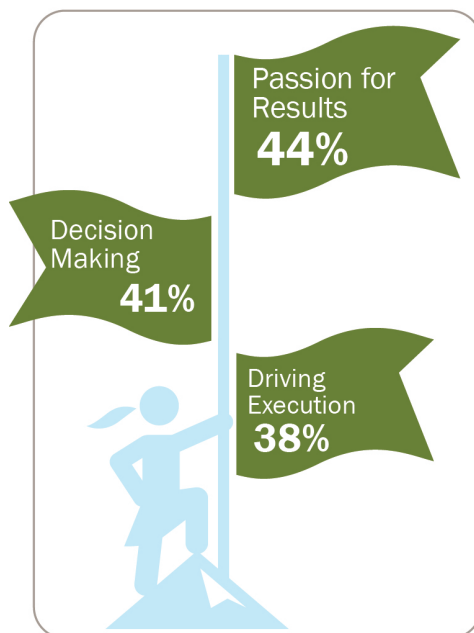
The CEO Profile

Exclusive Characteristics of Succession Finalists

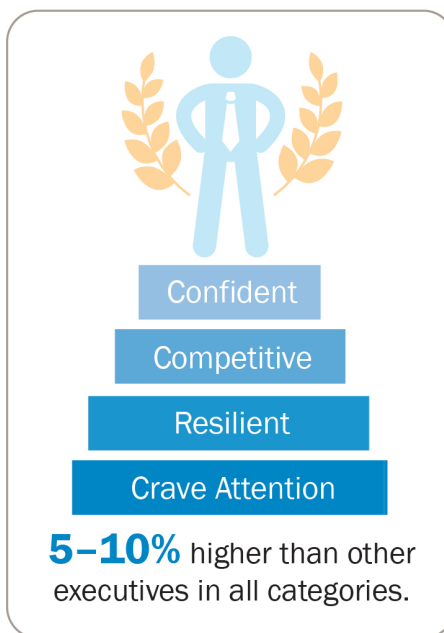


How CEO Candidates Excel, are Wired, and Struggle

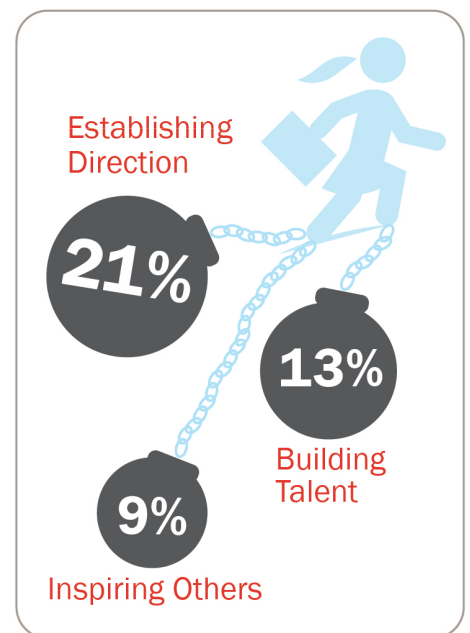
How CEO candidates **excel**



How CEO candidates are **wired**



How CEO candidates **struggle**



The CEO profile, using 243 CEO candidate finalists from 48 organizations. Percentages indicate proportion of CEO candidates strong in these skills.

How the Fittest Survive to Get a Chance at the Top Job

Leaders who are successful enough to be considered for a CEO position are unlike others. We set out to learn how CEO candidates are unique in their response to leadership challenges and if their personal attributes set them apart. We profiled 243 CEO finalists, in 48 organizations, and benchmarked them against our entire database.

[EVIDENCE]

What CEO Candidates Do to Excel

Obsess over execution and results—They stay laser focused on outcomes and demand specifics on how results will be achieved.

Instantly and accurately size up complex business situations—Relying on seasoned business instincts, they quickly sort the good business ideas from the bad so they can steer toward best bets.

Fixate on customer needs—They embody the customer persona so that they can get specific about diagnosing how business plans will meet customer needs now and in the future.

How CEO Candidates Are Wired

Intensely competitive, confident, and emotionally resilient—While it's true that most executives share these traits, they are even more pronounced among those preparing for a CEO position.

Craving of attention—Most personality derailleurs, such as arrogance or volatility, decline in prevalence. Not so for attention-seeking. The top job attracts those who enjoy being noticed for their talents and charm.

Creative or pragmatic (but rarely both)—21 percent of CEO candidates are creative, conceptual strategists, and 29 percent are practical, no-nonsense operators. Only 8 percent balance both.

Where CEO Candidates Struggle

Default to the short-term—The so-called “strategic plans” these leaders make are often not very strategic at all. They solve operational dilemmas, but few generate effective, long-range growth strategies. So meaningful organizational change is rare.

Treat talent as an afterthought—Their most rigorous planning seldom focuses on talent. Coaching is diplomatic but is often not goal oriented. Talent development is perfunctory, not strategic.

Experience difficulty in being inspirational—When trying to rally the organization behind their plans, most leaders turn reflexively to financial projections. Leading from the heart doesn't come naturally for them.

! Action

- .01 Don't settle for anything less than deep insight into your CEO candidates. They tend to be fierce competitors who have a strong bias toward execution, but often show weakness in paving the way to the future. Ask how similar or different this profile is from the potential CEO successors in your organization. You'll need accurate data about your successors' capabilities to ensure the right answers and the best decisions.
- .02 Don't mistake industry experience or business savvy with the ability to think strategically. Leaders often are considered strategic until they are confronted with solving a complex strategic business challenge. C-level simulations are proven predictors of leader success and company financial performance as they generate insights into the true strategic capability of top leaders.
- .03 When building development plans, it pays to be specific, particularly at the top. The most common growth needs among CEO candidates are areas that can be developed, but not without concerted effort. An effective CEO succession plan pushes senior-level leaders to work toward the CEO's standards. Development happens faster when accurate, in-depth assessment data is used to pinpoint behaviors that can be applied to enhance effectiveness.

The Struggle Between Creative and Pragmatic

