

Survival of the Fittest

How C-suite roles are evolving and what it means for top teams

PART TWO | The CEO



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Leaders For What's Next

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Geopolitical waves, digitization and AI. The drive for sustainability. Demands for full transparency and the changing needs of talent. These and other forces in the ecosystem have dramatically broadened the scope of the CEO role. The traditional routes to the top seat are already changing.

This series examines the evolution in C-suite roles and the composition of the optimal Leadership Team For What's Next. Based on the insights of senior Amrop Partners from across the world and the Amrop global data set, we examine five roles: the CEO, the CFO, the COO, the CHRO and the CIO.

In this article we ask: what will the CEO For What's Next look like? What factors are already determining the survival of the fittest?



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Key Questions

1

How has the role of the CEO evolved over the past 10 years?

2

What are the key performance factors for role holders?

3

How is the CEO role domain likely to evolve going forward?

4

Which CXO domains could be the source of tomorrow's CEO?



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Survival of the Fittest — the CEO | Topline Messages

The modern ecosystem is a multidimensional, multicultural, multinational, multi-business experience. The scope of the CEO role has never been wider. A new profile is emerging.



Multiverse navigator: the CEO must be present at all levels of the firm.

In addition to the broadening scope of the CEO role and its rising demands face to external stakeholders, the company figurehead must also be consistently present and available on the internal frontlines.



Paradox leader: when the CEO moves beyond either/or, to 'both/and'.

Four core paradoxes inhabit today's ecosystem: health versus wealth, globalization versus localization, reflection versus action, and exploration versus exploration. The CEO's strategic sensing ability allows innovative solutions to emerge.



The atypical candidate: the CEO For What's Next will come from new sources.

New routes to destination CEO need opening up, beyond the COO/CFO avenue. The CHRO looks set to join them. Coaching, training, or supplementing with other CXO roles can fill the gaps that the widening role scope creates. And CEOs will need self-awareness and humility to accept support.



Sensemaker: culture and values are now central CEO concerns.

As digitization and hybrid working become the norm, the CEO will need to federate and engage people within the 'e-cosystem' and create a great place to work, even as the next generation of talent disregards the 'job for life'.



Chief Reputation and Brand Officer: the new CEO is a multi-channel public figure.

They must step up to the podium and express the organization's purpose fluently and authentically, displaying not only mental, but physical fitness. This further confirms the demise of the CEO as a discrete technocrat.



Democrat: the CEO must genuinely care.

Engaging employees at the sharp end has always meant connecting with all levels of seniority. But today's sharp-eyed employees are alert to the difference between real interest and manufactured camaraderie.



Purposeful: the CEO must be guided by a deep sense of 'why' and 'what for.'

A true north and clear value system guide the fittest CEOs through ambiguity and complexity, helping them to distinguish what is important from urgent. It supports consistency and authenticity. And purposeful organizations are magnets for purposeful people.



The classic qualities and leadership skills no longer suffice.

Our Amrop Partners, seasoned executive and board search specialists, identify eight characteristics and six tasks for organizations to consider when designing the search strategy for their next top leader.



1

Widening Scope

Culture, values and reputation are now central CEO concerns. They demand a compelling and authentic presence on multiple fronts.



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Technical ability is no longer enough. The new CEO must be a sensemaker.

Previously in our series examining the evolution of the C-suite, senior Amrop Partners examined the general picture for the top team. Today's operating context is undergoing tectonic shifts. What are the implications for the team's composition and dynamics?

One thing is clear: when it comes to the survival of the fittest in today's turbulent environment, an organization's true north has become as important as its economic bottom line. Culture, values and sustainability head the agenda of today's high-performing C-suite — and that of the CEO. Quantity cannot be achieved without quality.

Culture, values and sustainability are closely intertwined. Each feeds into the other. And these factors are being keenly observed by stakeholders. As one Amrop Managing Partner puts it: "It's all totally connected and I think that's going to be rated, looked at, make the difference."

In a nutshell, today's CEO operates in a kind of multiverse: "a multidimensional, multicultural, multinational, multi-business experience," says another Amrop Managing Partner.

Grit and Gravitas will be defining qualities

The life of the CEO has always demanded extraordinary resilience. Given the widening scope of the role, will today's CEOs need even more grit and gravitas than their predecessors?

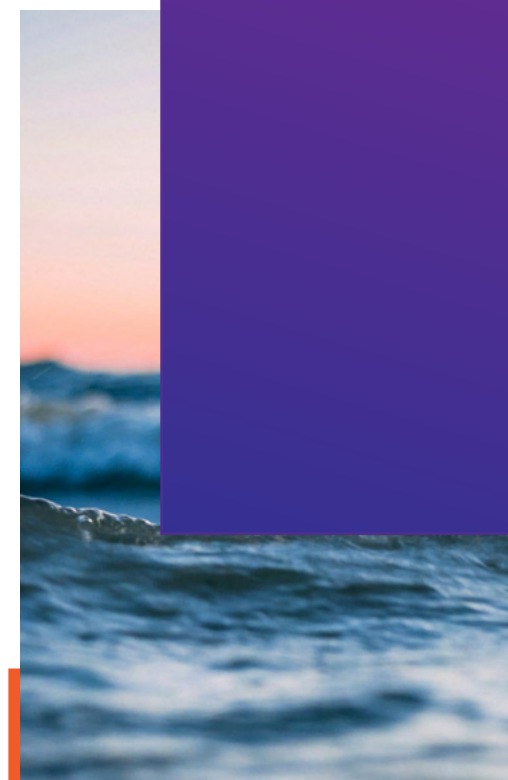
"Gravitas is a word that we use all the time with those very senior roles," confirms one Amrop Board Member. "We do want to get a sense of that. How readily can this person go into a boardroom, into major clients, command an audience, reach out and get the call-backs? Do what needs to be done to be a true leader? And not everybody can."

"Getting the softer skills right and the mindset around how you engage people differently will lead companies to greater profitability over time," he continues. "It doesn't replace technical skills. Your operational mindset, absolutely not."

"But this is no longer about just being a technical, operations or salesperson. It's around how you package all of this together to get the best out of your people and therefore create the best for your organization and other stakeholders."

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It's a multi dimensional,
multi-cultural,
multinational, multi-
business experience.”



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Getting the softer skills right and the mindset around how you engage people differently will lead companies to greater profitability over time.”

The CEO will need to maintain the human touch within today’s ‘e-cosystem’

Not only has expressing and installing the ‘way we do things around here’ become an ever more important task of the CEO, technology has made it more difficult. Whilst digitization and hybrid working may mean that people connect faster and more often, the depth of that connectivity remains to be seen. As one Amrop Managing Partner puts it: “The digitization of business and the expectations concerning sustainability make it very challenging to define the essence of culture. In a hybrid, digital world it is definitely more complicated to shape.”

Creating a great place to work is now moving to the top of the CEO agenda.

“That’s why people want to work with truly good companies, with really capable colleagues,” says one Amrop Managing Partner: “Wow! This is a fantastic company to join. It becomes a win-win down the road.”

Today’s CEO is a public figure

The imperative to express the organization’s purpose and do it fluently and authentically further confirms the disappearance of the discrete technocrat.

In particular it means that the ability to step up to the podium must be added to the traditional KPIs of the CEO, Amrop Partners argue. “The CEO role has definitely changed,” says one. “It has become much more public, representing the values of the company, its ESG agenda and overall purpose. It is much more than a purely operational form of leadership. Whilst it still has an operational component, the other parts have taken a much more central role. I think that’s the change: you step into a public domain. And no matter how good an operator you are, it’s a different skill set.”

This Amrop Board Member goes even further: “I sometimes refer to the CEO as the Chief Brand Officer or the Chief Reputation Officer. Because this is the person who sets the tone from the top, who must relate well to the board of directors (if there is a board) to the employee base, to the street. And if you’re a private company, to your clients, and if you’re public, the investor community. It’s all about brand preservation.”



The CEO has to demonstrate work life balance

Role modeling by leadership has long been a pillar of organizational trustbuilding. But a recurrent preoccupation is work life balance, and the overworked CEO now has to walk that talk as well. Today's top leader is being acutely observed by a generation of employees who no longer believe in marriage to an all-consuming 'job for life'. How can organizations create a compelling culture in the face of cynicism about the pseudo family?

The answer is that not only must the firm's values must be more relevant to people than ever before, they must transcend financial performance. Diktats such as: *'we're the winning team, no matter what it takes from us'* no longer hold sway. More than ever, the CEO has to embody a culture that fosters wellbeing — reconciling the twin concerns of health and wealth.

"You can't have a CEO who works 100 hours a week and then says: *'we have a good work life balance in the rest of the organization'*. It doesn't work like that anymore," says one Amrop Partner. "You have town halls, events where suddenly this person is much more an icon of the company than in the past. You're also seeing a lot of personal portraits of CEO's, and them having to be role models for whatever company culture they're looking for and what they're trying to achieve in that cultural setting."

The CEO's door opens onto the street. And the wind is blowing in

Of course, reputation has always mattered. But today, it is center-stage. The Amrop Talent Observatory¹ is a global study exploring why senior executives join or leave an organization. It finds that nearly 90% of executives would be repelled by a serious reputational fallout, no matter how attractive the firm might be in other respects.

Today there is nowhere for CEOs to hide. "What has become even more evident that CEO reputation is make or break. We have seen so many instances of CEO reputation damaging not only organizations but whole industries," warns one Amrop Managing Partner.

Not surprisingly, "at these levels, demands and transparency in the expectations have increased. Also the observation, obviously, of external stakeholders of all kinds; whether rating agencies or other observers who have far higher expectations in this respect."

“

I sometimes refer to the CEO as the Chief Brand Officer or the Chief Reputation Officer. Because this is the person who sets the tone from the top.”

¹ 'The Amrop Talent Observatory', (2021). A survey of 443 senior executives from all world regions.



The reputation factor has serious implications for CEO appointments

“One of the things we always look at during the appointment of a CEO (or other senior executives), is their risk tolerance,” says an Amrop Board Member. “And it’s hard to truly gauge that, other than looking at some of their experiences where they’ve had to deal with challenging situations. Because everyone is looking to see how this person performs, and how the organization performs under their leadership. And that’s why I go back to the Chief Reputation Officer. If that’s who you are, then what is it going to take to really drive the business forward?”

Talking the walk: the rise of the CEO-communicator

Today, many CEOs are media personalities and they carry all the expectations of the Instagram age. For better or worse, they embody the organization. As brand ambassadors, they need a magnetic presence. Not only verbal, but physical.

“You’re definitely seeing CEOs suddenly having to have an opinion about our purpose and impact in the world as an organization, the long-term goals, being very communicative,” says one Amrop Partner “You need to be media trained, knowing what to say in a storm. You need a blog or podcast, all these communication channels.” But even this is not enough.

“It’s important what you do in your personal life, that you look fit, all these other things that weren’t at all an issue in the past. Suddenly you become your persona and company. These are gray areas that merge. Even if you’re just the hired CEO.”

CEO candidates take note: another Managing Partner has an acid test when it comes to road testing character, values, personal culture and principles. “We look at these factors first, versus competencies, skills and experience. I ask our staff: is this candidate polite to you, consistent when they know that you are not very senior? Or are they hypocritical, in that, when this ‘big shot’ is talking to me it’s a totally different mask?”

Mastering the macro and the micro

In addition to the broadening scope of their role and rising demands of external stakeholders, the CEO must also be available on the internal frontlines. A global Amrop/IMD study² explores the leadership dimension of large midcaps. In over eighty interviews with C-suite members, the presence of the CEO at the coalface emerges as a distinctive, and value-added, factor.

Given the growing sense of employee non-attachment and an increasingly digital workplace, the need for physical availability will only intensify. This, if the CEO is to deliver on the culture-building mandate. But it is a balancing act. As well as being present on the terrain, the CEO must also rise above it. As an Amrop Managing Partner puts it: “They have to be foresightful, see things from a high level and ground themselves to the battlefield, otherwise they lose touch. And they cannot implement the strategy.” He concludes: “The future is so murky right now.”

Engaging employees at the sharp end has always taken a democratic ability to connect with all levels and types of people. But today’s employees are probably more likely than their predecessors to spot the difference between genuine curiosity for their wellbeing and manufactured camaraderie. Authenticity is a must.

² ‘Welcome to the Flight Deck. The Human Dimension of Globalizing Mid-Caps as Seen by Their Leaders’, (2014). Amrop, IMD.

2

The Wise and Purposeful CEO

A true north and value system guide the fittest CEOs through ambiguity and complexity. They enable the CEO to distinguish what is important from urgent. Purpose nourishes authenticity and helps to resolve tricky paradoxes. Moreover, purposeful organizations are magnets for purposeful people.



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If they are driven by conscience, by fundamental values, plus all the capabilities and qualifications, they become extremely powerful and positive value-creating CEOs.”



The fittest CEOs live and breathe purpose

As an (increasingly public) figurehead, the new breed of CEO must exemplify purposeful leadership. This fundamental sense of ‘the why’ helps the purposeful CEO to navigate ambiguity and complexity, differentiating what is important from urgent. It also helps the CEO to be consistent and authentic. As one Amrop Managing Partner says: “It really goes back to wise leadership³ — the CEO’s value system and ability to shape a culture and the community, combined with mastering this larger arena of topics.”

Is this a matter of servant, rather than sovereign leadership?⁴ Another Managing Partner thinks so: “The truly value-creating CEO has to be put their self-interest last. Unfortunately, that’s not always the case.”

A purposeful CEO is moved by a deeper motivation than company mission, he says. “If they are driven by conscience, by fundamental values, plus all the capabilities and qualifications, they become extremely powerful and positive value-creating CEOs.”

Purpose creates a virtuous circle

We recall that purposeful companies attract and retain purposeful people. And this has never mattered more. An Amrop Board Member: “I do believe that CEOs need to be far more purposeful than they’ve ever been. And if you’re looking at how you’re going to attract and retain your key talent, people want to work for organizations where there is purpose. People want to feel that they’re making a meaningful contribution, and that their company is aligned on a number of different levels. And so, it would include things like ESG, DE & I.”

Amrop’s Talent Observatory⁵ supports this argument. Examining the reasons why senior executives jumped ship, the global study found that factors related to support, growth, beliefs and values were far more common departure reasons than ‘hard’ factors, such as compensation or contracts.

This confirms that senior executives (and arguably the wider employee base) need to buy in to the organization’s purpose and strategy for securing long term sustainability. And that strategy must reconcile shareholder and stakeholder perspectives.

“It’s typically the CEO who’s going to lead,” says the Amrop Board Member. “And if you’re looking at your next generation of followers, it’s how you engender that followership. So, it’s not just about your top line and bottom line anymore.

“Yes, you want to be a profitable organization and grow, but it’s far more meaningful than that. And those organizations with a meaningful action plan around purpose, not just a statement on a wall or a website, outperform their competitors. And it’s incumbent upon every CEO to get a sense of how they’re going to lead in that domain and what it’s going to mean for their organization. So, I do think the role has changed. Years ago, often, particularly if it was a public company, it was about top- and bottom-line growth. And that world has changed significantly.”

³ ‘Wise Decision-Making: Stepping Up to Sustainable Performance.’ (2017). Amrop. In this global study, wise leadership is summarized by Amrop as ‘ethical, responsible and sustainable’.

⁴ Meyer, R., and Meijers, R., ‘Leadership Agility: Developing your Repertoire of Leadership Styles’, (2017).

⁵ The Amrop Talent Observatory (2021). A survey of 443 senior executives from all world regions.



Wisdom and purpose: keys to paradox leadership.

Today's business ecosystem is an ambiguous place, full of strategic tensions.

In order to use the horns of a dilemma as a springboard for innovation (rather than being stuck on them), one ability remains paramount for a CEO: the mental agility to identify, unpack and resolve paradoxes. The accomplished paradox leader is a synthesizer. He or she can reconcile apparent contradictions to reach an innovative solution.

In this forest of pitfalls and thinking traps, CEOs who are wise and purposeful are better equipped to resolve the dilemmas that emerge from the undergrowth. They are guided by a 'true north' that helps them to rise above the trees and take a helicopter view. They possess a set of values and principles that informs their diagnostic process and guides their decisions.

These CEOs possess 'strategic sensing' ⁶. They are forward-looking, with an eye on the best opportunity. They anticipate change, spotting subtle signals and connecting dots, rather than blindly reacting to a crisis. They are 'integrative' in that they are capable of very sophisticated interpretation and able to manage contradictions in a holistic way.

In short, they do not choose between 'either/or' but allow 'both/and' to unfold into a new reality, transcending opposing ideas and creating innovative, competitive solutions.

Four core paradoxes

1

Health versus wealth

Today's drive for sustainability contains a core tension: "The ultimate CEO is able to reconcile the two perspectives of shareholder and stakeholder (the wider community) because they cannot abandon shareholder interests. Absolutely they cannot," says one Amrop Board Member. "And for sure you need to focus on your profitability at the end of the day and if you're a public company your stock price and so on — all the financial considerations. They do have to reconcile those different stakeholders."

2

Globalization versus localization

"I think it has become increasingly complicated over the past 20 years due to globalization and the fact that you have by definition various country cultures embedded in global organizations." says an Amrop Managing Partner. "And to try and synthesize this in a meaningful way is a huge challenge."

3

Reflection versus action

Today's CEO must be determined yet caring. As this Amrop Managing Partner puts it: "The CEO is a strategic do-er, a relentless but compassionate leader. The best would have the guts to make a very difficult decision, but at the same time if they don't have the compassion, they win the battle, but not the war."

4

Exploitation vs exploration

The Amrop Managing Partner returns to the staggering breadth of skills the new species of CEO must master: "I think it's the transformational, cultural, innovational, educational, implementational leader. Again, this is the paradoxical type of new leadership: on one hand they must conserve the goodies, on the other they have to revolutionize and disrupt. Because the market, the climate is so different, and changing at lightning speed. And it's predictably unpredictable right now."

⁶ 'From Tension to Transformation: How Wise Decision-makers Transcend Paradoxes and Ambiguity', (2020). Amrop.



3

Appointments and Succession

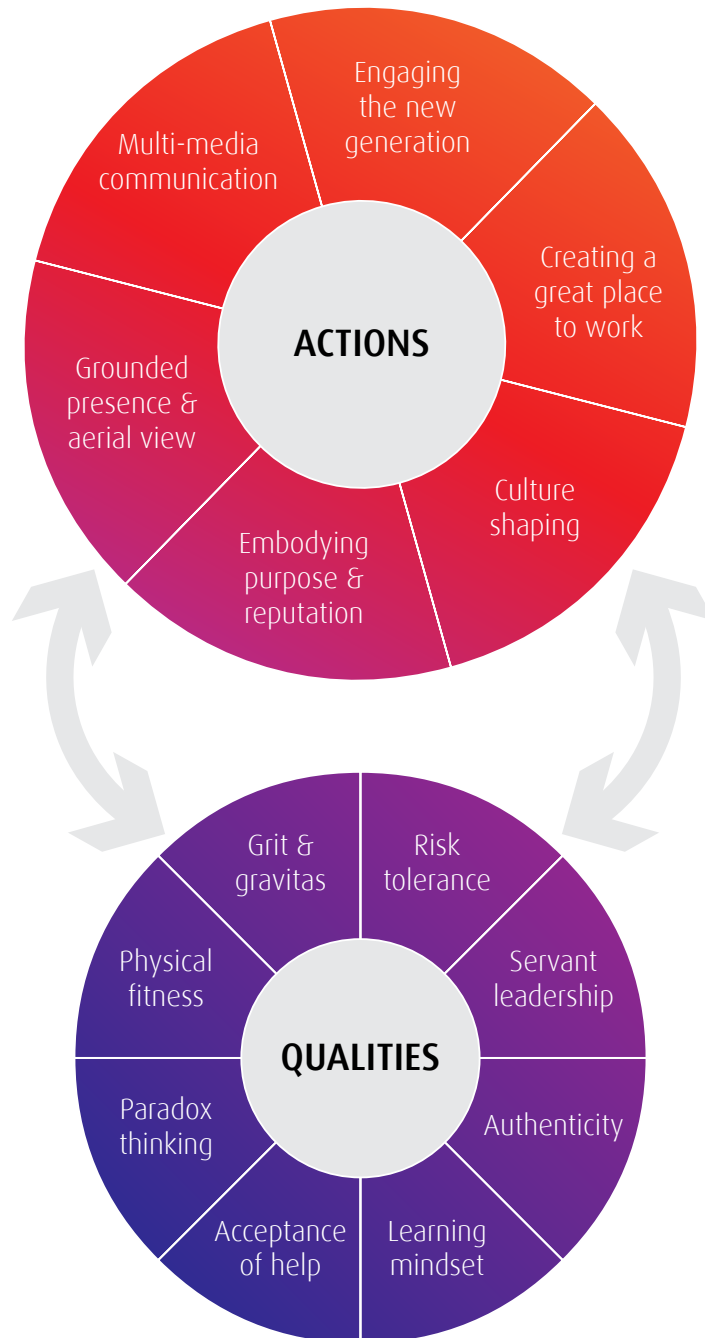
The new breed of CEO needs to evolve new attributes. Different routes to destination CEO need opening up. Coaching, training or supplementing with other CXO roles can fill the gaps arising from the widening role scope. And the CEO will need self-awareness and humility to accept support and learn.



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Profile

The CEO For What's Next will emphasize a set of qualities and actions beyond the traditional norm.



What got you here won't get you there

From sweeping digitization to sustainability, a host of factors are profoundly re-shaping and amplifying the CEO role. Externally and internally, the CEO is under the spotlight 24/7. Inside the firm, to succeed in strategy-setting and implementation, talent attraction and retention, people must be engaged and federated. But those people may no longer buy in to the pseudo family. An inclusive and purposeful culture is a must. This all has implications for the profile — and source — of the CEO For What's Next.



This CEO may be a great CFO, but if the person is an introvert and not capable of communicating, of embracing the company with their personality and so on, that's a taxing thing. If you're not capable and it's very hard for you, then you need help."

Even a big brain cannot do it all

Given the sweeping change in the role, new routes to the 'destination CEO' need to be opened up, beyond the traditional avenues of COO/CFO. Coaching, training, or supplementing with other CXO roles will be vital to fill skill gaps. And the CEO will need self-awareness and humility to listen, learn, and accept support from others.

As one Amrop Managing Partner explains: "This CEO may be a great CFO, but if the person is an introvert and not capable of communicating, of embracing the company with their personality and so on, that's a taxing thing. If you're not capable, you need help. I think about some of these elected leaders; *great CFO, but can we really see this person leading the company?* Not sure."



An Amrop Board Member recalls a recent CEO appointment. The newcomer was unusually young for the size of company in play, with a background in finance and M&A. "That's the warehouse the person brings to the table, and it has served them really well. But they're also involved in large acquisitions and joint ventures. And the whole sector is going through such a business transformation."

Whilst the transformational mindset of the incoming CEO was a bonus, there were trade-offs. "I can see why they were attracted to someone like that. But then you've got gaps by virtue of that experience too. And so, it's how you bridge those gaps."

"The breadth of the role has increased, which obviously makes it even more tricky to master all those disciplines," says an Amrop Managing Partner.

Another Amrop Partner considers how some major multinationals have solved part of the challenge. In one case, "the CFO was promoted to CEO — a very quiet guy — and suddenly he had to step up and be a more public person. The company divided tasks so that other people started speaking a bit more, so that the new CEO didn't become so much the center even if he became a very public figure all of a sudden."

Could a shared CEO model help share the load?

"I think some companies are trying the model of three CEO's in one," says one Amrop Managing Partner. "But to be honest I don't know whether it will work."

He can see several potential reasons to install a shared CEO model. The company may have grown beyond manageable proportions: "so it's kind of like splitting the job into smaller-sized ones." The CEO may not yet have gained enough trust. Or power sharing may be needed.

However, "It's an exception right now. There may be a negative too, because it doesn't mean the players have enough accountability to be decisive."

Another Amrop Managing Partner is equally skeptical: "I think you need a single CEO responsibility. But of course, the CEO complemented by a strong management team is kind of job sharing anyway." Indeed: "it's more of a topic sharing than a top sharing."

However, one Amrop Partner has seen examples of CEO-sharing: "There are a few companies with co-CEO's, with the CFO being more on par, hired by the board. In private equity they talk about a troika — the Chairperson, CEO and CFO, typically. And that triangle is the epicenter of decision-making. So, if there's any major change in top leadership it's more on the board side and the chairperson becoming much more involved — closer to the business. Active ownership is becoming a thing."

If formal CEO role-sharing is probably a step too far for most organizations, the need to supplement the skill set of a single individual is very real and should affect the composition and functionality of top management teams.

An Amrop Board Member concludes: "Over the last number of years we've seen more and more CFO's moving into that CEO realm and doing it very effectively. And of course, depending on the discipline it would also talk to where their gaps might be and how they would need to bridge those gaps. It's a fascinating journey to see how that role has evolved."

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I think you need a single CEO responsibility. But of course, the CEO complemented by a strong management team is kind of job sharing anyway.”



When seeking the CEO For What's Next, avoid old recipes

"The CEO role is definitely getting tougher," says an Amrop Board Member. "It's a journey and everyone's trying to figure out what that means and looks like. Some companies are further advanced in embedding all those leadership characteristics that they're looking for in a CEO." Others are playing it safe: "let's get the person who is proven in our industry, who has that track record."

In a further Amrop thought leadership piece examining the CFO role we discover that its scope, too, has broadened. This 'new species' of CFO will remain in the running for CEO if (and only if) role holders embrace this wider set of characteristics.

Future CFOs must continue to resolve the paradox of wealth and health. The bottom line cannot be the sole imperative: "I've seen a number of CFOs become CEOs because of the value brought to the table by virtue of a financial mindset," the Amrop Board Member says. "But now it's far more strategic, broader." Whilst the CFO doesn't need to be deeply buried in running a major operation, he or she does require a general understanding and ability to talk the language of, for example, supply chain and operations.

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I would be surprised if in five years from now we didn't see some CHROs who are more generalist stepping into that kind of a role.

The CEO succession pool is changing shape. And the CHRO could be a contender

As CXO role domains generally become more well-rounded, could a wider range of profiles join today's CEO succession pipeline? "I do think that's a possibility," says the Amrop Board Member. "And maybe people who have grown up in sales or marketing — if they develop more of an operational mindset. But I see more a really well-rounded CHRO as being that next feeder pool, as long as they have that exposure. I would be surprised if in five years from now we didn't see some CHROs who are more generalist stepping into that kind of a role." After all, there is a notable precedent: "Years ago, CFOs were not necessarily the natural successor to a CEO."

The CHRO as the next CEO, then? Another Amrop Partner would welcome the development. "I would love that. The usual rise is still via the CFO or COO role, he says, even business development executives are unlikely to reach the CEO post today. "We haven't really seen that change yet. It's very rare still that the CHRO becomes the CEO. It happens — we saw a big software company who recently promoted the CHRO role to CEO. We saw it in a few places.

"So there could be a way for that to happen. Anyway, it would broaden the talent pool and we like that: bringing someone new with a different perspective into the CEO role. But I haven't seen it yet in any sort of magnitude. We haven't seen a shift where executives are being promoted from other functions than the traditional functions where CEOs are eminent."





The role has become much more multi-faceted. And that means that there are people who would have become CEO who suddenly won't."



This Amrop Managing Partner is also cautiously optimistic about the new sources of CEO: "They might come from all the CXO disciplines. It's not going to need to be the head of the biggest division or the CFO. I think if we look at culture, values, and sustainability then it could be any CXO who takes the role based on his or her ability to drive exactly these topics. And personal credibility. So, I think that's going to broaden."

On the other hand, the wider scope of the CEO role will eliminate some candidates who would have been high potentials under the old paradigm. "The role has become much more multi-faceted," says an Amrop Partner. "And that means that there are people who would have become CEO who suddenly won't."

Going borderless

Not only should companies look beyond traditional talent pools, but they also need to cross national borders. "CEOs must be neutral minded," says an Amrop Managing Partner. "If not, they are going to be very biased and can only work on a national or regional basis. A global CEO, whether in China, in the USA or Switzerland has to be globally minded and educated. Because so many people are making the wrong judgments."

Despite economic setbacks, China is today the world's second largest economy. We can expect a cross fertilization of CEO talent between China and the rest of the world. Whether high potentials on either side of the borders can perform in unfamiliar territory is questionable. Black boxes, even in the 21st century, need to be opened, and biases questioned.

One thing is clear: a CEO needs to have worked in several companies to cope with this Amrop Managing Partner's call for a 'multi dimensional, multi-cultural, multinational, multi-business experience.' He concludes: "unfortunately the one-company men and women are handicapped."



Fast food: the appetite for business transformation is shortening CEO tenure

CEO churn has become a persistent feature of business, whether in public companies, small and mid caps, or portfolio private equity firms, an Amrop Board Member confirms. “They are definitely staying less in my opinion. I think there is much more scrutiny of the performance of a CEO.”

The turbulence at the top has implications for CEO appointments. Candidates need to grasp just how quickly they will be expected to deliver. “When people come into the CEO role they’ve got to understand the tolerance of how long it’s going to take to achieve results. And sometimes it’s a turnaround situation, sometimes a transformation. So many organizations are going through transformations right now.”

An Amrop Partner agrees: “There’s less longevity of the CEO than there used to be. A company of a hundred years could easily have lived with only four to five CEOs, each having twenty-year tenures. You rarely see that anymore.

“Particularly with listed companies, you have a short spurt. Because as soon as the agenda changes completely then the profile of the board also changes and you see the CEO change.

“It doesn’t matter if the CEO has been very successful. If the agenda changes then they may very well say: ‘he or she was great as long as business was good and moving fast, and good with everything related to growth. Now we have to cut 30% of the workforce, optimizing our supply chains, downsizing, selling off non-essentials, we need a different profile. This is not the person to do that for us.’ ”

He ends on an interesting, even paradoxical insight. The fact that the CEO is expected to embody an organization has a flipside: “Because you iconize the CEO and align the CEO to purpose, when the purpose changes, it’s hard to keep the same person.”



As soon as the agenda changes completely then the profile of the board also changes and you see the CEO change. It doesn’t matter if the CEO has been very successful.”

In further Amrop articles, we will examine the evolution of the CFO, the COO, the CHRO and the CIO.





About Amrop

The Amrop Partnership is a premium leadership and executive search consultancy with 69 offices in 55 countries and a global team of more than 550 professionals.

We help our clients find and develop Leaders For What's Next.

Shaping sustainable success is our mission, craft and passion.

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