

THE DIGITALISED CEO

Dynamic Change at the Top Table



The digital revolution is blazing, challenging hierarchy, business models and modus operandi. AI, Big Data, Machine Learning and Business Intelligence are at the helm of enterprises large and small, propelling them to become more strategic, customer-oriented and competitive.

And businesses around the world are finding they need to search outside of their sectors to find the executive leaders with the requisite skills to drive the company forward. With this seismic shift, the CEO must reinvent what they mean to their business by offering an unwavering vision of the future.

How will they challenge the status quo in their business?

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION MEANS DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES

With data as the new currency, today's CEOs need the right senior talent in place to

interpret and determine the most interesting insights to fit fast-changing business models and generate the biggest investment returns.

This change in company culture, to become more data-driven, requires a change in mindset of current (or potential) leaders. Essentially, the senior leadership team needs to be open to the new opportunities data brings with it.

We know it is crucial to select CEOs with unwavering vision and versatile skill sets, and to surround them with the talent they need to successfully navigate the data jungle while actively driving change.

Nathália Molteni, Associate Partner Latin America, explains the scale of the shift: “To drive innovation and change, CEOs need to be prepared to take their organisations in entirely new directions. This requires a leadership mindset where CEOs are prepared to question long-held assumptions and beliefs – challenging the status quo if this is holding back progress,” she says.



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So, what exactly do these cutting-edge leaders look like, and what skill sets do they bring to the top table?

FACING THE NEW FRONTIER IN LEADERSHIP

One of the most important attributes CEOs can cultivate is agility – as a skill and as an approach to change integration. “Leaders must face the challenge of adjusting their actions to quickly respond to changing customer needs, shifting technology innovations, and the pace of change of competing firms. This means we look at their record in terms of the transformations they have implemented, their entrepreneurial spirit, with focus on their adaptability and technology background, at least as a starting point,” explains Molteni.

The CEO must be the face of change for the whole enterprise, challenging the tradition of the company versus today’s expectations of what a leader is (and should be). It is vital for them to be opportunity-driven, with a deep understanding of how an entrepreneurial mindset will help the company find new opportunities, specifically as the world becomes more customer-centric.

Critical thinking must be coupled with a firm understanding of what information is important to perform their job – and what is not. Sam Randall, Global Head of Technology Practice Asia Pacific, explains: “In this age of Big Data, where there is more information available for CEOs than ever before, a good leader understands what data should be looked at and acted upon, what should be used to inform a decision, and what data is unnecessary.”



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UPSKILLING POTENTIAL FOR PERFORMANCE

A successful organisation relies on more than methods and processes: investing in the right people is crucial. This can mean spreading the net far and wide, beyond industry borders. Employers and recruiters need to keep this top of mind.

“The ability to constantly learn and reinvent is not a given, but demands an open mind, humility, and self-awareness. Nimble, versatile leaders foster this environment to produce the best possible outcomes,” says Molteni.

According to a Deloitte survey of business leaders, 72% say upskilling is the best path to realising workers’ potential, while 63% report that new technology is driving hiring for specific skill sets.

CEOs must adeptly leverage tech and the new skills it brings into their organisation to their advantage, while trusting their personal knowledge and soft skills to guide them. “It is important that data remains a tool for CEOs



to include in their decision-making process, rather than falling into a ‘chasing the gauges’ reactive approach to moves in data,” says Randall.

MASTERING THE METRICS

From driving industry disruption to equipping their people for a new future of work, the modern CEO must understand how to monitor, measure and master success.

Randall explains that companies are hiring leaders that embody a strong business acumen and a clearly defined strategy, “accompanied by an understanding of what the key metrics of success will be. These form a central part of the management reporting and progress milestones, which inform the success of any new initiatives or strategic directions.”

“As more companies mature through their digital transformation journey, and as access to high-quality data increases, CEOs need to really understand the interactions their business is having with the ecosystem, the market, and their customers’ behaviour to improve their products and service effectiveness. Searching for this type of leader requires deep knowledge of the market and sector they come from,” adds Randall.

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF SKILLS

Leadership has never been so compelling nor complex, requiring CEOs to seek solutions from differing viewpoints, meaning recruiters are being called on to use all six senses to find the right fit for courageous, future-facing companies.



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Today's leaders must cultivate new mindsets and behaviours, upskill their teams to work in new ways and transform their organisations by integrating agility into the design and culture of the entire enterprise.

And their focus should be on rising consumer demand for always-on, performance-based, and integrated solutions. To keep up, CEOs need to continuously evaluate how digital disruption is changing customer behaviour, rethink their customer engagement models, and redesign employees' roles to form customer success (CS) capabilities – according to Deloitte research.

"Never has there been a more transformative time to be in business. It is only natural that the CEO profile of today looks different. Leaders need to combine a set of almost conflicting attributes: visionary and strategic yet execution-oriented; data-driven and analytical yet creative and innovative; entrepreneurial yet able to rapidly operate at scale on a global stage," says Molteni.



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

More than sectorial knowledge and network, adaptation and innovation can make or break the CEO in today's tech-torqued environment. Decision-makers and recruiters must look outside the traditional arena for new leadership that doesn't just follow, but drives, digital transformation.

- ▶ In today's world of rapid digital transformation, a successful CEO must embrace self-reinvention and upskilling
- ▶ Shrewd decision-makers must understand what information is important to perform their job – and what isn't
- ▶ Agile organisation relies on more than methods and processes: investing in the right people is crucial
- ▶ Savvy executive leaders must leverage tech to fulfil business needs, team ambitions and consumer demands