

Start with what – the first step in your quest to be CEO

This article outlines some of the early questions that I have observed successful CEO candidates answering. There are three main things a prospective CEO needs to answer.

They are:

1. What is the strategic context?
2. Why you would be the right person to lead the organisation in this context?
3. How would you address any shortfalls in qualities, skills and experience?

What is the Strategic Context?

What does the organisation need strategically right now and in the foreseeable future? What opportunities and challenges exist and why are they important? What changes are needed?

Specifically:

- What is the organisational problem or challenge that you believe will be solved or helped by you becoming CEO?
- What specific change are you advocating in the organisation? Is this at an industry level or just your organisation?
- Why is this a compelling need?
- What value is represented by your ideas and plans?
- Think of the three previous CEO's, each developing the organisation with a particular focus that built on their predecessor. How does your proposed focus as CEO build on and develop the organisation?

What sort of person is required as CEO?

What values, qualities, skills and experience are needed to achieve the strategic goals?

Specifically:

- Is your value set aligned with the organisation? How does it link and yet extend what is important to the organisation?
- What qualities do you need to develop? What qualities and habits do you need to downplay to work effectively at enterprise level?
- How experienced are you at enterprise level leadership? If experience is lacking, what qualities and skills would compensate for this?

How would you address any shortfalls in qualities, skills and experience?

From our list of 97 questions asked of CEO's globally in interviews, here are the main areas. No prospective CEO candidate is perfect or has the entire skill set and experience base covered.

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The question is what the context demands from the list below and what would you do about addressing those areas where there are gaps.

1. Experience in managing regulator and stakeholder relationships
2. Determining and working with governance and corporate processes
3. Developing/maintaining the right culture at enterprise level
4. Management and development of the organisation's reputation
5. Assessment of performance and cost base – strengths, weaknesses
6. Development of strategy and vision at enterprise level
7. Analysis of risk culture, exposure and processes
8. Plans for talent retention and compensation
9. Views on organisation structure: synergies and efficiencies
10. Objectivity about the qualities and behaviours that have got you to CEO and how to adapt those for enterprise level leadership.

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