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FIVE C'S FOR CEOS

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Define CEO. The officer who oversees operations? A liaison between a company and its board? While accurate, these descriptions miss a critical aspect of the job. As the senior leader of an organization, the CEO is a symbol of what the company stands for – not just for its stakeholders, but for every person who comes in contact with the company.

Many CEOs neglect the symbolic impact of their role. They may even unwittingly embody the stereotypical “corporate suit” that the C in their title stands for. CEOs can strengthen their influence by redefining that C in a more powerful way. Here are some suggestions.

- **Clarity** – Everyone in an organization follows the CEO’s lead. CEOs must be crystal clear about his or her vision; ambiguity confuses people and leads to a lack of focus.
- **Consistency** – An unpredictable leader gets unpredictable results. CEOs must be vigilant about their expectations, staying consistent and on target with their message.
- **Communication** – Significant time and talent is wasted trying to “figure out” what a CEO wants. Continuous communication with a clear, consistent message streamlines organizational efforts.
- **Consideration** – An organization isn’t made up of systems and strategies; it’s made up of people - who are affected by every decision the CEO makes. Considering the impact of those decisions on real people can lead to a more devoted workforce.
- **Community** – The CEO is the symbol of an organization for the people within and outside the company. CEOs can increase their effectiveness by taking into account every person, including shareholders, board members, employees, vendors, contractors, suppliers, clients, community members and more.

Unfortunately, the word “corporate” has taken on a stodgy reputation in an age of change. CEOs can reinvigorate their role by focusing more on their leadership than on their position – that is, by thinking not just about the things they do, but the way they do them. Incorporating the five C’s allows every CEO to gain the additional employee respect and commitment that help a company excel.



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