

How CEOs Uniquely Drive Impact

A little more than a decade ago, we launched BCG's CEO Advisory, offering customized individual programs as well as peer learning forums for current and prospective chief executives. Since then, we've had conversations with thousands of CEOs, working closely with them through business and personal challenges.

One of the biggest questions we get from CEOs is how they can direct their energy to achieve the greatest impact. We answer that question in a recent article, distilling our latest thinking on the topic into [six critical moves that a CEO should make](#):

Create purpose and clarity. A strong sense of purpose fuels motivation and engagement across the organization, and the CEO should champion it not just in high-level communications but in everyday decisions.

A company's purpose is also the foundation for strategy, which the CEO must articulate clearly and specifically. A well-crafted strategic narrative links purpose to ambition, priorities, and measurable goals, along with the capabilities and culture required to succeed.

Create focus. In a world of limitless distractions, CEOs need to simplify. Deborah Ellinger, a seasoned CEO, uses a "Now, Next, Never" framework to set priorities.

Saying yes to too much dilutes impact. Creating focus means having the discipline to say no to initiatives that may seem attractive but don't align with core objectives. It's about ensuring the entire

organization is channeling its energy toward high-impact areas rather than getting bogged down by less strategic pursuits.

Create capacity. In today's world, enabling an organization to learn, perform, and evolve requires having the right people *and* the right technology. The CEO must ensure that both are in place, increasing investments in employee upskilling to capture the full benefits of AI-driven workflows.

The CEO sets the tone here. By actively pursuing new technologies alongside employee development—and addressing workforce issues such as anxiety, disengagement, and fatigue—the organization has both the ability and the motivation to succeed.

Create drive. Organizations move at the pace of their people. Stability matters, but so do inspiration and energy. Employees need to see that their CEO has enormous ambition in shaping the future. Storytelling, transparency, a culture of accountability, and sometimes a sense of urgency can all reinforce that belief.

It's critical for CEOs to actively engage with employees, recognize contributions, and set an example of resilience and commitment. By doing so, they instill a collective drive that transforms aspirations into tangible achievements, allowing the organization to go further faster.

Reduce complexity. The CEO can focus the company's energy where it matters most. This is about making big, bold moves without unnecessary baggage—and not letting the complex reality of the world overly complicate the organization.

This might mean cutting out products that aren't core to the strategy or competitive advantage, or realigning the organization around strategic priorities.

Reduce friction. Constructive tension can lead to innovation. In fact, it can be where the best ideas emerge. But unproductive silos, misalignment, and personal grievances slow progress. CEOs must surface and address these frictions head-on, ensuring there's alignment at the top that cascades through the organization.

How? It takes the nurturing of an open environment where candid discussions can happen without fear of conflict. Strong leaders foster collaboration by building trust, promoting shared accountability, and ensuring that internal disputes do not derail momentum.

These moves aren't just theoretical. I've seen them play out and make a difference, whether at the big turning points in the life of an organization or during everyday leadership decisions. And since we know this world isn't getting any simpler, CEOs must work hard to be intentional about where they direct their energy.

Most CEOs know what they *can* do. What matters most is knowing what they *should* do. There will always be more to tackle, more to improve, more to fix. The goal is focus where it's possible to create outsize impact, empower teams to lead, and make the calls that will shape the organization's purpose, drive, and focus for years to come.

Until next time,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rich".

Rich Lesser
Global Chair

Further Insights



Moves Only a CEO Can Make

CEOs need a clear understanding of how they can uniquely contribute to the long-term success of their organizations.

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