EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO MARKET TO CEOs
Getting the C-Suite to hear your message is a formidable challenge for any B2B marketer. But if you think all members of the executive team think alike, you’re mistaken. CEOs have different priorities than CIOs who don’t worry about the same things as CFOs. There’s a real opportunity to beat the competition to the table if you understand which executive will be eager to hear your story and what vernacular you should use to tell that story.

In this ebook, we’ll go inside the minds of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) so you can tune your messaging to effectively target this key audience.
Chief. Head honcho. The big boss. These are the terms that might come to mind when you think of the CEO. But it’s a common misconception that CEOs can do whatever they want since they wield the most power. Stereotypes aside, CEOs must work tirelessly to meet the needs of many different groups including employees, customers, suppliers, investors, and more. The CEO is responsible for daily, short-term, and long-term management decisions and while he can choose to delegate a few jobs—many items fall squarely on the CEO’s shoulders.

If your product or service will impact the strategy and direction of a company, you’ll have to win over the CEO. Their job is to ensure that the company culture, senior executive team, and financial resources are focused on the company’s priorities. And they won’t have time for anything that distracts the company from reaching its goals.

“When I became CEO in 2011, I wanted to tackle the company’s purpose: Why are we doing what we’re doing? What is our higher order, or the purpose for our work? Together with the leadership team, we focused on developing a purpose-driven strategy that would propel the company going forward, given all the changes and volatility in the world.”

Denise Morrison, CEO, Campbell Soup Company
Source: PwC
The average CEO is aged 55, came from finance or operations, works with high intensity, and shows devotion to their brand.

92% of CEOs are men.
Average tenure of a CEO is about 9 years.
CEOs work an average of 57.8 hours each week.

Source: CEO
To fully appreciate the mindset of a CEO, you must first understand his priorities, goals, and needs. As the top dog, CEOs must lead the company’s direction, make decisions, and seek input from a variety of stakeholders.

The following people are important to the CEO:

- Board of directors
- Supply chain partners
- Customers
- Employees
- Investors/shareholders
- Society at large
- Business itself

When crafting your story, consider how your brand can improve the CEO’s standing with these stakeholders.
Among the duties of the CEO, these five are fundamental:

**Visionary**
Determining and communicating the strategic direction of the company.

**Culture builder**
Ensuring that company values are applied across all departments, from top to bottom.

**Resource allocator**
Ensuring the company has the people and capital needed to drive business forward and balancing current performance and future investment.

**Lead performer**
Understanding what stakeholders expect from the company and delivering results.

**Decision maker**
Making the final call and taking action on a variety of issues—from new products and hiring to financial and legal decisions.

*Sources: Entrepreneur, Harvard Business Review*
The average age of CEOs is declining. What does that mean for companies? Younger CEOs tend to be more energetic, innovative, and willing to take certain risks. They also tend to be more tech-focused and social. In fact, twice as many CEOs under 50 find social media very valuable. Good news in an age of digital business transformation.

Bottom line: No matter their age, successful CEOs have a clear picture where their company is heading and the role that employees play in meeting company goals.

Source: Inc.

84% of CEOs said that they expect digital change to bring higher profit margins.

Gartner
According to a recent PwC report, the top three priorities for CEOs are:

1. Growth
2. Customers
3. Workforce

Other priorities that have become more critical over the last few years:

- Multichannel, e-commerce, and m-commerce
- Customer engagement management
- Digital marketing
- Internet of Things
- Risk management

Sources: PwC, Gartner

TIP

By connecting the dots between your brand and one or more of these priorities, you can more effectively make inroads with CEOs.
“If you count all the time I’m focused on our mission, that’s basically my whole life, (...) I spend most of my time thinking about how to connect the world and serve our community better, but a lot of that time isn’t in our office or meeting with people or doing what you’d call real work, (...) I take a lot of time just to read and think about things by myself.”

Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and CEO, Facebook
Source: CNN
CEOs are busy individuals. Here’s what their day might look like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:30 – 7:30</td>
<td>Work at home; read industry news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 – 8:30</td>
<td>Commute to work; talk on phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 10:30</td>
<td>Meetings with staff, board, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 11:30</td>
<td>Talk to customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 12:00</td>
<td>Selling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 – 2:30</td>
<td>Read and respond to high priority emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 – 3:30</td>
<td>Talk to employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 – 4:30</td>
<td>Strategy and planning session with CFO and CIO</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:30 – 5:30</td>
<td>Review and analyze reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 – 6:00</td>
<td>Review strategy notes and create action items for tomorrow</td>
</tr>
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*Many CEOs also spend about an hour working at home after dinner.

Source: Inc.
The CEO thinks differently than his counterparts. Some tips to make a connection:

**Prioritize your thinking**
CEOs are busy people. Start with the bottom line first and fill in the details when asked. Explain how your idea fits with the company vision and supports the values and culture.

**Be confident**
CEOs want results and won’t be impressed if you sound wishy-washy. Make sure you’ve thought out your plan and be prepared to cover the pros and cons of your idea.

**Measure what’s important**
CEOs like numbers and concrete evidence. But they don’t want to waste time measuring things that don’t matter. Stick to the important project milestones and metrics.

**Acknowledge improvements**
CEOs know that everything has some element of risk. Don’t pretend everything is good all the time. Take accountability for the good and bad and discuss when course corrections are needed.

Source: Washington Business Journal
It’s no surprise that CEOs are important players. They are the visionary leaders for the company—and on the hook for company growth and performance. CEOs have a vested interest in effectively communicating that vision with employees and ensuring company values and culture are always supported. Yet many marketers avoid talking directly to the CEO. Using this guide is a helpful first step in making a valuable connection with this important C-level player.

Need help telling your brand story? Want to develop content that helps C-level executives find you?

Give us a holler.

503.946.6463

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