**CFO to CEO: 4 Tips for Making the Move**

For many CFOs, the aspirational next step along their career path is becoming CEO.

It appears many financial leaders are interested in rising to the CEO role: In a [Robert Half Management Resources survey](https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/management-tips/eyeing-the-top-spot?utm_source=IMA&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Content_Sharing), nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of CFOs said they were either somewhat or very motivated to be the CEO at their company.

It’s only natural for CFOs to aspire to the top leadership job. Excellent fiscal management skills, ideas for improving business efficiency and [controlling costs](https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/management-tips/4-cost-control-measures-you-cant-live-without?utm_source=IMA&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Content_Sharing), broad and deep economic and business awareness, and experience with investor stakeholder management are just some of the attributes that these executives can bring to the CEO position.

CFOs do face stiff competition for the CEO’s chair. An executive vice president, the chief operating officer (COO) and the chief information officer (CIO) are often contenders, for example. There may be external candidates in the mix as well.

So, if you’re a senior-level financial executive who’s eager to take the helm at your company someday, it’s wise to take steps now that can help improve your odds of being considered for the CEO role when the opportunity arises:

**1. Deepen relationships throughout the organization**

CFOs are expected to weigh in on a wide range of business matters that their organizations face, from compliance and regulatory issues to internal controls and taxes to major transactions and other significant changes. And in recent years, [most CFOs have seen their influence expand](https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/salaries-and-skills/cfos-influence-continues-to-expand?utm_source=IMA&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Content_Sharing) beyond the accounting and finance function. However, those in the position of selecting the next CEO may not realize how well-rounded the company’s CFO may be.

Step up your efforts to build a solid understanding of how other teams in the business operate on a day-to-day basis and look for opportunities to help support and collaborate with other top executives in the organization. For example, [in many companies today the CFO and CIO work together regularly](https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/management-tips/5-ways-cfo-and-cio-collaboration-can-benefit-the-business?utm_source=IMA&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Content_Sharing) to make decisions about technology investments and manage risks.

Strengthening your relationship with the firm’s general counsel can be beneficial, too. You can deepen your knowledge of issues such as intellectual property, contracts and business litigation — matters that any CEO should understand well.

**2. Prepare your successor**

Being indispensable is not necessarily a positive thing when you’re aiming for the next rung on the career ladder. High-performing CFOs could be skipped over for a promotion simply because the organization feels it can’t do without them in their current role.

One way to neutralize this obstacle is to [groom a successor](https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/management-tips/no-understudies-for-star-performers-time-for-a-succession-plan?utm_source=IMA&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Content_Sharing), which will help to ensure continuity in the finance department. (It’s important to be proactive about this process, anyway, because it can take time to find and prepare a promising candidate for a leadership role.)

**3. Network with other executives**

The more industry leaders you have within your circle, the more you’ll learn about accepting the CEO’s mantle. The CEO’s responsibilities are diverse — and heavy. To handle them adeptly requires not only a thorough understanding of the entire organization, as explained earlier, but also the landscape in which the business operates. That includes the company’s industry and key markets, as well as any dynamics — economic, regulatory, technological and more — that could impact its operations.

Successful senior executives stay informed, and keep pace with change, by networking with their peers. Take time to attend or contribute to industry events, get involved with relevant professional organizations, and, of course, cultivate a strong professional network and raise your visibility online by participating in social media outlets such as LinkedIn and Twitter. More than half of CFOs (54 percent) recently interviewed for a survey by our company said [staying on top of professional and industry trends is a key benefit](https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/job-market/cfo-social-media-activity?utm_source=IMA&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Content_Sharing) of using these platforms.

Consultants can also provide valuable insights and best practices that they’ve acquired through their work for various organizations. So, building a rapport with the consultants your business engages, and inviting them into your professional network, can be well worth the effort.

**4. Take on consulting positions**

If the CEO job in your organization is not likely to be available anytime soon, or you just want to explore other career options, you might want to consider taking the consulting path, too.

[Working as an interim CFO](https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/job-market/working-as-an-interim-cfo-tips-for-success-from-an-expert?utm_source=IMA&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=Content_Sharing) is an opportunity to take on new professional challenges, acquire more knowledge, hone existing skills and expand your network. Your experiences as a consultant could also open the door to new career opportunities. For instance, the exposure and relationships you gain could make you a top-of-mind candidate for a CEO role in the future.

Not every CFO wants to be their company’s leader. But if you’re one who does, it’s important to begin laying the foundation now that can help you reach that top role when the time is right.

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