
DEVELOPING A C-SUITE SELECTION FRAMEWORK

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PREFACE

In this article, we examine:

- *The benefits and challenges of evaluating candidates using "culture fit"*
- *Universal factors that impact C-suite candidate selection*
- *An example C-suite talent selection framework that we would recommend prior to conducting an executive selection process*

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Massey Henry is a leading Canadian executive search and advisory firm, offering solutions to today's complex executive recruitment challenges, with a focus on the financial services sector.

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FROM OUR NETWORK



C-suite selection in financial services requires a highly strategic approach. Having worked extensively with Michael Henry to build our executive leadership team at FSRA, I have seen the value of clearly defining a talent selection framework, and the positive impact this process has on attracting high-calibre candidates and building an effective team.



Mark White

Chief Executive Officer
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INTRODUCTION

The leadership selection, assessment, and evaluation process within financial services organizations can often be monopolized by considerations around culture fit, burning platform issues, and “must have” candidate requirements.

How Important is “Culture Fit”?

Culture fit is always a critical component of finding good leaders, but can sometimes produce more questions than answers. This may include the need for further clarity around areas such as:

- *How is culture defined within an organizational context?*
- *Does the executive leadership team share the same understanding of the organization's culture and what constitutes a 'good' culture fit?*

Some organizations demonstrate close alignment on how their culture is understood by investing substantial time to reinforce fundamental principles from the top down.

More frequently, however, **when pressed about an organization's culture, we often hear behavioral checklists rather than a coherent statement of cultural tenets.** Often, there is a lack of a shared understanding regarding fundamental organizational issues by those tasked with critical talent management decisions at the senior executive level.

In our experience identifying and evaluating C-suite leaders across financial services, we have found that determining an organization's 'point of view' on key strategic factors is equally as important as defining 'culture fit'.

This 'point of view' can then be translated to candidates as they evaluate the opportunity, and can also be leveraged by the designated search committee and/or board throughout the duration of a C-suite candidate selection process.

UNIVERSAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT C-SUITE CANDIDATE SELECTION

The following are some of the critical areas that need to be defined and given close consideration in advance of a C-suite selection process:



For example, conducting a **defined stakeholder consultation process** before an executive search begins is one way of establishing a baseline or framework for candidate evaluation.

This consultation process — which has the added benefit of making key stakeholders feel more included in the process — will provide clarity around a number of key considerations. Items covered during these consultations can include stakeholders' perspectives on the organization's core values, strategy, first-year deliverables, as well as success factors for the executive role.



Did you know?

Massey Henry previously examined the importance of Stakeholder Consultations in our thought leadership report, "[*CEO Selection in Financial Services*](#)".



Candidates often share with executive search firms like ours that they receive inconsistent answers from leadership teams regarding organizational priorities, future direction, culture, and decision-making. Our experience suggests that taking a comprehensive look at these factors can yield improved candidate selection results.

In this context, taking a comprehensive look means establishing a leadership consensus around a series of important considerations to the business — there are no right or wrong factors. A well-aligned leadership team should be able to identify the most important factors and quickly determine a collective point of view for each. This process can take anywhere from a few hours to days, but the return on investment is significant.

This exercise also builds confidence for external recruiters and/or internal interviewers, enabling them to relay questions regarding a candidate's experience and ability to function within the organization's operating model and culture. As well, they can provide consistent and aligned answers to highly sought-after executive candidates regarding the organization's strategy, operations, and culture.

Developing such a consensus framework prior to the interview process is beneficial to the organization and often results in stronger executive candidates.

On the next page, we have provided an example of a **"C-suite talent selection framework"** that we would recommend for consideration prior to conducting an executive selection process.



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| Key Factor | Organizational Considerations | C-Suite Candidate Implications |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ What is our business strategy? ✔ How did we develop the strategy? ✔ How have we adapted over time? ✔ Is there likely to be a significant change to the current strategy? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience developing and implementing strategies ● Learnings from participating in strategy development and implementation processes |
| Operating Model | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ How are we organized? ✔ What is our organizational structure? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hierarchical ○ Functional ○ Agile | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience with different operating models ● Learnings about operating models and the pros and cons of different approaches |
| Decision Making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ How do we make decisions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hierarchical ○ Collaborative ○ Functional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Experience with decision-making ● Preference for decision-making approaches |
| People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ How does the organization identify, select, develop and promote talent? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are we proactive or reactive? ○ What are the gaps? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Breadth of management experience ● Management style and interpersonal skills ● Approach to selecting and managing talent |
| Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ How vital is technology to our business? ✔ What is our stage of technology evolution? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enabler ○ Adapter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding and role in working with technology ● Technology implementation or transformation experience ● Learnings based on experience to date |

The factors outlined above will be unique to each organization. This type of framework aims to align the executive team — often the core interview group for executive hires — and create a structured process for candidate evaluation at the C-suite level. It also enables a more focused discussion of the candidate's experiences relative to organizational requirements.

THE BOTTOM LINE

We encourage executive leadership teams and boards to invest time in developing a **C-suite talent selection framework** that speaks to the key cultural, operational, and strategic factors that define the organization. This process will enable those involved in executive talent selection to discuss these factors with C-suite candidates, and most importantly, interview and assess executive candidates within the aligned context.





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