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Effective Leadership Strategies for COOs

As a c-level executive, the Chief Operating Officer is expected to be involved in the day-to-day operations of a company. Companies large and small have a chief operations officers in some capacity. While established companies will have a COO position, emerging entrepreneurs assume the position along with other C-Level posts (e.g. chief, marketing, financial and executive officer). When all is said and done, the COO has a significant impact on how the company is run, because he/she is involved in so many different areas of the company.

The following advice for would-be and established COO incorporates input from professionals who are current and former C-Level executives themselves, as well as fellow business experts, from various LinkedIn forums.

Decision Maker

The COO carries the responsibility of reporting to the COO and board of directors regarding every area of operation, and making key decisions for all areas of the company. The COO is described as the “daily communicator,” and should have a constant and deep understanding of how each department functions on a daily basis, communicating with managers and directors on every level. In addition, the COO works and communicates with investors and customers as well. As such, A COO should be well versed in the vocabulary of all aspects of business.

Internal Leader

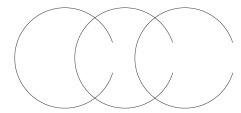
While the COO is the face of the company to the outside world, the COO is the face of internal operations and leadership. He or she is responsible for making the internal departments work in harmony, while carrying out plans across a variety of functions and making sure they flow together and are implemented correctly. The COO should be the point person for every department, while also being available to give guidance and direction for all internal activities.

“A CEO sets the vision / tone / strategic direction, while the COO is responsible for internal implementation of that vision. Of course they all work very closely together, but one is focused on external factors (shareholders, customers, etc.) while the other is more focused on internal factors (staff, budget, structure, operations, etc.)”

Internal Strategic Planner

With the direction and vision set by the CEO, the COO is responsible for implementing initiatives that are in-line with that vision. A COO may also be in charge of planning his successor or those of other C-Level colleagues, strategies for more efficient operations, meeting marketing goals, and short-range financial situations.

A COO wears many hats, being both the face and the voice of company personnel. The internal operations are what ultimately bind the company together, to keep it going, and are why the office of COO is so critical. If a company is failing to maintain everyday internal operations, the external operations are destined to fail as well. The COO should constantly strive to increase the productivity of his or her employees, ultimately driving up profits as well. In times when the economy is challenged, a COO should also have a hand in ways to cut costs while still maintaining efficiency and productivity across the board.



What I enjoyed most about the COO role was the opportunity to help shape the entire organization by using cross-functional teams and projects to infuse the various departments with the vision and then watch as everyone ‘boarded the boat and began to paddle in the same direction.’”

Unfortunately, more and more businesses are dropping the COO title from their roster. In response to a rollercoaster economy, big companies are opting for a more hands-on CEO's who can do the job of the COO as well. Still, experts stress that even without the position, the work still needs to be done, and the CEO may not be able to handle everything down the road.

Where there is the position for a COO, he or she should be an inspirational and personable leader for all employees, as well as a familiar face throughout the company. While maintaining constant contact throughout all internal channels and departments on a daily basis, the COO can build cohesiveness and unity, strengthen the work ethic of the employees, provide leadership and instruction, and play a large part in the building of a quality business for customers and investors alike.

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