

Want to become a CEO? Here's how to prepare

 indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/want-to-be-a-ceo/1/1075091.html

A CEO's job is much coveted one.

However, now with the changed ecosystem, though even today a CEO's job is coveted, some sheen has worn off.

Today, we do come across candidates who think that a job of a CEO is thankless and therefore not worth aspiring for. However, if you are really keen to leave a legacy or look at creating maximum impact that you would like posterity to remember you for, then the job of a CEO is something you should strive for.

It is critical to know what you will encounter when you become a CEO.

CEO ecosystem:

- A CEO is not all powerful as is commonly believed. People generally think that a CEO enjoys unlimited power. The fact is that there are boundaries, checks and balances on the power of a CEO and a CEO certainly does not get a blank cheque
- A CEO of a multinational has to take the Regional Head along in a big organisation and often keep the equations going and give confidence to the Global CEO that the company is headed in the right direction
- CEO has to spend a lot of time in managing different power centres in different geographies and must be prepared about decision making being a trifle slow and painstaking
- In an Indian corporate though decision making is much faster with proximity to the top bosses, however one must be prepared that information about what is happening in the company will reach much faster so therefore it is beneficial to be proactive with sharp focus on business
- As the CEO is perpetually under a microscope with every decision being dissected, one has to be prepared to face criticism sometimes fair and often enough not so fair as well. There are bound to be some bad decisions so one should take the criticism with a smile and ideally learn to laugh at himself/herself.

CEO is lonely:

As the complexity of the job has multiplied as have the expectations, one must not take failures to heart and instead just learn from them as no one is infallible. On the top of this as the job of a CEO is lonely, it is often difficult for a CEO to get an objective opinion from internal stakeholders as there is a tendency in them to give an opinion which is coloured and safeguards their interests.

Therefore, often it becomes important to back his or her instincts as a lot of decisions in today's complex world become intuitive one way or another with limited time and data to use.

Therefore, not everyone enjoys the job after they have become a CEO.

Further, it may be prudent for to introspect and then come to a conclusion on whether you are indeed a CEO material and where your DNA is compatible to a life of a CEO and its ecosystem.

How to prepare yourself to be a CEO:

The following may be helpful in getting you to the coveted position as well as ensuring your success.

1. Get diverse experience: Strategise and strive to get as diverse an experience as possible. Endeavour to get cross functional, cross industry and diverse geography exposure. Good to volunteer and take additional responsibilities in the organization as they will pay you rich dividends later.

Cultivate relationships with other functional heads and try and understand their challenges and learn from their experience. In a simpler language, be hungry to learn not only about your job but also focus on the big picture from an organizational standpoint.

2. Introspect and learn and unlearn: We must first introspect and get feedback from others on a regular basis as it is important to course correct on a continuous basis.

Ensuring quality thinking time for one is important as often enough when we introspect we will realise that some of our actions, mindsets as well as decisions were suboptimal. As the speed and magnitude of change is increasing by the day it is imperative to realize that the shelf life of all our ideas as well strategies is decreasing by the day.

3. Get a mentor/coach:

A great mentor can be life changing for you. Frankly, everyone at senior level in an organization needs one. It can only add value to your strategic career/life decisions. It helps if the coach/mentor understands our ecosystem and helps you to see the big picture more clearly.

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