

Center for **Executive Succession**

2018
HR@MOORE
Survey of Chief HR Officers



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The Chief Human Resource Officer:

Exploring the Counselor, Confidante, and Coach Role

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2018 HR@Moore Survey of Chief HR Officers again tracked how CHROs spend their time in seven roles identified when the survey was first developed. The results indicate minor changes, with CHROs spending more time with boards of directors and slightly less time as counselor/confidante/coach.

In terms of the Chief Executive Officer's agenda for HR, talent still tops the list by a significant margin. However, for the first time in the survey's history, culture has risen to the second most popular agenda items, indicating a qualitative change in the requirements of CHROs.

While *quantitative* data suggests that executive leadership team members (ELT) work effectively with one another, the *qualitative* data on how CHROs coach ELT members suggests that this is not accidental. They describe the ways in which they work to help ELT members to build relationships, they facilitate the flow of information from the CEO to the ELT and vice versa, they promote organizational effectiveness both for the corporation and for each ELT's business, and they conduct personal coaching with ELT members.

CHROs report that CEOs engage in relatively healthy decision making processes, but then also describe how they help to facilitate this. CHROs work to ensure that CEOs have all the relevant information in front of them, try to make sure CEOs hear the viewpoints of the right people, and help them to recognize unintended consequences of their decisions, particularly on stakeholders such as employees and customers.

Finally, consistent with past survey results, CHRO roles continue to be filled predominantly with outside hires rather than internal promotions.

OVERVIEW

For almost 10 years the HR@Moore Survey of Chief HR Officers has tracked how CHRO's spend their time in a variety of roles, and occasionally delved deeper into understanding how they perform a more specific aspect of their job. The 2018 survey again asked CHROs to report how much of their time they spent in 7 specific roles, but then asked more specific questions about how they coach the CEO and ELT, and how they help the CEO to make better decisions. This report describes these results.



THE CHRO ROLE

Based on interviews with CHROs conducted in 2008, we identified 7 roles that comprise the overall job of the CHRO. These include: Talent Architect, Strategic Advisor, Counselor/Confidante/Coach, Leader of the HR Function, Liaison to the Board, Workforce Sensor, and Representative of the Firm. These areas are defined in **Table 1**.

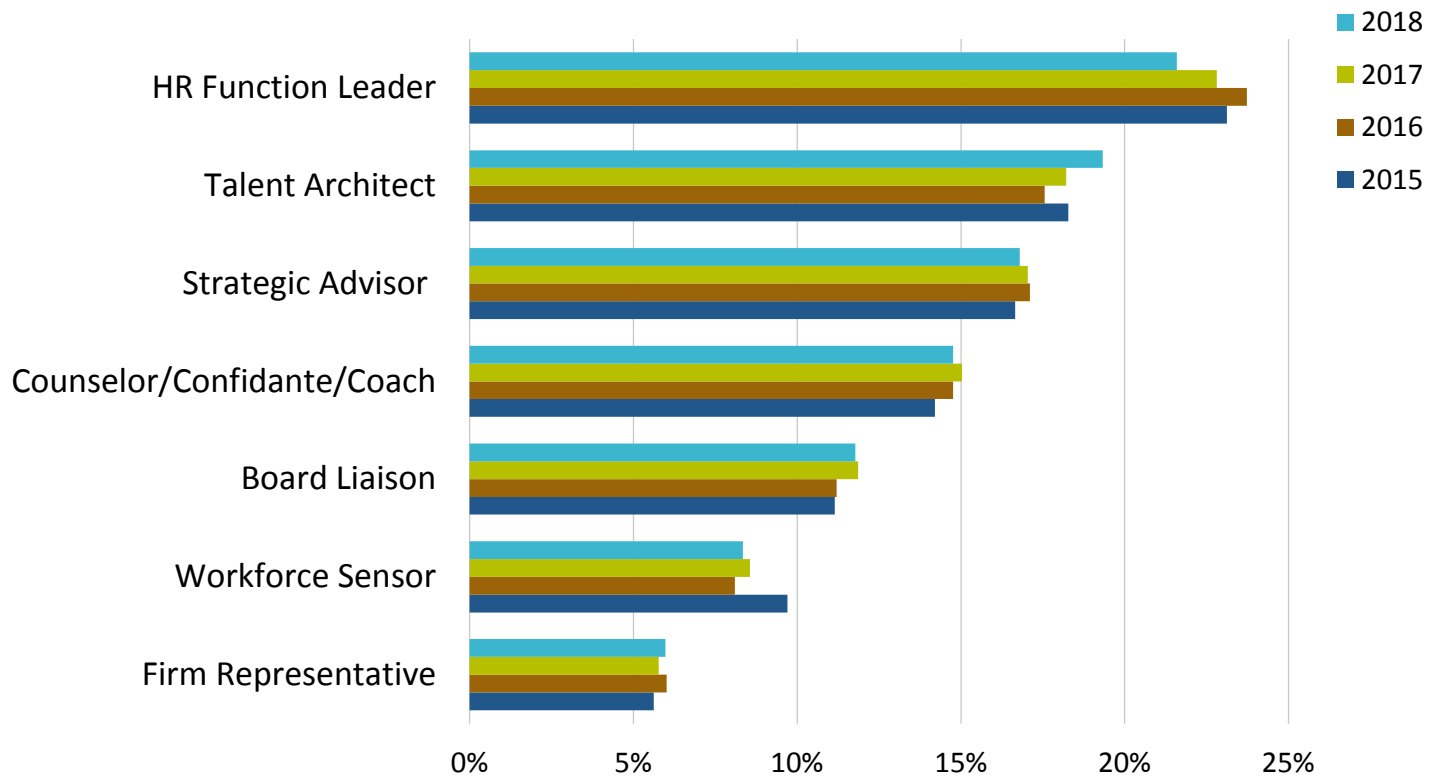
- 1 HR FUNCTION LEADER
- 2 TALENT ARCHITECT
- 3 STRATEGIC ADVISOR

TABLE 1. THE CHRO ROLE	
ROLE	DEFINITION
Strategic Advisor to the Executive Team	Activities focused specifically on the formulation and implementation of the firm's strategy.
Counselor/Confidante/Coach to the Executive Team	Activities focused on counseling or coaching executive team members or resolving interpersonal or political conflicts among team members
Liaison to the Board of Directors	Preparation for Board meetings, phone calls with Board members, attendance at Board meetings.
Talent Strategist/Architect	Activities focused on building and identifying the human capital critical to the present and future of the firm.
Leader of the HR Function	Working with HR team members regarding the development, design and delivery of HR services.
Workforce Sensor	Activities focused on identifying workforce engagement/morale issues or concerns and building employee engagement.
Representative of the Firm	Activities with external stakeholders, such as government agencies, investor groups, proxy advisory firms, professional societies, etc.

As in past years, survey respondents were asked to report how much time they spent in each role, and were given the option of specifying an “other” category if the roles listed did not adequately represent all important aspects of their job. These results are depicted in **Figure 1**, and show the time spent compared to the last 3 years of the survey (2015-2017). As can be seen in this figure, Leader of the HR function continues to

occupy the most time of CHROs at 22%. CHROs spend the second-most time as Talent Strategist/Architect at 19%, followed by Strategic Advisor (16%), Counselor/Confidante/Coach (15%) and Liaison to the Board (12%). Comparing these results over time shows relative consistency. However, there seems to be a slight decrease in time spent as Leader of the HR Function and an increase in time spent as Talent Architect.

Figure 1
Time Spent in CHRO Roles



THE CEO'S AGENDA FOR HR

Consistent with past surveys, we again asked CHROs about the top 2-3 items on the CEO's agenda for HR. Not surprisingly talent again topped the list, being mentioned 97 times across the 126 CHROs responding to the question. Also note that in some cases talent was listed as the #1, #2, and #3 items (e.g., Talent attraction, talent development, talent retention).

Interestingly, culture has begun to emerge as the second most important item CEOs have for HR's agenda. This year culture, in some form, was listed 53 times. See **Figure 2**. In many cases CHROs simply stated "culture," but a number more specifically

wrote things like "creating a performance culture," "culture of inclusion," "culture for talent" or "culture and engagement." This is consistent with a recent white paper produced by Gartner/CEB titled "Becoming a World-Class CHRO: A Practitioner-Defined and CEO-Validated Model." While many of the aspects of the role overlap with the roles we have been assessing for years, they suggest "Driver of the Culture and Purpose" as one of their five roles. We note that when we began this research, culture was not as high on CEOs agendas, and thus, CHROs did not list it as an important component of their jobs. However, as CEOs and boards have increasingly recognized the linkage

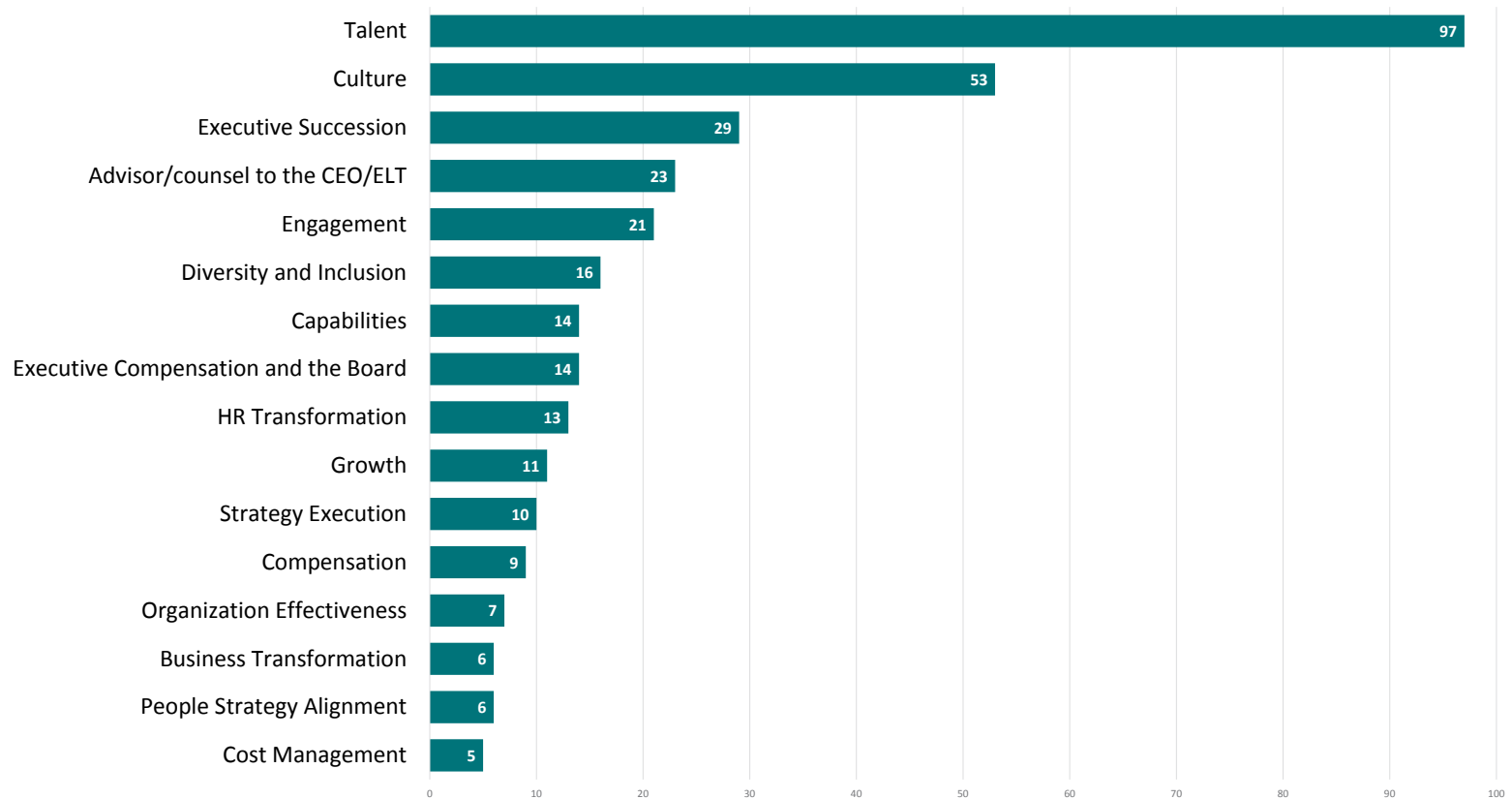
“**...culture has begun to emerge as the second most important item CEOs have for HR's agenda.**”

between culture and firm success, this is becoming a critical part of how CHROs contribute to the organization.

Further down the list were items such as “executive succession” (29), “advisor/counsel to the CEO/ELT” (23) and “engagement”

(21). “Diversity and Inclusion” (16), “executive compensation and the board” (14), “capabilities” (14), “HR transformation” (13) “Growth” (11), and “Strategy execution” (10) also were mentioned by 10 or more CHROs.

Figure 2
CEO's Agenda for HR



COUNSELING AND COACHING THE ELT

This year's survey aimed at uncovering some of the ways that CHROs impact the organization's effectiveness through their coaching of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the CEO. We first asked CHROs to report the extent to which their ELT members exhibited positive team dynamics such as trust, working together, cooperating, depending on one another, standing up for one another, and regarding one another as friends. As can be seen in **Figure 3**, CHROs tended to report high levels of cooperation, mutual dependence, trust, teamwork, and mutual support. However, respondents also indicated that these positive work relationships do not necessarily spill over into personal friendships.

While these results may suggest that ELTs are clearly high functioning, the areas where CHROs coach them suggest that this functioning does not necessarily emerge naturally. In reading through all the responses, a number of different coaching/counseling areas emerged. Some revolve around the role of CHROs in helping to build ELT effectiveness, and others around helping individual leaders maximize their own success. Some examples of the actual responses are provided in **Table 2**.

Relationship Building. The first set of areas that CHROs discussed was their role in helping to build relationships among the ELT members. This has both positive and negative components.

Figure 3
ELT Cohesion

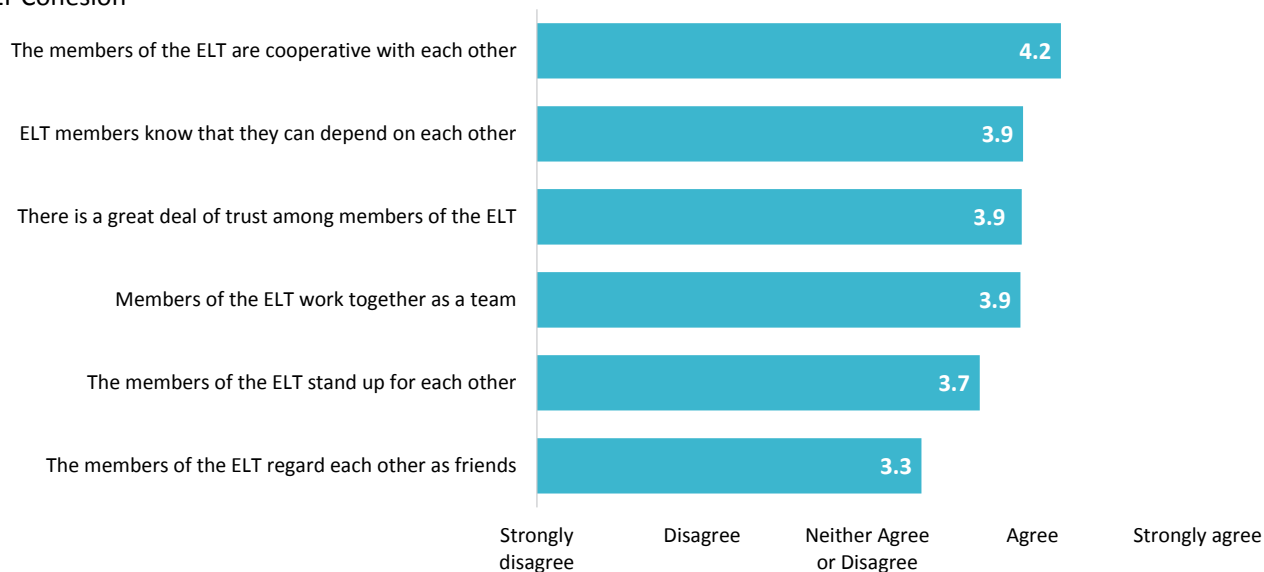


TABLE 2. EXAMPLES OF HOW CHROs COACH AND COUNSEL THE ELT

- I assist the members of the ELT in making sure they are communicating clearly with each other; Through my role I am also one of the first to sense when there are competing priorities or tension across operating units and will work with those leaders to point out those issues and work to resolve them.
- With few exceptions the ELT leans on me for counsel regarding how best to approach, influence, partner with the CEO. On the flip side, the CEO relies upon me to coach, counsel and influence the ELT.
- Listen to what they are trying to achieve and then ensure it is in alignment with the global strategy. If not help them get in alignment. Identify most effective way for them to achieve their goals while reinforcing and supporting global strategy and culture. Help them identify how to overcome obstacles/conflicts. Encourage them to take appropriate risk and integrate development of their people into what they are doing.
- I work with the various executive team members to provide them with feedback and coaching about themselves as well as members of their teams. I also work with them on effective interactions with the CEO, as well as team alignment.
- I am accountable for maximizing alignment and effectiveness of the ELT. This means ensuring clear roles and accountabilities across the team, supporting individual leader development, building a healthy team culture, & ensuring metrics and incentives are aligned.
- I am the HR strategic business partner for the Executive Committee which means I partner with them to ensure the organization is capable of delivering our strategic plan. This means we discuss organizational issues that span the enterprise and that we have a plan to ensure the talent, technology and systems to win. I also I am the employee relations person for the EC which requires me to intervene when the team is not performing in its optimal state.
- I frequently meet with them to discuss organization direction and strategy, specific leaders and key players, peer relationships, their development and key staff development.
- Coaching individually to help them be a better leader-- this could take many forms from 1-1 feedback following team meetings or large group settings, coaching/ prepping them for a meeting with the CEO, coaching them through how to give feedback, ideating on talent solutions/talent development plans for their teams, working with their executive coach to partner on development planning, etc.
- I am the sounding board for all ELT members. In most cases it's venting about the CEO. In other cases we are strategizing talent ideas and movement.
- I spend significant time coaching and counseling the ELT. I am often asked to mediate issues or concerns they have with each other and to provide advice on how they might handle the issue. I also coach on issues related to succession, talent, employee relations and many other areas.



Team and Trust Building. First, CHROs proactively seek to build a cohesive and highly functioning team. Thus, they try to plan team building activities, ensure role clarity, ensure accountability, etc., which, if done well, help ELT members to work well as a team.

Coaching Through Conflict. However hard they may try to positively build community and relationships, the realities of having smart ambitious team members who seek to maximize their own success often results in conflict emerging among team members. Allowing such conflict to fester has potentially significant negative effects on team and organization success. Thus, CHROs often serve as the person to step in and counsel those involved, in an effort to resolve the conflict.

Orienting/Assimilating New ELT Members. As team members retire or are exited, new members replace them. Moving into an existing ELT with established routines, norms, and styles creates challenges to these new members. CHROs noted that they play critical roles in helping these new members to assimilate into the team, coaching them around what to expect, how to react, and how to become a successful team member.

Information Sharing. The second set of areas concern the role that CHROs play in communicating information within the executive team, both upward and downward.

Downward Bearer of News. Often communications from the CEO to ELT members may be difficult. This could stem from CEOs not being good at communicating negative messages, from a lack of clarity regarding what they want, or from a desire to avoid conflict. Thus, CHROs must often be the medium through which the CEO communicates, or the one who clarifies or magnifies that communication. This may be regarding their performance, their goals, or their behavior. Whatever the topic, the CEO wants to send them a message, and the CHRO is one who delivers it.

Upward Facilitator of Anonymous Information. Because of the CHROs unique relationship with the CEO, often ELT members use that individual to convey messages that they could not comfortably convey in person or in a way that identifies them. CHROs often become the conduit for such messages, relaying information or questions to the CEO in a way that protects the ELT member.

Organization Effectiveness. CHROs coach ELT members in areas that can have a direct impact on the business. Part of this takes place regarding corporate effectiveness, and part regarding ELT members own business effectiveness.

Advising on Business Unit Strategies and Execution. While business unit leaders may have their own HR business partner, CHROs often help them think through their strategies, and particularly some of the talent moves that might hinder or accelerate strategic

success. In particular, they can help these leaders think through the talent implications of their strategies, and give insights into individual talent capabilities to help leaders build the right teams.

Ensure Corporate Strategic Alignment. Business unit leaders have accountability for the results of their businesses, and thus often develop strategies that maximize their likelihood of business success. However, sometimes those strategies may not align with the larger priorities of the corporate strategy. Because CHROs coach team members on developing and executing their strategies, they are positioned to see when those business unit strategies may conflict with corporate ones. Thus, they coach the leaders around how to get their strategies back in alignment.

Personal Coaching. Finally, CHROs reported coaching ELT members around their own personal careers. In particular, they identify development areas for these leaders to work on, act as a sounding board when leaders are frustrated with the CEO, and provide guidance on how to approach interactions with the CEO.

Coaching for Development Needs. With their eye for talent, CHROs have unique and accurate insights regarding the kinds of behaviors and the competencies that leaders need to work on in order to further their career success. Thus, they sometimes help to coach the individual leaders in their personal leadership development needs. This may be positive, in terms of identifying competencies that can be further developed to accelerate success. On the other hand, sometimes it is providing negative feedback on inappropriate or dysfunctional behavior within the team.

Acting as an Emotional Sounding Board. A number of CHROs related how difficult, hard charging, or otherwise frustrating CEOs can be. These individuals may be great strategic decision makers and have unique business insights, but sometimes

they can be hard to work for. Thus, CHROs noted that they often play the role of letting ELT members vent about their frustrations.

Providing Guidance on Dealing with the CEO. Once the venting is over, ELT members need strategies for approaching the CEO. CHROs' insights into the CEO's personality and style help them to coach ELT members, providing them with ideas for how to best approach the CEO.

In summary, ELTs are made up of smart, ambitious, and successful individuals who all have some self-interest and their own set of flaws. Asking them to work together unsurprisingly breeds potential problems that, if left unresolved, can undermine the team's effectiveness. Clearly, CHROs play a significant role in ameliorating these potentially dysfunctional effects through their coaching and counseling of the team's members.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

INFORMATION SHARING

ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS

PERSONAL COACHING

CEO DECISION MAKING AND HOW CHROs HELP

This year's survey asked about the CEO's decision making style. We asked CHROs to report the extent to which CEOs double-check information, consider various options, consult others, make last minute decisions, make quick decisions, and make impulsive decisions. As can be seen in **Figure 4**, CHROs rated CEOs highly in terms of their ensuring the accuracy of information, consideration of alternatives, and consultation with others. It also appears that CEOs tend to be timely in their decision making, and not impulsive. However, variability in

these reports suggest that there are some CEOs who may face some challenges in their decision-making styles.

Thus, we also asked CHROs to tell us how they helped CEOs to make better decisions. Examples of their responses are listed in **Table 3**. However, a number of themes emerged from the responses. Rather than list them in order of popularity, we present them as ways that CHROs can facilitate the decisions throughout the process.

Figure 4
CEO Decision Making Behavior



TABLE 3. EXAMPLES OF HOW CHROs HELP CEOs MAKE BETTER DECISIONS

- Serve as a sounding board; provide relevant (but not excessive) data; honestly share my point of view; coach if I don't think he's getting enough diverse perspectives, etc.
- First -- frame the decision. Make sure we are solving the actual problem. Second -- consequence determination. Point out unintended consequences. Third -- 360 view of other points of view to be considered
- Open honest discussion with someone who is not looking to get his job.
- I give the CEO the full picture, tell him the consequences of the decision he is about to make, what the perception of such decisions will be and make sure he has an informed view before making change.
- Daily sounding board and the voice of business-driven, unfiltered and completely objective transparency for him...along with painting picture of decision implications (especially regarding impact to employees/customers/shareholders/suppliers).
- Challenge the process on who he's spoken with; provide alternative points of view; present intended and unintended consequences of the decision; help think through broader impacts.
- Encourage more patience for discussion. Provide data. Get him to state what he is trying to accomplish and consider how the decision he's considering helps or hinders. Be candid.
- Providing alternative viewpoints, using external benchmarks or best in class examples, providing research or other resources for him to consider, exposing him to SMEs for expert advice.
- I give the CEO the full picture, tell him the consequences of the decision he is about to make, what the perception of such decisions will be and make sure he has an informed view before making change.
- I help him think through how the source of the data/info may play a role in how that person's perspective is formed and delivered. We brainstorm on how the Board will likely respond to certain "facts" and how they are presented. We often discuss how the impact of decisions on our talent and organization...and how those relate to our long-term strategy.
- Gathering and organizing the relevant facts, data and insights on possible impacts/risks to culture, operations, reputation and costs; providing my perspective on the alternative courses of action; listening to his point of view and providing feedback; advising on who else should be brought into the decision process
- Making sure he has all of the facts and differing viewpoints. I also act as a confidante/sounding board for him. In the Exec Team, I call for the decision when no new information is coming and the team is languishing in debate.



“...the weight of critical decisions is heavy on CEOs.

These are important and stressful processes that no one should have to face entirely alone. CHROs can provide significant support to CEOs...”

Frame the Decision. Often decision makers find it difficult to articulate the actual problem to be solved. At the outset, CHROs can help the CEO to frame the decision to ensure that the right problem is being solved, and that the solution will actually solve the problem. Part of this role is acting as the sounding board for the CEO, letting that individual bounce preliminary ideas off of the CHRO to help better formulate both the problem and the solution.

Ensure the Right Data is Available. CHROs noted that often their role is providing the right data to CEOs. All decisions are made with incomplete and uncertain data, but often relevant data is available, but has not yet been accessed. CHROs often have relevant data, particularly regarding human capital, that is necessary for effective decisions.

Ensure the Right Voices are Heard. While the previous data did not suggest that CEOs are impulsive in their decision making, it is clear that they like to be timely in their decisions. Focusing on timely decisions may result in only a few, and sometimes biased, voices being heard. Thus, CHROs help CEOs make better decisions by ensuring that all of the right people are part of the decision making process. This may come by structuring the process so that all the relevant players have input, or in some cases it means communicating the views of members of the ELT anonymously to the CEO.

Bring in Alternative Points of View. A number of CHROs noted that one way they help CEOs is to bring in alternative points of view, not because they believe them, but as a way to be the sparring partner in the CEO's thought process. One stated that he often plays “devil's advocate” as a way of challenging the CEO's thinking.

Point Out Unintended Consequences. Often decisions seem obvious based on financial formulas. However, such formulas ignore the reality of people, whether they be employees, customers, or shareholders. Consequently, many CHROs see their job as trying to get CEOs to recognize some of the unintended consequences of their preferred decision. This, along with bringing in alternative points of view, were by far the most cited ways in which CHROs help CEOs make better decisions.

Have and Express an Opinion. As CHROs truly become business leaders, their opinions on all aspects of the business have as much credibility as any other leader on the ELT. Consequently, our respondents mentioned that they often weigh in with their opinions on the decision. Sometimes CEOs agree, sometimes they take it as valuable input, and sometimes their decision contradicts the CHRO's opinion, but they still appreciate the input.

Call for a Decision When It's Time. Finally, while CEOs seem to be timely in their decisions, they also tend to want optionality. This means that they sometimes delay a decision until they have to make it. Or decisions are delayed because the ELT continues

to struggle with it and there appears to be no consensus. So, CHROs help facilitate CEOs decisions by knowing when the decision has to be made, and calling for it at that time.

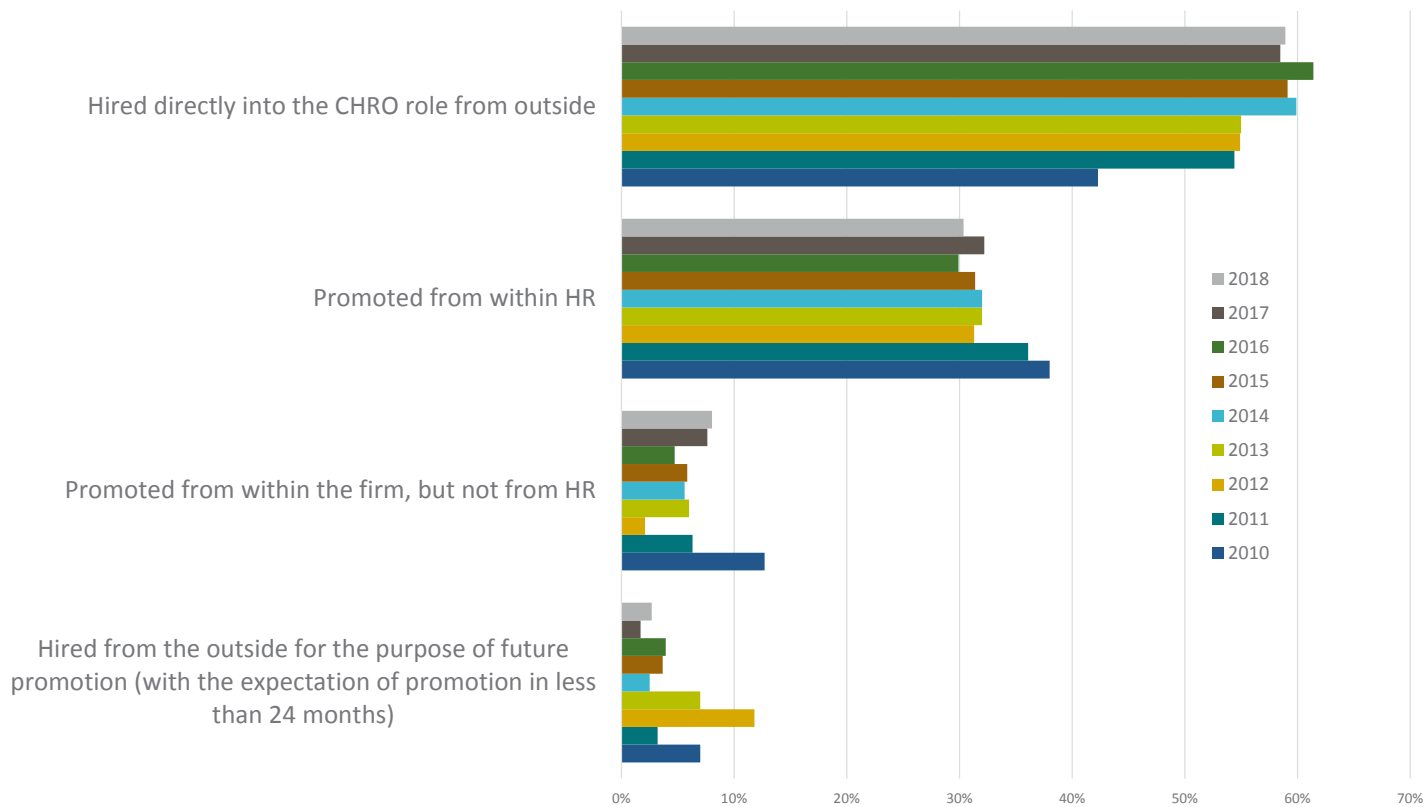
In summary, the weight of critical decisions is heavy on CEOs. These are important and stressful processes that no one should have to face entirely alone. CHROs can provide significant support to CEOs by (a) ensuring that they have all the right data and information, (b) they have a chance to hear from all the right people, and (c) they are aware of all of the potential consequences of the decision alternatives. By facilitating these conditions, CHROs are able to serve as strong supports to CEOs.



PATHS TO THE CHRO ROLE

Finally, each year we ask about how the CHROs in our survey were placed in their roles. We offer 4 alternatives: (1) promoted internally from within HR, (2) promoted internally but from outside of HR, (3) hired directly from outside, and (4) hired from outside for the purpose of a future promotion to the role. Our results have been disappointing,

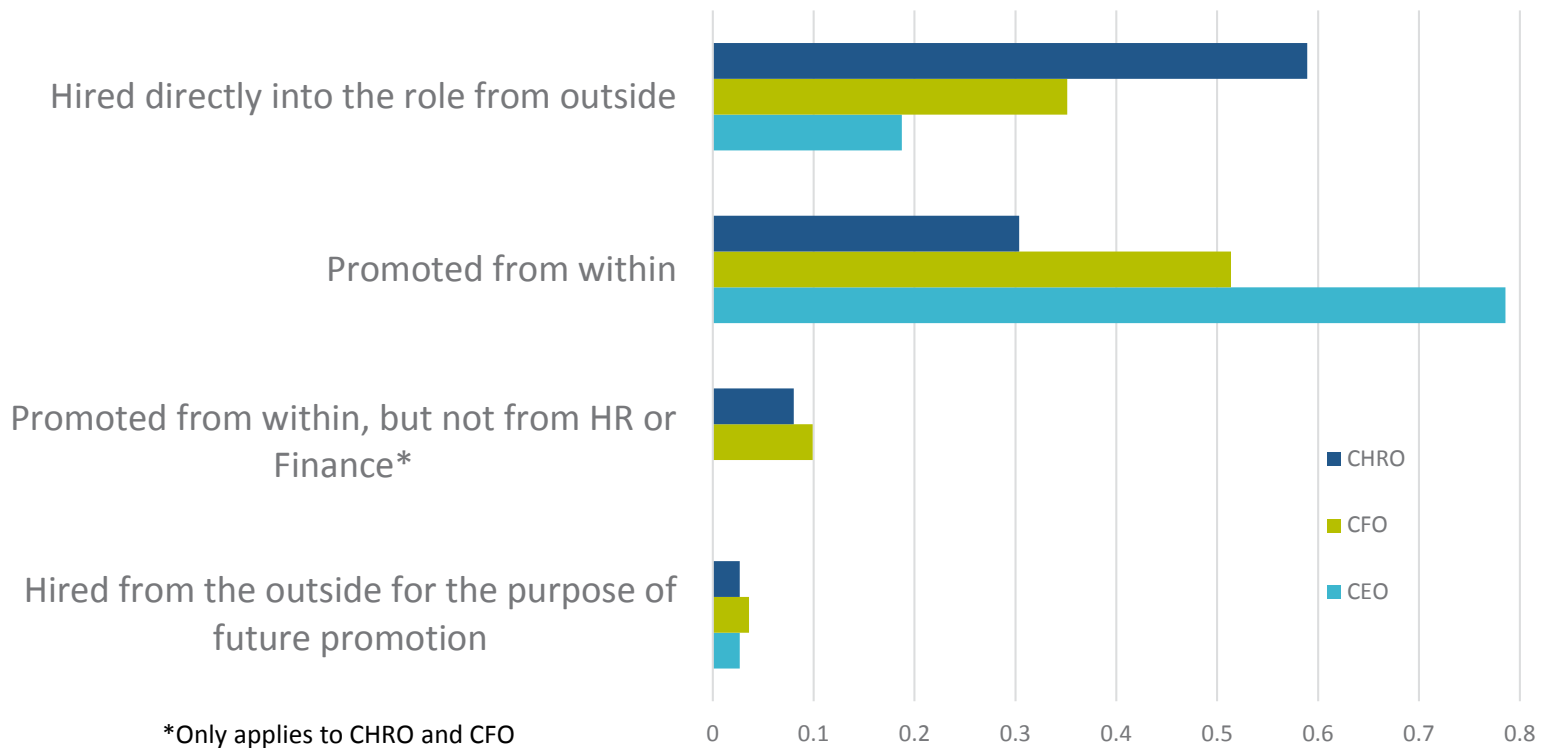
Figure 5
How were you Promoted to the CHRO Role?



in that between 50 and 60% tend to be hired directly from outside, indicating a lack of sufficient succession planning for the CHRO role. This year's results are no different as 59% were externally hired and only 31% were promoted internally from within HR. Also, as can be seen in **Figure 5**, these numbers tend to indicate a consistent trend over the past 9 years toward the fact that CEOs increasingly hire their CHROs from the outside.

Also, we compare the promotion paths for the CHRO with those of the CEO and CFO. **Figure 6** displays these results. Again, disappointingly, 52% of CFOs are promoted internally (compared to 31% for CHROs) and only 35% are hired directly from outside (compared to 59% of CHROs). This again presents a troubling commentary on CHROs' ability to build a sufficient pool of capable successors.

Figure 6
Path to Position



CONCLUSION

Over the past 10 years the CHRO role has changed. While the time spent in different components has remained relatively stable quantitatively, how those roles are performed have significantly changed qualitatively. While talent still tops the CEOs agenda for HR, culture is emerging as a much more important agenda item.

In this report we present data on the functioning of ELTs, and our results suggest that generally these teams work effectively with one another. However, CHROs also described the ways in which they coach and counsel team members, which indicate that the effective functioning may not be a natural process but one that must be proactively managed. CHROs noted the ways in which they help in relationship building, knowledge and information transfer, organizational effectiveness, and personal coaching of individual ELT members.

Similarly, CHROs report that their CEOs seem effective in their decision making processes. However, again, the ways in which CHROs help them point to the fact that this effective decision making may not always be natural. CHROs work to ensure that

the process works effectively through making sure CEOs have the right information accessible, the right people available, and the good and bad outcomes identifiable before they make decisions.

Finally, CEOs continue to prefer hiring CHROs from outside the organization, and to a far greater extent than they hire CFOs from outside. These findings continue to demonstrate the need for CHROs to better attend to building their potential successor pool.

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The Center for Executive Succession serves as an independent, objective source of knowledge regarding C-suite succession practices. The center provides a forum for corporate leaders to shape the future direction of succession practices, which are increasingly one of the board's top governance priorities. Our partners have the opportunity to contribute to cutting edge research that challenges the status quo and is empirically driven to further success in C-suite succession planning. For more information or to inquire about potential membership, please visit our website or contact us at CES@moore.sc.edu.



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In 1998, the school was named for South Carolina native Darla Moore, making the University of South Carolina the first major university to name its business school after a woman.

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