MEET THE NEW BOSS
A leadership primer for 2022

In today’s uncertain and challenging times, the C-suite is starting to look very different. A Russell Reynolds study finds out how different the C-suite would look in 2022 and what new skills will the CEO and CXO add to their repertoire.

Words: Sachin Rajan
In today’s challenging times for corporations, the C-suite is starting to look very different.

The corner office is anything but stable — increasingly rare is the elder statesman who spent a long successful career at this one company. This era is rampant with multi-tasking, job-hopping talent; millennials, either launching companies or “arriving” at companies with soaring expectations that infrequently match capability. Amidst all this there is pressure to disrupt, or be disrupted.

Russell Reynolds partnered with Trendera late last year to take a closer look at this. Could we identify the forces (dark and positive) that will shape commerce and industry in, say, 2022? And if we could, what would these imply in terms of how different the C-suite would start to look?

What new skills will the CEO and CXO add to their repertoire? Approximately 50 conversations with top leaders across the globe later, here is what our crystal ball threw up.

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First off, a look at some of the top trends or forces that are driving change:

**FUNCTIONAL EXPERTISE: THE “C” LEVEL CONTINUES TO RISE**

Functional experts are likely to seriously break out of silos and take on more strategic roles. No longer condemned to niches, these specialists will demand and establish clear roles in the value-creation process. The “ask” of these individuals too will soar. With technology getting embedded in finance, predictive analytics being used in hiring — the CFO and CHRO in 2022 will start to need a spectrum of new skills.

**TECHNOLOGY SHIFTS: FROM JARGON TO FLUENCY**

Perhaps the most obvious — today, terms like big data and artificial intelligence (AI) are a staple ingredient in every discussion around strategy; going forward though, this data fluency will more universally translate into actionable insights. Employees will be much more comfortable making data- and AI-driven decisions. Digital relationships too will evolve. With the penetration of business transactions into the all-pervasive tablets, phone, computers, there will be growing pursuit of an equilibrium. Leaving devices outside of meetings, digital breaks, and the more radical digital detox interventions, will lead to a more balanced interaction on this front.

**EGALITARIANISM AT WORK: CONSENSUS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Younger employees increasingly see leadership as not necessarily worth striving for — preferring models that share or rotate leadership. This will have significant implications to organisation and leadership structures, as well as overall accountability and how team performance is managed.

**WORK ENVIRONMENTS: FROM DIVERSITY TO AUTHENTICITY**

With the tone shifting from acceptance of “minorities”, to a celebration of diversity, workplaces will require to become places where all employees feel they “belong”. Future organisations will harness the collective force of individuals being their authentic selves at work — included and celebrated.

**A BRIGHT FUTURE: LESS AND LESS CERTAIN**

An increasing number of people can no longer envisage what a positive future looks like. Hearteningly, this manifests less as pessimism, but more as a propensity for employees to start thinking in shorter cycles, and most certainly not in terms of the traditional “journey to retirement”. Right or wrong, this will have a sweeping impact in terms of how employees manage their relationships with institutions like their employer, society, government, and indeed personal institutions like home ownership and even marriage.

**THE MANIFESTATION OF THE 2022 C-SUITE**

There is little doubt that tomorrow’s CEO and CXOs will need to be more...
 serão igualmente executivos de amanhã que dirigirão as decisões no futuro.

4. Guerra versus coração: A mentalidade que o novo especialista trará.

Em contraste com um começo mais arriscado de uma startup "acelerando" versus estabilidade. Isso, em última análise, é a influência "anchoring" — trazer as ideias que estão estabelecidas e ideias que são mais recentes. A cultura da empresa muitas vezes será vista como menos eficaz.

5. Redefinir o sucesso e uma nova visão compartilhada: Com políticas econômicas e incertezas cada vez maiores tornando-se a norma e não a exceção, os CEOs serão chamados para garantir a eficiência de suas equipes, assegurando que a concorrência seja construtiva e não destrutiva.

Hogan Assessments recentemente criou um novo método de liderança e estrutura, Leadership Span, que foi desenhado especificamente para elevar as competências de liderança, incluindo inteligência emocional e habilidades de relacionamento, com base em dados que maravilhosamente apoiam duas tendências de resultados muito divergentes.

A through a joint research effort between Russell Reynolds Associates and Hogan Assessments, a paradox has emerged in the derailment and Hogan Assessments jointly created a new leadership approach and framework, Leadership Span™ for the C-suite. This scientific approach is designed specifically to elevate the self-awareness of leaders on their potential and help organisations predict C-suite effectiveness.

There is an inherent tension in the C-suite differentiators. Each of the four pairs contain traits that are naturally at odds with each other: Heroic and vulnerable, risk taking and reluctant, galvanizing and connecting, disruptive and pragmatic. Future-ready, successful C-suite leaders must be able to span both traits within each pair as they lead their organisation, channeling the strengths of each while navigating their inherent weaknesses.

The four major dualities that characterise the transition into successful senior leadership roles are:

1. Being both disrupting and pragmatic: Organisations need a leader to disrupt the status quo with innovation, but they also must be pragmatic about focus, priorities, and the pace of innovation in their organisation.

2. Being both risk-taking and reluctant: A good leader takes calculated political elections to the success of new business ventures, “data” has proven to be a spectacular but oftentimes fickle ally. The C-suite of the future will continue to rely on the gut to “be broken” and make calls when data miraculously supports two very divergent potential outcomes.

At the same time, metrics will be created to measure more difficult to gauge leadership capabilities, including emotional intelligence and relationship-building skills.

From a long past culture where managers were “feared”, leaders will place employee happiness and wellness front and centre, enabling them to be maximally productive.

ARE TODAY’S LEADERS FUTURE-READY?

Leadership is complex. The forces that are driving change in the near future have forced organisations to rethink what makes a C-suite successful when it comes to spearheading large organisations, because the leadership qualities that worked in the past may no longer be relevant in the future. In other words, what got CEOs there may not get them there (as sky-high failure rates for new CEOs demonstrate).

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Through a joint research effort between Russell Reynolds Associates and Hogan Assessments, a paradox has consistently emerged in the derailment amongst leaders, one which if not managed well, may expose the C-suite and the organisation to risk.

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risks and is opportunistic, but we also want them to be somewhat reluctant and show some vigilance before steering the organisation off a cliff.

3. Being both heroic and vulnerable: A heroic leader needs to be a vulnerable as well, so their perseverance and grit don’t turn into self-delusions. They need to take feedback and external data to heart and make continuous improvements to themselves and their organisations.

4. Being both galvanising and connecting: Leaders must galvanise support with energy and inspiration, but they also need to know when to take a step back and share credit, promote the success of others, and to connect the organisation to become something stronger and greater than themselves and the cult of their own personality.

The model was created to identify each individual’s leadership span (or range). While each span may seem contradictory — how can someone be both risk-taking and reluctant — the most successful leaders are able to embody both traits simultaneously.

**Pragmatic disruptors** innovate and drive change, but they do so in collaboration with their teams. They recognise that bold visions will likely fizzle without the engagement of the broader organisation, and they recognise that the perfect is often the enemy of the good.

**Reluctant risk-takers** are willing to make big bets, but they do so cautiously and with a mature sense of the law of unintended circumstances. They are uniquely able to resist trend chasing. They cut through the clutter of competing ideas and take risks where they matter.

**Vulnerable heroes** don’t hesitate to lead the charge, but they understand that they don’t have all the answers. They’re never paralysed by indecision, but they’re rarely unilateral in action. They engage their teams and seek guidance, but act quickly and decisively in the face of challenging circumstances.

**Galvanising connectors** build tight-knit teams while working to connect and engage their teams with a wider ecosystem of internal and external partners. They are highly inclusive but never insular. They build bonds within, and build bridges to, the team.

While the ability to span these competencies will prove useful at nearly all levels of leadership, it is especially crucial in C-suite roles, where a “retreat to strengths” is rarely an option in the face of disruptive change.

Fast forward to 2022 — that C-suite will demonstrate the range of traits captured in the Leadership Span™. Visualise now the headline stories of high-performing leaders. The hero who wants the status and benefits of being a leader, and overcomes his failings, with the support of his team of high performing C-suites. The risk-taker who gambles on a new way of doing business, and takes calculated risks under varied business conditions to rise above the norm.

Andy Warhol wisely said, “…they always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself…”. So brace yourself, prepare to flex, span, and confront the exciting business wave ahead.

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