

Are You a Strong or Weak Leadership Link?



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Whether you are a highly seasoned CLO or relatively new to the role, you have probably faced concerns at some point in your career such as: Why am I having trouble becoming a consistently sought-after strategic advisor to other executives in the organization? Why is it difficult for me to gain the support and the budget for key organizational learning initiatives? Why am I not considered a part of the “inner circle” at the senior-leadership level?

You are not alone. Chances are you are among the majority of CLOs today—a majority that still faces the outdated perception that the CLO role is the weak link in the executive chain.

Although these aren't quick fixes, by mastering the following three strategies, you will be viewed as a stronger executive-leadership link.

Advise a Key Senior Executive

Building credibility and becoming a sought-after strategic advisor takes time. Depending on your organization's type, find the area in which you have the most expertise and that will provide the greatest impact to a senior executive. Develop a working partnership with one leader first. Once you have established a working relationship, determine his or her key strategic initiative. Consider what you can bring to the table that will help the executive achieve the desired results.

But do not stop there. While you are providing value-added support to one executive, continue to research other strategic initiatives within your organization. Based on the credibility you have established through your initial partnership, you might want to consider offering some suggestions that could further other organizational initiatives.

Market Your Successes

Don't rely solely on other leaders in the organization to notice your contributions. Determine the best way to “market” your relationship as a strategic advisor and show how you were able to add value to key performance results.

Don't allow yourself to become the victim of an organizational culture that does not recognize the contributions of the CLO and the learning and development function.

Communicate and market your contributions and successes. I am not suggesting you brag about your successes, but rather put them in perspective, focusing on the functional area that achieved the results. As long as you include the value you and the learning and development function brought to the table, you will help strengthen your role as an indispensable link in the strategic-leadership chain.

Develop Visibility

There is a lot of truth to the notion “out of sight, out of mind.” When you are not actively involved in a “visible” role in the strategic initiatives of the organization, it is difficult to be seen as a strong link in the chain.

Although this will require additional effort on your part for a period of time, the visibility and involvement at the senior level of the organization will be worth it. If you have the desire to be viewed as a strong link, your active and visible role might include:

- Researching best practices and benchmarking data on specific initiatives, as well as helping to incorporate key learning into these efforts.
- Customizing just-in-time learning programs for team members who need particular skills for the initiative.
- Managing project planning, reporting and milestone reviews for senior leadership that support the initiative manager and team.

Although you might need to invest some professional overtime to be actively involved in key strategic initiatives, the added visibility and credibility you will build with the senior executives involved will make you a stronger link within senior leadership. It also will help you build an executive-level network that you can leverage for future CLO-sponsored initiatives.

Taking the lead to ensure that you are viewed as a strong link across senior leadership should be a personal priority. If it is not, you might find yourself a weak—or even non-existent—link throughout your CLO career. ■

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