

Time To Upgrade The C-Suite

Organization charts at community banks have experienced some transformations over the last ten years. Nothing dramatic, but still changes worth noting. One of the most common is the identification of a C-Suite leadership team. As community banks grow, the generalist approach to management gives way to specialization. Department leadership is migrating away from senior and executive vice presidents to c-level titles, like, CEO, COO, CIO, CMO, and CLO.

The change is a useful upgrade. The titles bring clarity to the leadership role and the area of expertise being managed. Having a Chief Lending Officer gives everyone a quick reference to the area being managed and the leader responsible for lending team performance. Plus, the c-level abbreviations play well with today's fixation on using acronyms to reference everything.

CEO Reimagined

Chief Executive Officers have been pegged to the leadership role for the entire organization. It is the best spot to guide innovation, quality, trust, respect, and other core values that should be influencing organizational performance. Now, apply that concept to every manager that leads people or processes. If we change our perspective a few degrees, we could end up with a clarification for both managers and employees.

What if a CEO became a chief excitement officer, chief enthusiasm officer, or chief excellence officer? Redirecting the focus from an area to an outcome or desirable attribute provides an entirely new context for the leader's role. Call Center managers become chief experience officers.

Lenders become chief dream officers. Investment representatives become chief comfort officers.

Title Drives Focus

Letting the title drive the focus (chief _____ officer), we could encourage every manager to adopt a c-level mentality when they engage with their staff, customers, and community. The difference with a c-level perspective is the fact that while the position includes a primary focus, the manager also possesses a working knowledge of every department and function that influences the desired outcome.

Just like a CEO stays connected to a myriad of company functions, like operations, lending, and risk management, all managers would begin with a focus on their core responsibilities, seasoned with an understanding of how all the pieces fit together. The end result would be leaders with empathy and respect for every contributor in the process. Battles over us and them become a unified team discussion driven by questions like, 'How can we help each other succeed?'

Your Chief Title

If you were challenged to create your c-level title, what would you use to fill in the blank?

Chief _____ Officer

The label you choose is very likely your focus. It is very likely the characteristic or deliverable you feel most comfortable acknowledging to others. Challenge your managers to fill in their c-level blank. What do they feel fits well with their knowledgebase, skills, management philosophies and responsibilities?

The company culture you are nurturing and reinforcing should be reflected in the words your managers place in their c-level blank.