

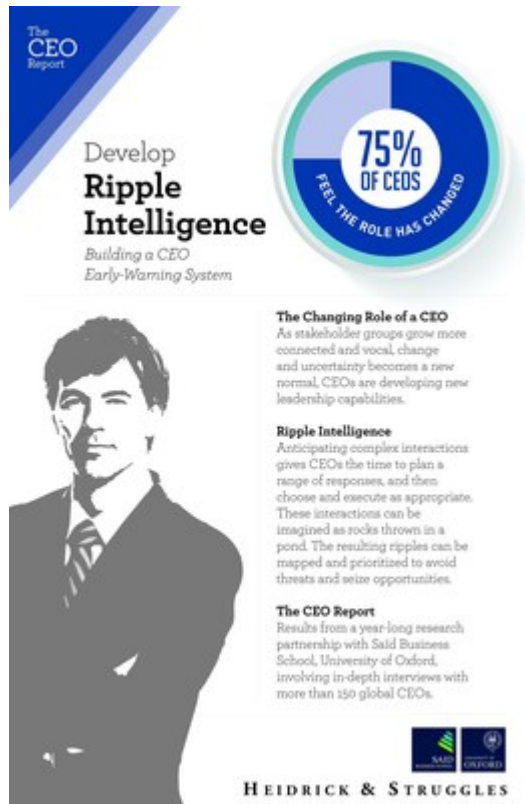
HEIDRICK & STRUGGLES

What CEOs Need to Lead in an Uncertain and Hyper-Connected World

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Oxford-Heidrick Research Identifies Six Critical Capabilities

DAVOS, Switzerland, Jan. 21, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Chief executives today navigate a world unprecedented in complexity and unpredictability. Their success hinges on adaptability, authenticity, and continual growth in the role, even more than on preparation beforehand, according to [*The CEO Report*](#), the product of a year-long global research partnership between [Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford](#) and [Heidrick & Struggles \(Nasdaq: HSII\)](#).



The role of CEO is structurally unique and preparation is therefore always incomplete, the report notes. Embracing a mind-set of continual learning and curiosity is necessary for CEOs to cope with the uncertainty around them.

Based on in-depth interviews with more than 150 CEOs from around the world and across business sectors, *The CEO Report* is one of the most comprehensive, in-depth studies of CEO leadership capabilities. It identifies a suite of integrated skill sets that today's senior-most leaders leverage to help them grow and thrive in a business environment marked by constant change and dissonance of competing stakeholder interests.

"Senior business leaders must operate in a new normal of unpredictable change in a hyper-connected world," said Tracy Wolstencroft, Heidrick & Struggles CEO and President. "Volatile business climates can provide a competitive advantage for those who are able to lead and inspire their teams through this uncertainty."

"This research captures what it is to be a CEO today and the significant leadership challenges CEOs face. A picture emerges of leaders who are changing and developing as quickly as the environment in which they operate," said Professor Peter Tufano, Dean of Saïd Business School. "This rich and detailed study gives us a deeper understanding of the needs of executives at the top of organizations and suggests ways in which we can support them in their personal development."

Ripple Intelligence

Contextual intelligence is not enough today. CEOs need to continuously adapt to changing dynamics impacting every aspect of their business. "Ripple intelligence" – a critical finding in the research – is the ability to see the interactions of business contexts like ripples moving across a pond. It enables CEOs to envision how trends and contexts may intersect and change direction, so they can anticipate disruptions, make time to plan, and protect against being blindsided by unexpected events. Ripple intelligence also makes CEOs aware of their own impact and how it may influence contexts that might otherwise seem remote and unconnected.

"Ripple intelligence is a significant early-warning system that CEOs are using to navigate the uncertainty and unpredictability of today's world," said lead researcher Dr. Michael Smets, Associate Professor in Management and Organisation Studies at Saïd Business School. "The report will help CEOs understand the dimensions of how to amass information and perspective so they can better navigate the ripples they can see, and anticipate those they can't."

The other critical capabilities identified in *The CEO Report* are:

- **The S³ of Change** – The ability to determine not just the speed of change, but also the real and perceived scope and significance to the organization and its stakeholders.
- **The Power of Doubt** – The transformation of doubt into a powerful decision-making tool is a critical skill among CEOs today. They leverage doubt similar to elite athletes' utilization of nerves: as a source of focus and insight when harnessed constructively.
- **Adapting authentically** – Facing relentless pressure for change, CEOs consider adaptability a requirement for the role. Yet 'authentic leadership' is also a demand and thus the need to balance between being ever adaptable, while remaining true to their personal sense of purpose, and thus their authenticity, is critical.
- **Finding balance** – Faced with competing, yet equally valid, stakeholder demands, CEOs increasingly must navigate through paradoxical choices, including between "right ... and right," both for themselves and their organizations. Balancing these paradoxes gives CEOs the foundation to turn organizational trade-offs into win-win situations.
- **Continual growth and renewal** – CEOs feel that their success today hinges on continual growth in the role, even more so than on their preparation beforehand. They recognize that the role is structurally unique and preparation therefore always incomplete. Embracing a mindset of continual learning and curiosity is necessary for CEOs to always be ready for the uncertainty around them.

"The research has given us a deep understanding of how CEOs navigate these markets," said Valerie Germain, Global Managing Partner for Functional Practices at Heidrick & Struggles. "It is clear that they strive to find opportunity among the challenges, for both business and personal growth. There were many consistent leadership traits despite the diverse experiences of this wide-ranging group."

About the Research

The research was conducted by a research team from Saïd Business School, University of Oxford and Heidrick & Struggles, under the research and ethics guidelines set by the university. Combining the complementary strengths of these two institutions produced a distinctive blend of academic rigor and practical business impact. Jointly, they conducted in-depth interviews with 152 CEOs from across the world and from a wide range of sectors, making this one of the most comprehensive studies of CEOs globally. Collectively, these leaders have over 880 years of CEO experience, and are responsible for a total of more than 5.8 million employees generating \$1.7 trillion in revenues. All interviews were anonymized prior to analysis by the research team.

The full report is available here:

- www.heidrick.com/theceoreport
- www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/ideas-impact/ceo-report

About Heidrick & Struggles

Heidrick & Struggles (Nasdaq: HSII) serves the executive talent and leadership needs of the world's top organizations as the premier provider of leadership consulting, culture shaping, and senior-level executive search services. Heidrick & Struggles pioneered the profession of executive search more than 60 years ago. Today, the firm serves as a trusted advisor, providing integrated leadership solutions and helping its clients change the world, one leadership team at a time. For more information, visit www.heidrick.com.

About Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford blends the best of new and old. We are a vibrant and innovative business school, but yet deeply embedded in an 800-year-old world-class university. We create programmes and ideas that have global impact. We educate people for successful business careers, and as a community seek to tackle world-scale problems. We deliver cutting-edge programmes and ground-breaking research that transform individuals, organisations, business practice, and society. We seek to be a world-class business school community, embedded in a world-class University, tackling world-scale problems. www.sbs.ox.ac.uk.

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