

Exploring the Role of the CEO

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SUBJECT(S): Management

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, the teacher will address the organization function as it occurs in the business context at the national level. Students will read “What Makes a Successful CEO.” Students will then research popular corporate CEOs and discuss their takeaways.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Management, III. Business Organization

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“What It Takes to Become a CEO”](#)
- [“Leadership Secrets from a School that Turned Out Some Top CEOs”](#)
- [“Educator Toolkit: The Chief Executive Officer”](#)
- [“Career Insight: Thinking about Business Ethics in a Practical Way”](#)

Objectives/Purposes: The purpose of this lesson is for students to comprehend elements of organization for a business, as a function of business management, at the national level. They will begin to explore the role of the CEO and what it takes to get to that position. This includes the basics, like defining some of those C-suite acronyms, as well as a deeper discussion of what makes a successful CEO.

Knowledge@Wharton Article: [What Makes a Successful CEO?](#)

Other Resources/Materials:

For Teachers:

1. Internet Access — If the teacher has Internet and can project the screen to the class, this is fine.

Activity:

1) *Introduction (5 mins): Class Discussion opener*

Have the students break into small groups and list as many “national” corporations or establishments as they can (e.g., Chilis, Target). Mention that they should differentiate between corporations or establishments that have a presence in the country and that also have an international presence (i.e. Chilis vs. Starbucks).

Have each group present to the class.

2) *(5 mins)*

Have the students stay in their groups. Ask the students the following questions:

- What is a CEO? Chief Executive Officer
- What is a COO? Chief Operating Officer
- What is a CFO? Chief Financial Officer
- What is a CIO? Chief Information Officer
- What is a CMO? Chief Marketing Officer
- What is a CLO? Chief Learning Officer
- What do these organizational titles have in common? They are all executive-level organizational positions at the *top* of the hierarchy.

Because students may not know the acronyms, please share and discuss as a class. Also, discuss with students how managers working within a business structure are both aided by the structure and potentially constrained by the structure (i.e., bureaucratic “red tape,” forms, policies, etc.) For example, when an individual is admitted to the hospital, almost before the

nurse will be able to issue care to a patient, the patient must sign medical release forms/documents as a legal requirement. How are such requirements by design structure indicative of how an organization operates?

Guided Reading (10 mins):

Now, have students read the K@W article or listen to the podcast [What Makes a Successful CEO?](#) It is an interesting interview conducted by Mike Useem, a Wharton management professor who is an expert in leadership. Some of the concepts may be challenging, but the content is quite rich.

Class Discussion (10 mins):

1. Does everybody want to make it to the top?
2. What is the “C” Suite?
3. What attracts somebody to reach the corner office or the “C” Suite?
4. How can an aspiring CEO prepare for the “C” suite?
5. What often takes others off-track from becoming a CEO?
6. What makes a successful CEO?

(Teacher Note: The article provides a basis for student understanding leading into the Exploration Activity below).

Exploration Activity (20 min): Becoming a CEO

Divide students into teams of two. Prepare for this lesson with a big box filled with “CEO cards.” Akin to baseball cards, these props will have a CEO’s face, the name of his/her business and a few more stats about that person. We didn’t include these in the lesson because the popular CEOs are always changing. They should be pretty easy to create, with a little help from the Internet, your computer and a printer. Each team of two is charged with investigating the CEO on the card. They should consider how he/she rose to that job, some of the key challenges he/she has faced, and why he/she has or has not been an effective CEO. It may be best to do this exercise over two days so students can also learn from each other. For a twist, have them conduct office-based scenarios that incorporate the related company’s products and services and qualities that the CEO is best known to possess.

Group Reports/Discussion (If there is time, ask for volunteers to talk about what they learned. You may have to hold over until tomorrow if they are particularly engaged and have a lot to share).

Each group gets 3 minutes to share 3 important things they learned about their chosen CEO.

Closing (5 mins):

Use this time to answer questions and clarify points of confusion.

Tying It All Together: This lesson plan can stand alone or the teacher may wish to visit other Wharton Global Youth Program lesson plans that highlight other aspects of management, including but not limited to:

- Five Functions of Management
- Theories of Management
- Business Organization
- Personal Management Skills
- Business Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Human Resource Management
- Technology and Information Management
- Financial Decision Making
- Operations Management

Bear in mind that each section on management represents a unique vantage on business management and that the Management standards collectively articulate the role of the business manager as leader/steward of the organization.

Practice Outside of the Classroom: Students may be encouraged to observe these types of business organizational arrangements while they are out shopping and analyze their effectiveness.