

The CEO's Role in Successful Transitions



When a chief executive is leading his or her organization through a significant transition, challenges and issues may present themselves in unexpected ways.

It's a challenge for any chief executive to lead a global corporation through the continuous change and improvement upon which successful corporate growth depends.

This leadership challenge is especially pronounced when an organization seeks to carry out a significant, redefining transition. At such a time, the CEO must clearly articulate and communicate his or her strategic vision, both inside the corporation and to the outside world.

This occurred recently when Christian & Timbers changed its name to CTPartners. A name change might seem risky to some, but we were convinced that this was an important, next-stage evolution for our firm. The executive team shared the sense that the timing was right for a new name. After all, during the past several years, we have achieved transformational global growth on what we consider to be the most solid of business foundations.

The marketplace has responded enthusiastically to our commitment to provide the highest levels of performance, quality and results within a transparent and accountable framework — a first ever in the executive search

industry. A successful corporate transition depends on clear communications from the chief executive on down. So we emphasized one powerful message to our employees, clients, and other key constituents: Our new name represents our global network of 300 top-quality pro-



fessionals so much more powerfully than the names of any one or two individuals. We needed a name that reflects this new identity, as well as our philosophy of partnering with our valued clients and executive candidates alike.

It was very important to me, as a CEO, to communicate this positive vision. But during a time of change, business leaders also must address what I call the “negative” vision — in other words, all the things that the

company's transition does *not* mean.

In our case, that meant reiterating that, despite our new name, nothing was changing about our core values of partnering with clients and with candidates, our corporate priorities, or our strategic business model. At CTPartners, we will continue to run counter to our competitors, whom we view as mostly American firms that have international capabilities. CTPartners is a global firm that respects and embraces local customs and conditions. In addition, we will continue our efforts to raise the bar for our industry and deliver value to our clients by disclosing important measures, including our metrics of placement rate, days to placement, and executive stick rates.

There's one more point worth emphasizing. When a chief executive is leading his or her organization through a significant transition, challenges and issues may present themselves in unexpected ways. It's essential to listen, respond, and be flexible; after all, communication is a two-way street. However, it is the organization's core values that are the glue that holds it all together. ■