

Making it Easier to Transition into Executive Leadership

9 Steps to Make an Executive Transition



In our leadership coaching with corporate executive teams, we will often have individuals approach us for coaching transitioning to their next executive opportunity. These executives have often been with their companies for 10, 20 and sometimes over 30 years, and they find themselves for the first time in a position where they are looking for their next opportunity. Given that they have been with their companies for a long time, the “next step” has been generally outlined for them and they’ve followed a well-worn path to their current positions. They had mentors, but no real coaching on how to find a new position outside of the organization they’ve been in. While they are excellent leaders & performers with tons of experience, they may not possess the assets & coaching that they need to take their next steps.

Through our executive transition process, we make this easy. We have identified the key assets that corporate executives need to develop, as well as the process to go through to determine next steps. Sometimes, all we need is just a refresh and a direction. We have included these assets & steps below for making an executive transition.

Step 1 – Conduct a Self Assessment

The first thing to do as you are considering an executive transition is to consider what you have and what you want. Some questions to ask yourself are outlined below:

- ⦿ Why am I considering a change?
- ⦿ What do I like about what I currently do?
- ⦿ What would I change about my current job?
- ⦿ Do I like the industry I am in?

- ⦿ Is there anything I could change about my current job so that I like it more?
- ⦿ What would I be more interested in?
- ⦿ Is there someone who has a job that I think I might like? Could I find something similar?

Part of this self assessment is to determine if you want a new job, or if you just want to change some things about your current job. Maybe you could ask for increased or decreased responsibility, you could get more flexibility, or move into a different role. However, if you have determined that you would like to move into a new company, then more on to step 2.

Step 2 – Determine Your Degree of Transition

After you’ve done a self assessment and determined that you are ready for a transition, it’s time to consider how big of a change you are looking for along several different dimensions.

Pay

- ⦿ Consider what pay level you will need. There may be trade-offs when you’re in a salary negotiation, and you will want to determine what range you have to work within.

Time

- ⦿ Consider how much time you want to be working. If you still have a lot of energy and you’re eager to make an impact, then time per week may be a non-factor. However, if you are moving into the later years of your career, you may want to consider how much you want to work on a weekly basis.

Years to Work

- ⦿ Consider how much longer you want to work. If you think you only have 2 more years until retirement, that is a different conversation than if you have 10 or 15. Your time to work will determine how much of an impact you can make and what type of position you will want to take. It may be to make as much before retirement as you can, or you may be thinking about what type of legacy you want to leave.

Location

- ⦿ Consider where you want to work. If you are indifferent to location, this will determine how you approach recruiters & the development of your resume. But if there’s a certain area that you want to be in, you should map this out. Many executives are considering moves to warmer climates, and this is something to think about as you go through the process.

Industry

- ⦿ Consider your current industry and if you might want to make a change. If you like the industry you are in, and you just want a change in companies, this is a different conversation than if you are looking for something new. As you hit an executive-level position, there are leadership skills that are transferrable across industries. This will change the way you position yourself.

Role

- ⦿ Consider what type of role you want. This might be where you do a little research around and see what your peers are doing at other companies. There may be a position that you could duplicate at another company. Or, you may like what you do now, and you’d like to be able to do it somewhere else. If you want to do something totally different, you may need to get some additional training.

Flexibility

- ⦿ Consider how much flexibility you need. If you are in a position now where you want to get out a little earlier to meet family, that will be different than if you are now an empty-nester and you can travel as much as you would like to. Your degree of flexibility will largely impact the role you take.

Step 3 – Develop Your Brand

When a recruiter or hiring manager—or friend—looks at you as a potential candidate, they will consider the totality of your brand. This includes who you are, what your values are, where you want to go in your career, and the skills & experience that you have accumulated, among other things. We will see from time to time that executives build an excellent brand for themselves; however, they often do a poor job of promoting that brand or making it known. Their LinkedIn profile may be out-of-date or their bio on the website is old. Developing & defining your executive brand is important, but so is messaging that brand out to others. Below are key elements to you brand.

Vision

- ⦿ When you did your self assessment, you thought about what your vision is. Your vision outlines the impact that you want to make and the guardrails for decisions you make. For instance, if your vision is to solve problems to create great value, then you may take an executive sales leader role over an administrative executive role. Your vision dictates this decision.

Values

- ⦿ Your values are those things that you believe in that you would fight for; they dictate your behavior and reactions; and they exemplify who you are. When determining a company to work for, it’s so important that it aligns with your values. Think of values as those things that you work to instill in your children or mentees or things your parents taught you—honesty, integrity, energy, fun, service, etc.

Goals

- ⦿ When you outlined your Degree of Transition in Step 2, part of it was considering what your goals are. Your goals are the milestones that get you to your vision, and they are metrics that you can track and reflect on. Your goals may center around type of role, number of people impacted, value to a company, education, money, and more.

Passions

- ⦿ Your passions are part of your brand, and they are those things that give you energy and make you feel alive. They are the things that you lose track of time doing. For instance, you may be passionate about running, travel, reading, gaming, cars, etc.

Tangible Assets

- ⦿ Your tangible assets are the physical proof of why you’re good. These are certifications, education, results achieved, and all of the metrics & results that you would list on a resume. This is where you will spend a big chunk of your time—accumulating your tangible assets. As you do this, you will want to think about how these tangible assets can be transferred across industries.

Intangible Assets

- ⦿ Your intangible assets are those things that you can’t touch, but they are visible & defensible. Think of the skills that make you good, that you can back up with evidence. As a corporate executive or senior leader in industry, you have accumulated much wisdom and know-how—probably more than you even realize. Do you know how to run a large P&L? Are you savvy with developing a strategy? Have you managed people and on-boarded new talent? These are all skills that make you unique, and can be valuable to other businesses.

Keywords

- ⦿ Once you have completed all of the above, you will want to list your brand keywords. What are those words that you want others to use to describe you. They may be ones you have heard before or ones that you would like to develop. Think: hard worker, problem solver, leader, etc.

Step 4 – Develop Your Recruiting Resources

Once you have completed steps 1 to 3, the next thing to do is to amass all of that information into your recruiting assets that you may send to friends, colleagues or recruiters. Those are listed below.

- ⦿ Cover letter
- ⦿ LinkedIn Profile
- ⦿ Resume / CV
- ⦿ Executive Bio
- ⦿ Professional Website
- ⦿ Ideal Job Description
- ⦿ Ideal Company Profile

Step 5 – Leverage Your Relationships

As you begin to think about your executive transition, your relationships will be one of your best resources. Start with those around you, and then look to grow your network from there. You’ll be surprised with the people who can help you—you may not have thought of them previously because you were not in the mindset you are in now, but as you start your process, there may be other people who can support you. One great resource to create a list of your relationships is your LinkedIn and other social media profiles. LinkedIn is great because you can export your connections list so that you have it readily available. [Use this link.](#)

Step 6 – Assemble Your Support Team

You have great experience, but in the past you may have had a great support team at your company who managed your calendar, built your presentations, or did the marketing. As you continue to do your current job, you may want to consider having a support person or dedicated recruiter outside of your work that could help you with your transition. They could field phone calls, set up interviews, build your resume, write your bio or update your LinkedIn.

Step 7 – Research & Recruit

Once you have your direction set, you can start to research companies and industries. Seek out a recruiter who could help you. Take a look at what’s available on recruiting & job seeker websites. Simply understand the roles so that you can begin to craft the one you want. Put yourself out there to people who can advocate with you.

Step 8 – Set Your Process in Motion

Once you have your direction & assets, you understand the value you’re going to offer, you have connected with relationships, and you have assembled your team, you are ready to get your process in motion. Connect with your relationships and communicate your value proposition to others so that they can put you in touch with the right people.

Step 9 – Follow Up and Adjust

As conversations start, as they inevitably will, make sure you remain responsive and flexible. You may have to give a little to get a little. Or, you may have to adjust your company profile or industry that you would like to be in. Stick to your vision, but adjust as necessary.

Need Help?

If you’re ready to make an executive transition, but don’t feel like you have the tools or time to do it, we can help you. [Contact us](#) to learn about our executive transition services or email Francois Gau directly at francoisgau@velocityhub.com.