



THE CCO AS PACESETTER

What It Means, Why It Matters, How to Get There

2019 Page Research Report
Executive Summary

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CEOs across industries and regions are driving the greatest wave of transformation in generations. It is striking that not only are so many companies changing simultaneously, but many are changing into the same kind of company. We are seeing the emergence of a new business design.

We also see ample evidence that CCOs are playing a key role helping CEOs transform their companies by defining, reinforcing or reviving corporate character – the unique, differentiating identity of the enterprise. At the same time, new digital capabilities are helping CCOs to engage stakeholders, authentically and effectively, to build reputation, earn trust and achieve measurable results in entirely new ways.

“Pacesetting CCOs are playing a key role in helping CEOs transform their companies.”

The CCO’s agenda reflects and supports the CEO’s transformation plans and the requirements of this new design. In our research we found:

CCOs are increasingly responsible for, and are transforming, corporate brand stewardship.

This is more than an expansion of job scope or, in some cases, the transfer of responsibilities from Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs), who have historically “owned” brand. It is an indication that the practice of corporate and master brand stewardship is evolving. CMOs predominantly manage brand for a single stakeholder: the customer. Brand “equity” is, therefore, built in attributes and differentiators that shape buyer perception and behavior. However, CEOs today are transforming their companies not only to serve current and potential customers, but also to meet the changing expectations of employees, investors, governments and the public at large. This requires a multi-stakeholder perspective, an appreciation of the new drivers of reputation, an arm-in-arm linkage with the company’s culture initiatives and, in many cases, a fundamental rethinking of the meaning of the brand. CCOs are stepping up. And they are doing more than enforcing logo standards and communicating corporate “narratives” - they are creating systems and tools to ensure that the actual experiences stakeholders have with their companies are consistently “on brand.”

CCOs are heavily engaged in instilling a new kind of corporate culture that is taking hold across business.

CEOs consistently say culture is at the top of their transformation agendas. A new business design requires the workforce to possess new skills, exhibit different behaviors and mindsets, and work in different ways. Digital businesses move at the speed of innovation and insight, continually learn, make decisions based on data, and are truly customer-centric and agile. Modern businesses eschew hierarchy, thrive on diversity in every dimension and authentically contribute to society. CCOs are working to establish or scale such cultures. They are moving beyond traditional employee engagement practices, beyond storytelling and internal communications campaigns. They and their teams are collaborating with the Chief Human Resources Officer and across the C-Suite to provide the reinforcement, rituals, training, tools and systems to enable the new culture. They are helping to close the gap between brand and experience, between aspiration and reality.

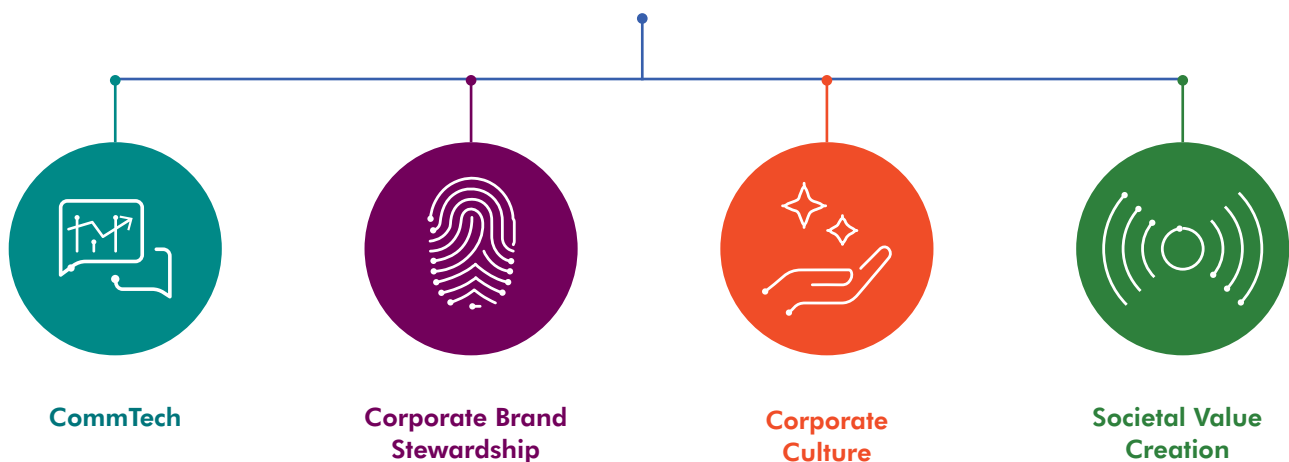
CCOs are helping to define an enterprise commitment to societal value creation.

Stakeholders increasingly expect businesses to create not only customer and shareholder value, but broader societal value, as well. These demands come not just from civil society activists, but also from customers, and increasingly, investors – more and more of whom are focused on long-term value and want to invest in companies that will be able to create it on a sustainable basis. The most vocal demands, however, are coming from employees, many of whom now make career decisions based on their opportunities to create meaningful, positive change in society. Many CCOs already manage, or work closely with, corporate responsibility departments. Increasingly, because of their broad stakeholder view, CCOs are helping enterprises rethink their corporate purpose with a focus on societal value, and driving changes in business strategy and planning to make societal value creation an integral part of the fabric of the business. This requires a management system that integrates the societal value commitment into the company’s products and services, policies and processes, and the actual behavior of its people.

CCOs are investing in technology and talent to make their functions more agile, more digital, more data- and analytics-driven.

Virtually every CCO has developed digital capabilities, but until recently this has been used to produce and disseminate digital content and to analyze traditional and social media. Now CCOs are adding to these publishing and listening capabilities. They are beginning to adopt the methods and tools of what the field of marketing calls MarTech or Performance Marketing — digitally engaging target audiences and nurturing them along a designed journey toward some action. In the case of MarTech, the desired action is usually a purchase decision. For CCOs, “CommTech” can support customer-facing work, but the same teams and tools can be used to engage a diverse array of stakeholders – employees, prospective employees, opinion leaders, investors, partners and citizens. CommTech will also be an essential defensive mechanism as the threat of machine-amplified misinformation and deepfakes increases. Progressive CCOs are establishing dedicated teams, formally training them on Agile methods, and equipping them with modern “tech stacks” that are increasingly automated. CommTech operations generate data of increasing value to the enterprise.

While few CCOs who participated in our research are at the most advanced stage in any of these realms, the trends and trajectories are clear. To help CCOs and their teams continue to develop and grow, the centerpiece of this report is “Progression Paths.” **There are four: one for CommTech and three — Brand, Culture and Societal Value — for the major elements of corporate character.**





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