

McKinsey Quarterly

The CEO checklist: A tool for leaders to evaluate themselves against best practices in each of the six responsibilities of the CEO's role.

Questions every CEO should be able to answer

Direction-setting checklist: Be bold	Not at all			Completely		
• Vision: Do we have a clear and compelling vision that reframes what winning looks like, and is it owned by the whole enterprise?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Strategy: Have we created a short list of clearly defined big moves at the enterprise level that will distance us from our competitors?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Resource allocation: Are we “thinking like an outsider” to actively reallocate resources (eg, dollars, people, and management attention) to our highest priorities, even when it’s hard to do?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Organizational-alignment checklist: Treat the soft stuff as the hard stuff

• Culture: Are we targeting and systematically pursuing specific areas of cultural change to further execute our strategy?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Organizational design: Is our organization characterized by a balance of stability and agility that maximizes the speed and effectiveness of execution?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Talent: Are the most value-creating roles in our organization filled with the right talent, and do they have a strong leadership pipeline?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Leadership mobilization checklist: Solve for the team's psychology

• Team composition: Is my senior team the right size, comprising people with complementary skills and characterized by an “enterprise first” mindset?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Teamwork: Does my senior team effectively use data and dialogue to make timely decisions on topics that only they can take on?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Operating rhythm: Does my senior team have an effective annual operating rhythm and business review cadence that drives execution and minimizes surprises?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Board engagement checklist: Help directors help the business

• Relationships: Have I built trust with my board members by being “radically transparent” and showing an interest in their views?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Capabilities: Do we have the right profiles on the board, and are we sufficiently educating directors and pulling them in to help where they can?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Board meetings: Are board sessions well prepped, effectively run, and focused on the future (going well beyond fiduciary topics)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

External-stakeholder-connection checklist: Start with “Why?”

• Purpose: Are we clear on the holistic impact we aspire to (our “why?”), and have we embedded that into the core of how we run our business?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Interactions: Do we fully understand our stakeholders' needs (their “why?”) and find constructive common ground with them?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Moments of truth: Have we built resilience ahead of any potential crises so that we'll be able to mitigate their impact and use them to unlock opportunities?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Personal-effectiveness checklist: Do what only you can do

• Time and energy: Do I manage my time and energy well, and do I have the right office support in place to help me successfully and sustainably do what only I can do as the CEO?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Leadership model: Am I leading in a way that is authentic to my convictions and values while also adjusting my behaviors to what the organization needs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Perspective: Do I approach my position with humility, focusing on helping others to succeed and continually improving my ability to do so?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐