

21st Century Global Leadership: Global Black Leaders Speak

Executive Summary



THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
The Power of Inclusive Leadership



The scale and speed of business transformation has escalated in recent years, and management of global enterprises has struggled to keep pace. Successfully adapting to change – learning how to lead, manage, and win in this environment – is not a matter of choice; it is a matter of survival.

As the preeminent member organization for the development of global black leaders, the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) naturally brings a black perspective to addressing these issues. It is what we refer to as the “diversity imperative.” The 18 CEOs/C-suite executives we interviewed for this report – of Fortune 500 companies, from a wide range of industries – describe the opportunities and detours they encountered in their climb to the senior-most levels of management and, more important perhaps, what can and must be done to ensure needed diversity representation as multinational companies compete in the global marketplace. A smaller group of five up-and-coming leaders we interviewed also present their views.

Those we interviewed weighed in on a host of issues relevant to ramping up enterprise leadership diversity, including:

- ▶ Revising the traditional leadership profile to include newer, critical competencies, such as global orientation, multiculturalism, and a combination of traditional proven leadership know-how and “softer” skills, including agility, sensitivity, and the ability to influence, not just dictate, to achieve strategic goals.
- ▶ Ensuring black and other diversity candidates have access to the support and opportunities early in their careers that they require to ascend to enterprise leadership positions.
- ▶ Recognizing that black executives may well possess a distinct cultural advantage in increasingly multicultural organizations and overall business environment, by virtue of their life-long experience successfully navigating two cultures in their personal lives.
- ▶ Elevating the urgency of nurturing diverse candidates with leadership potential by setting specific targets for representation, and compensating managers for success in hitting those targets.
- ▶ Identifying common roadblocks to development, such as considering chiefly staff positions when promoting black executives, as well as a perceived lower tolerance for failure among blacks and other underrepresented groups.

With only five black CEOs currently heading the largest companies (Fortune 500) – and only 15 total ever to have held those positions – there is still a long way to go before corporations reap the benefits of diversity at the top.

For organizations committed to promoting the diversity imperative, ELC offers the following recommendations:

ELC's Top 12: From good intentions to lasting impact

1. Design profiles for key leadership positions by linking them to strategic objectives.
2. Recognize the importance of emerging skills, such as empathy, agility, and cultural sensitivity in the new business world order.
3. Mind metrics and regularly track progress on a number of fronts to propel diversity goals.
4. Require diverse slates for executive positions to ultimately improve representation at the leadership level.
5. Consider putting some “teeth” in diversity requests to managers by including specific targets and rewarding success.
6. Think line not just staff when creating career development paths that will promote the global enterprise leadership the organization requires.
7. Develop a consistent preparedness standard and make sure experience and skills criteria for leadership positions are aligned with what will be required in the job.
8. Include stretch assignments with needed support for success if you are committed to growing beyond the status quo in leadership development and the business.
9. Provide access to mentors and sponsors to provide guidance on specific positions, and broader advice on developing a proactive career strategy.
10. Remember that retaining talent is a two-way street, so make flexibility a competitive advantage when the goal is to retain a wide range of talent.
11. Ensure board exposure for potential enterprise-level leaders to send the right message to both future leaders and to the board.
12. Promote a concerted effort to have an impact on education policy and get behind the push to develop greater numbers of young people with the skills they will need to build successful careers and enter leadership ranks.



The Executive Leadership Council, an independent non-profit 501(c)(6) corporation founded in 1986, is the pre-eminent membership organization committed to increasing the number of global black executives in C-Suites, on corporate boards, and in global enterprises. Comprising more than 500 current and former black CEOs, board members, and senior executives at Fortune 1000 companies and global equivalents, ELC's members work to build an inclusive business leadership pipeline that empowers global black leaders to make impactful contributions to the marketplace and the global communities they serve. For more information, please visit www.elcinfo.com.

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