

10 Questions to Ask Before You Start Your Next Executive Search

A CHRO should be able to answer yes to at least eight of the 10 questions before beginning a C-level search. If not, pause the search and fix the missing elements — because these gaps will turn into misalignment, slow hiring, culture mismatches, or post-hire friction.

1. Do we have absolute clarity on the company's next four years of strategy — and is the executive hire designed for the future state, not the present pain?

If the strategy is fuzzy, the hire will be fuzzy. If the strategy is clear, the hire becomes a lever.

2. Have we earned the “right to hire”?

This includes:

- purpose clarified
- values in action
- mission operationalized
- CEO aligned on what must change

A company with low clarity hires the wrong person. A company with high clarity hires the right one faster.

3. Did I build a true executive scorecard with the CEO — starting with “What will you stop doing once this leader is in seat?”

If the CEO cannot answer this question, the role is not ready.

4. Is the economic rationale for this hire documented and agreed on by the CEO, CFO, and legal?

If the ROI is not explicit, the search becomes emotional — not strategic.

5. Have I activated all networks — CHRO peers, board members, and if applicable PE/VC partners — before opening the external search funnel?

If you have not activated the network, you're doing “recruiting.” If you have, you're doing “executive search.”

6. Have I designed a consistent, 45-minute minimum interview loop with scorecard-driven competency questions (and limited variance)?

Inconsistent loops create inconsistent C-suite outcomes.

7. Can I articulate the top three behavioral risks of this hire — and how we will evaluate them during the process?

Skill is easy to vet. Behavioral risk is what breaks companies.

8. Have I established — in writing — the decision-making hierarchy for the executive hire (advisor → recommender → decider) before the search begins?”

If not, decision authority will become ambiguous, emotional, or contested. This is the root cause of stalled or failed executive searches.

Have I aligned the CEO, board, and other functional leaders on their decision rights in the hiring process?

If decision authority is unclear, the search slows, stalls, or fractures.

9. Have I built the 30/60/90, the integration plan, and the Decision Rights Matrix before the offer goes out?

Otherwise, the new executive walks into ambiguity — and ambiguity kills velocity.

10. Have I planned the post-hire re-leveling conversation with the CEO (what they stop doing, what peers stop doing, and what the new exec owns)?

A new executive changes the operating system. If you don't plan for the shift, the organization will resist it.