The unexpected demands and challenges of the Board, collectively and individually, are a big surprise for first-time CEOs.

- Engage members individually as well as collectively.
- Set expectations by “contracting” with the Board early on.
- Avoid ugly surprises.

The role of the first-time CEO requires simultaneous learning and leading.

- Recognize that others see a “complete” CEO, while learning on the job will be the reality.
- Work with peer CEOs who have “been there” and can help see what’s around the corner.
- Seek constant feedback, and act on it.

Decisions made by the CEO affect all stakeholders. But, it is the impact of those decisions on the lives of employees and their families that weigh on them most.

- Find ways to manage the stress that comes with making really tough decisions.
- Do not become detached. Communicate clearly and often. Be confident.
- Be prepared to quickly remove individuals who are ineffective or corrosive.
- Understand the need for emotional resilience and personal well-being.

CEOs find themselves isolated and at the center of attention simultaneously.

- Be prepared for relationships to change and to be treated differently, even by close colleagues.
- Recognize the magnified impact of every action and statement.
- Think carefully about what you say and to whom. Know that spontaneity can be the enemy.
- Your “title” will impact the behavior of others—do not let it do the same to you—stay true to who you are.
THE POWER OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION

The freedom to create, to have a vision, to set a course—and then to see it through by working with others—is the best part of the CEO’s job.

- Use the power of storytelling to build commitment to your vision.
- Before moving quickly, take the time to engage others, to listen, to learn.
- A clear sense of purpose, well articulated, is a great way to motivate others.

THE MYTH OF CONTROL

The politics and organizational dynamics that strive to influence the CEO are relentless. The CEO’s finite time is in infinite demand.

- Be prepared to manage the realities of organizational politics through open engagement and healthy debate.
- Manage the “time vampires” that suck time away from important tasks. Take control of the calendar.
- Learn to achieve success through influence, rather than control.

ABOUT THE RIVER GROUP

The River Group is a leadership consulting firm. We work with CEOs and senior executives on their major organizational and leadership issues.

We support leaders in transforming their businesses by helping them to:

- Architect and lead change
- Create a sustainable and fit-for-purpose culture
- Design an organization aligned with the strategy

We support businesses to transform their leaders by helping them to identify and develop current and future leaders who excel in:

- Change leadership roles
- Enterprise-wide leadership roles
- Roles of increasing responsibility

We work with organizations all over the world. We harness the best in social science research with proven tools and methods to deliver actionable solutions to our clients.

Our team combines the behavioral know-how of consultants with the concrete experience of the CEO.