



ELITE CV

2026 EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW PREP PACK

*The definitive C-Suite interview guide
for leaders competing in a global market*

Designed for: C-Suite Executives | VP & Director Level | Global Markets

Contents

01	Introduction: The Executive Advantage	03
02	The 2026 Interview Landscape	04
03	Executive Presence & Personal Brand Audit	06
04	Pre-Interview Research Framework	08
05	Your Leadership Narrative (SOAR Method)	10
06	Executive Interview Formats	12
07	The Core Question Bank	14
08	Role-Specific Preparation (CEO / CFO / COO / CMO / CTO / CHRO)	16
09	AI, ESG & Global Leadership Competencies	18
10	Virtual & Cross-Cultural Interview Excellence	20
11	Compensation Negotiation Playbook	22
12	The Executive Interview Master Checklist	24
13	Elite CV: Global Career Services	26

01 | Introduction: The Executive Advantage

Why executive interviews demand a fundamentally different approach

Securing a C-suite, Vice President, or Director-level role is one of the most competitive endeavours in modern professional life. The stakes are higher, the scrutiny is deeper, and the evaluation process is more complex than at any other career stage. Yet many highly accomplished leaders enter these interviews under-prepared relying on career momentum rather than intentional strategy.

This pack is designed exclusively for senior leaders who are ready to move beyond the standard interview playbook. Whether you are targeting a CEO seat, a CFO role at a global enterprise, or a VP position in a new geography, the principles here will help you:

- Articulate a powerful, credible leadership narrative
- Navigate multi-round and board-level interview processes
- Address the new competencies that matter most in 2026 AI fluency, ESG leadership, and cross-cultural agility
- Negotiate a compensation package that reflects your true market value
- Project executive presence in virtual, in-person, and hybrid interview settings across any culture

"The executive interview is not a test of what you know. It is a test of who you are, how you think, and whether you are the leader this organisation needs right now."

How to Use This Pack

Work through each section sequentially for a full preparation. If time is limited, prioritise Sections 03-07 for immediate impact. The Executive Interview Master Checklist (Section 12) consolidates all key actions into a practical pre-interview workflow.

02 | The 2026 Interview Landscape

What has changed since 2023 and what it means for you

The executive hiring environment has shifted dramatically. Four forces have reshaped what boards, CEOs, and executive search firms are looking for in senior candidates:

AI INTEGRATION

AI-related interview questions have tripled since 2023. Executives are not expected to be engineers, but they must demonstrate strategic AI awareness understanding how generative AI and automation affect value creation, workforce design, and competitive positioning. Only 11% of leaders globally feel prepared for the AI transition (PwC, 2025), making this a defining differentiator.

ESG AS CORE LEADERSHIP

Over 75% of executives now say ESG leadership directly impacts long-term business resilience. Boards are embedding ESG competencies into executive scorecards. Candidates who can articulate a clear track record on sustainability, inclusion, and stakeholder capitalism have a decisive edge.

GLOBAL TALENT COMPETITION

89% of white-collar executives now operate in globally dispersed teams. Companies are not just hiring for local markets they are seeking leaders who can build culture, drive alignment, and deliver results across geographies, time zones, and cultural contexts.

PSYCHOMETRIC & AI-POWERED ASSESSMENT

More than 50% of organisations now use pre-employment assessments for executive roles, including cognitive ability tests, personality profiling, and AI-scored video interviews. Understanding these tools and how to present authentically within them is no longer optional.

Key Shifts: 2023 vs. 2026

DIMENSION	2023 APPROACH	2026 IMPERATIVE
Interview Focus	Competency & track record	Judgment, AI fluency, stakeholder capitalism
Interview Rounds	3-4 rounds typical	4-6+ rounds; board involvement standard
Assessment Methods	Behavioural interviews	Panel, board, assessment centres, psychometrics, AI scoring
Global Relevance	Regional hiring focus	Cross-cultural leadership tested explicitly

ESG Questions	Occasional / optional	Core competency; linked to compensation
Virtual Format	Emerging / secondary	Fully embedded; virtual presence is a leadership signal
Comp Negotiation	Salary + bonus	Full package: equity, LTI, severance, change-of-control

03 | Executive Presence & Personal Brand Audit

Your brand is being evaluated before the first interview begins

Research shows that 65% of executive candidates are researched online before an interview invitation is extended. Your LinkedIn profile, media presence, and digital footprint are your first interview. A strong executive brand can generate significant business value and dramatically accelerates trust-building during the hiring process.

The Four Pillars of Executive Presence

AUTHORITY	Clear track record. Quantified impact. Industry recognition. Your story must answer: 'What scale of problem have you solved?'
AUTHENTICITY	Genuine personality. Intellectual honesty. Vulnerability about lessons learned. Boards are adept at detecting polish without substance.
RELATABILITY	Demonstrated empathy for employees, customers, and stakeholders. The ability to connect across functions, levels, and cultures.
VISIBILITY	Thought leadership, speaking, advisory roles, and media presence signal that you are a recognised leader in your domain not just within one organisation.

LinkedIn Optimisation for Executives (2026)

- Headline:** Do not use your title alone. Include industry, key competencies, and value: e.g., *"Chief Revenue Officer | SaaS Scale-Up | GTM Strategy | Board Advisor"*
- Summary:** Lead with the problem you solve and your scale of impact. Write in first person. Include 2-3 quantified achievements. Avoid corporate jargon.
- Experience:** Every major role needs 3-4 bullet accomplishments with metrics (revenue impact, team size, efficiency gains, growth rate).
- AI Skills:** Explicitly include digital transformation, AI strategy, and innovation leadership these are screened for by executive search algorithms.
- Recommendations:** Seek endorsements from peers, direct reports, and board members. Rotate periodically to stay current.
- Thought Leadership:** Publish 3-4 original insights annually. Comment thoughtfully on industry topics. Engagement boosts visibility with executive search firms.

PRO TIP

Google your full name before every interview process. Set up a Google Alert on your name. Know exactly what the hiring team will find and if needed, proactively address anything in your narrative.

Personal Brand Pre-Interview Audit Checklist

- LinkedIn profile 100% complete with executive-grade headline and summary
- Professional headshot updated within the last 18 months
- All experience entries include quantified accomplishments
- 2-3 current, credible recommendations visible on your profile
- Thought leadership examples visible (articles, speaking, media)
- Google first-page results reflect your professional brand accurately
- Personal website or digital portfolio up to date (if applicable)
- Social media activity is professional and consistent with your brand
- Online name and profile photo used for video platforms are formal and correct

04 | Pre-Interview Research Framework

Executive preparation goes far beyond reading the company website

Superficial research is one of the most common and costly mistakes senior candidates make. Boards and CEOs expect you to walk in with a strategic perspective on their business not just familiarity with their products. Use the framework below as your non-negotiable research protocol.

COMPANY DEEP DIVE

- Annual reports (last 3 years)- financial trajectory, stated priorities, risk factors
- 10-K / 20-F filings (public companies)- segment performance, risk disclosures
- Recent earnings call transcripts- management tone, analyst concerns
- Crunchbase / PitchBook (private companies)- funding rounds, investors, valuation signals
- Recent press releases, acquisitions, and strategic announcements
- Glassdoor and LinkedIn reviews- employee sentiment and culture signals

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

- Identify 3-5 key competitors and their market positioning
- Recent competitive moves: product launches, M&A, pricing changes
- Analyst reports and industry publications on sector dynamics
- Regulatory and macro factors affecting the industry
- White space opportunities the company may not yet be pursuing

LEADERSHIP TEAM INTELLIGENCE

- Deep LinkedIn profiles of CEO, your potential direct manager, and key peers
- Google each key leader for speeches, interviews, and published articles
- Note their leadership philosophy, stated priorities, and communication style
- Understand tenure and track record is this a stable or transitioning team?
- Research any board members involved in the hiring decision

THE ROLE ITSELF

- If a replacement: what happened to the previous incumbent?
- If a new role: what strategic need does it address?
- Current team composition open roles, recent hires, departures

- The key metrics that define success for this function
- How this role interfaces with the board and C-suite peers

Developing Your 3-5 Strategic Talking Points

Once your research is complete, distil it into 3-5 focused talking points that connect your track record directly to the company's current challenges and opportunities. Each talking point should be quantified, specific, and connected to a business outcome. Write them on a single index card. These are the threads you will weave throughout every conversation in the process.

ELITE TIP

Prepare a concise, written strategic perspective on the company no more than one page covering your assessment of their top 2-3 challenges and your initial hypotheses on how you would address them. Share it as a follow-up after a first round. It is a powerful differentiator.

05 | Your Leadership Narrative

The SOAR Method the executive's preferred storytelling framework

The STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) is familiar at most career levels. For executives, the SOAR method is more powerful it emphasises obstacles overcome and strategic judgment under pressure, which is exactly what boards and CEOs are evaluating. Research shows that SOAR-structured stories are 40% more memorable than standard STAR responses.

The SOAR Framework

S	SITUATION	Set the strategic context. What was the scale, complexity, or stakes of the situation? Establish credibility with specifics.
O	OBSTACLE	What made this genuinely difficult? What were the competing pressures, resource constraints, or stakeholder conflicts? This is where executive judgment is tested.
A	ACTION	What specific decisions did you make? Avoid 'we' boards are evaluating your leadership. Show how you led through ambiguity.
R	RESULT	Quantify the outcome. Revenue impact, growth achieved, cost saved, culture transformed. Connect the result to business or stakeholder value.

Building Your Executive Story Bank

Identify 10-12 core stories from your career that cover the full range of executive competencies. Structure each in SOAR format. Practice delivering each in 2-3 minutes. The goal is not to memorise, but to internalise the themes so you can adapt fluidly to any question.

STORY CATEGORY	WHAT IT DEMONSTRATES
Crisis Leadership	A situation where you had to make high-stakes decisions under uncertainty and time pressure.
Strategic Transformation	A business or function you significantly changed market entry, restructure, digital transformation.
People Leadership at Scale	Building, aligning, or transforming a large team or organisation.
Stakeholder Navigation	Managing a complex stakeholder landscape board, investors, regulators, or public.
Failure & Recovery	A significant failure, what you did about it, and what you learned. Boards respect leaders who are honest about this.

<p>Innovation & Growth</p>	<p>A new product, market, or business model you developed that delivered measurable value.</p>
<p>Cross-Cultural Leadership</p>	<p>Leading effectively across geographies, cultures, or diverse teams essential for global roles.</p>
<p>Change Management</p>	<p>Driving adoption of change across a resistant organisation.</p>

<p>COMMON MISTAKE</p>	<p>Using 'we' throughout your stories. Boards know leadership is collaborative but they are evaluating your specific judgment and contribution. Use 'I' deliberately: 'I decided...', 'I restructured...', 'I persuaded the board...'</p>
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06 | Executive Interview Formats

Know the format and how to excel in each one

Executive hiring processes routinely involve 4-6 rounds. Each format is designed to evaluate a different dimension of your leadership. Understanding the intent behind each format allows you to calibrate your approach accordingly.

COMPETENCY PANEL INTERVIEW

WHAT IT IS Most common format. Multiple interviewers (HR, future peers, direct reports, external consultants). Structured questions targeting specific leadership competencies. Typically 45-60 minutes.

HOW TO EXCEL Use SOAR stories. Maintain consistent energy and engagement across all panel members. Reference earlier comments to demonstrate active listening.

BOARD-LEVEL INTERVIEW

WHAT IT IS For C-suite roles. Involves board directors, non-executive directors, major investors. Focus: strategic leadership, governance, risk management, and cultural alignment.

HOW TO EXCEL Speak in peer-level language. Show strategic vision, not operational detail. Be direct, even provocative. Boards respect decisive, intellectually honest thinking.

ASSESSMENT CENTRE

WHAT IT IS Half- or full-day event. May include group exercises, individual case studies, role-plays, psychometric testing, and structured interviews. Used for MD/C-suite appointments.

HOW TO EXCEL Collaborate visibly but lead when appropriate. Show structured thinking in case studies. Do not dismiss psychometric tests engage with genuine self-awareness.

BUSINESS CASE / STRATEGIC PRESENTATION

WHAT IT IS You are given a real or hypothetical business challenge and asked to present your strategic recommendations to the hiring team.

HOW TO EXCEL Frame the problem before solving it. Show your analytical rigour. Include your assumptions. Acknowledge trade-offs. End with a clear recommendation and implementation roadmap.

STRENGTH-BASED INTERVIEW

WHAT IT IS Focuses on what you genuinely enjoy, what energises you, and where you do your best work. Growing in use for senior management assessment.

HOW TO EXCEL Be honest and specific. This format detects inconsistency. Know your energisers and areas of growth boards appreciate self-aware leaders.

INFORMAL / LUNCH INTERVIEW

WHAT IT IS Appears casual but is fully evaluative. Assesses emotional intelligence, interpersonal style, cultural fit, and behaviour outside of formal settings.

HOW TO EXCEL Your warmth and curiosity are under observation. Ask great questions. Listen more than you speak. Be genuinely interested in the people across the table.

07 | The Core Question Bank

The questions you will be asked and how to answer them at executive level

The following question bank covers the six core categories used in executive interviews globally. For each question, we provide the intent behind it and coaching guidance for crafting an executive-calibre response.

Leadership & Vision

Q: What is your leadership philosophy, and how has it evolved?

Do not give a textbook answer. Share a specific moment that changed how you lead. Boards want authenticity a philosophy that has been tested by real adversity.

Q: What would your direct reports say is your greatest leadership strength and your greatest blind spot?

This question tests self-awareness. The strength should be specific and backed by an example. The blind spot should be real, accompanied by what you are actively doing about it.

Q: Tell me about a time you led a team through a significant crisis.

Use SOAR. Focus on your decision-making process, not just the outcome. Show how you maintained team performance and stakeholder trust simultaneously.

Q: How do you approach succession planning and developing future leaders?

Boards think long-term. Show that you invest in talent deliberately with examples of direct reports you have promoted or prepared for bigger roles.

Strategic Thinking & Business Acumen

Q: What is your 100-day plan for this role?

Divide into three phases: Listen & Learn (days 1-30), Diagnose & Build (days 31-60), Act & Align (days 61-100). Show that you will not act before understanding the context, but equally that you will move decisively once you have.

Q: How do you balance short-term performance pressure with long-term value creation?

Show you understand the tension explicitly. Use a specific example where you held a strategic position under short-term pressure and the outcome justified it.

Q: What market opportunities do you see that we are currently missing?

This requires genuine research. It also demonstrates intellectual courage. A strong answer shows strategic insight and positions you as a peer, not a candidate.

Q: How would you approach a significant economic downturn in the business?

Show you can hold both the financial reality and the human dimension simultaneously. Boards want leaders who make hard decisions without losing the culture.

People, Culture & Organisational Health

Q: How do you build a high-performing executive team?

Talk about talent assessment, complementary strengths, psychological safety, and how you create clarity of ownership. Use a specific team-building example.

Q: Describe your approach to organisational change that encountered significant resistance.

Show empathy for resistance as a signal, not an obstacle. Describe your stakeholder engagement strategy and how you built a coalition for change.

Q: How do you approach diversity, equity, and inclusion at the leadership level?

Share specific actions, not principles. What diverse hires have you made? What structural barriers have you removed? Boards see through performative DEI language.

Failure, Accountability & Learning Agility

Q: Tell me about your most significant professional failure.

Choose a real, material failure not a humble-brag. Show that you took ownership, identified what you would do differently, and demonstrate the lesson is integrated into your current leadership approach.

Q: Describe a decision you made that was unpopular but that you still believe was right.

This tests moral courage. Show the reasoning behind your decision, how you communicated it, and the outcome. Do not choose a trivial example.

Values, Ethics & ESG

Q: How do you define and model the values of an organisation?

Show how you have made values visible through specific behaviours and decisions especially in moments where the easier path was to compromise them.

Q: What have you done to embed ESG principles into business strategy not just reporting?

In 2026, ESG as a reporting exercise is insufficient. Show how sustainability thinking has influenced product decisions, capital allocation, or talent strategy.

08 | Role-Specific Preparation

Tailored question themes and success metrics by C-suite function

While many interview themes are universal at executive level, each function carries its own evaluation lens. Below are the key questions and competencies specific to the most common C-suite and senior leadership roles.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

Key Competencies Assessed: Strategic vision, stakeholder governance, culture stewardship, external representation, board management.

- How do you manage the relationship between the board's expectations and day-to-day execution?
- What is your philosophy on stakeholder capitalism versus shareholder primacy?
- How do you stay connected to the culture and ground truth of the organisation at scale?
- What would you do in the first 30 days if you discovered a significant cultural or ethical problem?
- How do you think about the CEO's role in external positioning customers, media, government?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER (CFO)

Key Competencies Assessed: Capital allocation, risk management, financial storytelling, strategic partnership, investor relations.

- How do you balance financial discipline with the need for strategic investment?
- Describe your experience with enterprise risk management and capital structure decisions.
- How have you used financial strategy to drive business transformation rather than just measure it?
- Tell me about a time you had to deliver difficult financial news to the board.
- How do you develop financial literacy and business partnership capability in your team?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER (COO)

Key Competencies Assessed: Operational excellence, scalability, systems thinking, execution discipline, cross-functional alignment.

- How do you approach scaling operations across multiple geographies with speed and consistency?
- How do you identify and eliminate operational bottlenecks that are invisible to leadership?
- How do you maintain culture and performance during rapid growth or integration?
- Describe your experience linking operational KPIs directly to strategic outcomes.
- Tell me about a major operational transformation you led end to end.

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER (CMO) / CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER

Key Competencies Assessed: Brand strategy, revenue growth, data-driven decision-making, customer centricity, global marketing.

- How do you approach brand positioning in a highly competitive and noisy market?
- How do you balance brand investment with performance marketing in resource-constrained environments?
- How do you measure the ROI of brand and trust not just campaigns?
- How do you integrate customer insight into product strategy and board-level decisions?
- What is your approach to global brand localisation?

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER (CTO) / CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Key Competencies Assessed: Technology-business alignment, digital transformation, cybersecurity governance, talent in tech, AI and data strategy.

- How do you develop a technology strategy that is directly aligned to business objectives not just innovation for its own sake?
- How have you led a major digital transformation, and what did you learn?
- How do you approach cybersecurity as a board-level governance responsibility?
- How do you build technology leadership capability in a function that faces constant talent pressure?
- What is your framework for evaluating build vs. buy vs. partner decisions?

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER / CHRO

Key Competencies Assessed: Culture and values, talent strategy, organisational design, HR as a business driver, workforce of the future.

- How do you lead a culture transformation when the organisation has significant legacy behaviours?
- How do you measure human capital ROI in a way that resonates with the CFO and board?
- Describe your experience building scalable HR infrastructure during rapid growth.
- How do you approach executive succession planning with rigour and transparency?
- How do you ensure your people strategy anticipates the impact of AI on workforce design?

09 | AI, ESG & Global Leadership Competencies

The three dimensions that define executive readiness in 2026

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FLUENCY

Only 11% of global leaders feel prepared for the AI transition (PwC, 2025). This creates a significant competitive opening. You do not need to be a data scientist but you must be able to speak with conviction about AI's strategic implications for your function and industry.

Questions You Will Be Asked

- How strategically AI-aware are you, and how does generative AI affect your thinking about value creation in this role?
- Describe your experience working alongside AI tools or overseeing AI implementation.
- How would you approach reskilling your workforce for an AI-augmented environment?
- What ethical considerations do you weigh when adopting AI at scale?
- How do you ensure AI adoption does not erode trust, diversity, or organisational culture?

PREPARATION

Be specific about 2-3 AI use cases you have personally overseen or driven: a workflow automation, a predictive analytics initiative, a GenAI implementation. Show strategic decision-making, not technical detail.

ESG LEADERSHIP

Over 75% of executives say ESG leadership directly impacts long-term resilience. 65% of senior candidates research a company's ESG standing before accepting an interview. Boards now evaluate whether you model stakeholder capitalism in practice not just in policy documents.

Questions You Will Be Asked

- How have you embedded sustainability into business strategy not just compliance reporting?
- Tell me about an ESG initiative you championed that had measurable business impact.
- How do you balance profit obligations with purpose and stakeholder accountability?
- How do you hold your leadership team accountable for inclusion and belonging metrics?
- What is your approach to climate risk as a board-level governance matter?

GLOBAL & CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

For executives competing in global markets, cross-cultural leadership competency is evaluated explicitly. 89% of white-collar executives now work in globally dispersed teams. Companies with top-quartile cultural

diversity are 33% more likely to achieve above-average profitability but only when leadership navigates cultural differences effectively.

Questions You Will Be Asked

- Describe your experience leading a team across multiple geographies and cultures. What did you learn?
- How do you adapt your leadership style when operating in cultures very different from your own?
- Tell me about a cross-cultural misunderstanding or conflict you navigated. What was the outcome?
- How do you build psychological safety and trust in virtual, distributed teams?
- How do you approach governance and compliance when operating across different regulatory jurisdictions?

The executives who win in the global market are not the ones who ignore cultural difference they are the ones who leverage it as a source of competitive advantage.

10 | Virtual & Cross-Cultural Interview Excellence

How to command presence and build trust across a screen and across borders

Virtual interviews are now standard at every stage of executive hiring. For global roles, your ability to project confidence, warmth, and authority on video is itself a proxy for your ability to lead distributed teams.

Technical Setup Non-Negotiables

- Test camera, microphone, and speakers 24-48 hours before not 5 minutes before
- Internet speed: minimum 10Mbps download. Run a speed test and have a mobile hotspot as backup
- Camera at eye level not looking up or down. Use a stand or adjust your screen height
- Lighting in front of your face, not behind. No window backlighting
- Professional background clean, uncluttered. A bookshelf or plain wall is ideal
- Log in 10 minutes early. Have the dial-in number saved as a backup
- Close all notifications: Slack, email, Teams, calendar alerts all off
- Have a glass of water nearby. Silence your phone completely

Presence & Communication on Camera

- Eye contact:** Look into the camera lens when you are speaking not at your own image on screen. When listening, you may look at the interviewer's face. Practice this; it feels unnatural at first.
- Vocal energy:** Video compresses your presence. Speak with slightly more energy and variation than you would in person. Avoid monotone delivery.
- Pause deliberately:** Take a brief pause before answering complex questions. On video, this signals confidence and thoughtfulness not hesitation.
- Body language:** Sit upright. Use measured hand gestures. Avoid excessive movement. Smile naturally it reads more strongly on camera than in person.
- Full outfit:** Dress fully, not just from the waist up. Your mindset shifts when you are dressed for the room, even virtually.

Cross-Cultural Interview Protocols

When interviewing for roles in cultures different from your own, small adaptations make a significant difference to how authority, warmth, and credibility are perceived.

CULTURAL DIMENSION	LOWER-CONTEXT CULTURES (e.g. US, UK, Australia)	HIGHER-CONTEXT CULTURES (e.g. Japan, Korea, Middle East, parts of Europe)
Communication Style	Direct, explicit, speed valued	Indirect, layered, considered pacing valued

Showing Authority	First-person assertion; share opinions early	Demonstrate via credibility and patience; defer on title
Questions to the Panel	Direct and challenging questions are respected	Frame questions respectfully; avoid public challenge
Silence	Fill pauses quickly	Allow silence it signals contemplation
Hierarchy Signalling	Downplay rank; appear accessible	Acknowledge seniority; formal modes of address expected

**GLOBAL
BEST
PRACTICE**

Research the cultural communication norms of the hiring country before every international interview. A 20-minute read on the cultural profile of your target market demonstrates the cross-cultural intelligence the company is looking for.

11 | Compensation Negotiation Playbook

Negotiating a package that reflects your true market value

Executive compensation negotiation is fundamentally different from salary negotiation at earlier career stages. The package is multi-dimensional, the stakes are high, and the way you negotiate signals your commercial acumen and self-assurance. Executives who negotiate poorly leave significant value on the table not just in base salary, but in equity, severance, and long-term incentives.

The Complete Executive Compensation Package

COMPONENT	WHAT TO NEGOTIATE
Base Salary	Benchmark against industry, geography, and company size. Offers less negotiation room than other components.
Annual Bonus / STI	Typically 15-50% of base for C-suite. Negotiate both target percentage and performance criteria clarity.
Long-Term Incentives (LTI)	Equity, RSUs, or phantom shares. Negotiate grant quantum, vesting schedule (3-4 years typical), and acceleration clauses on change of control.
Sign-On Bonus	To offset unvested compensation forfeited at your previous employer. Often 20-50% of annual base. Highly negotiable.
Severance & Good Leaver Terms	1-2 years base salary for C-suite is standard. Negotiate: what constitutes 'good leaver', garden leave provisions, and reference obligations.
Change of Control Protection	What happens to your equity and employment if the company is acquired? This is critical and often overlooked.
Benefits & Perquisites	Executive health cover, pension/retirement contributions (6-15%), professional development budget, club memberships, car allowance, relocation package.
Flexible Working	Additional leave, flexible arrangements, and sabbatical options increasingly negotiable at executive level globally.

Negotiation Principles

- 1. Always let them go first.** If asked for your expectations, respond: *'What is the budgeted range for this role?'* Anchoring too early limits your upside.
- 2. Use market data, not personal need.** Frame your counter-offer around market benchmarks not your current salary or personal financial situation.
- 3. Negotiate the full package, not just base.** A modest base increase plus an improved LTI, sign-on bonus, and severance can be substantially more valuable.
- 4. Request 24-48 hours to consider.** This is expected and respected at executive level. Never accept verbally on the spot.

5. Get everything in writing. Do not start without a signed offer letter covering all components. Review it with a legal advisor especially equity and severance clauses.

**CRITICAL
WARNING**

Non-compete and non-solicitation clauses in executive contracts can significantly limit your future options. Have a specialist employment lawyer review the full agreement before signing. This cost is almost always worth it.

12 | The Executive Interview Master Checklist

Your non-negotiable preparation protocol from research to follow-up

PERSONAL BRAND & ONLINE PRESENCE

- Google your full name understand what the hiring team will find
- LinkedIn profile 100% complete: executive headline, strong summary, quantified experience
- Professional headshot updated within 18 months
- Thought leadership content visible on LinkedIn (articles, posts, speaking)
- Personal website or digital profile current and professional
- All social media reviewed nothing inconsistent with your executive brand

COMPANY & ROLE RESEARCH

- Annual reports (last 3 years) reviewed and annotated
- Competitive landscape mapped 3-5 competitors and their positioning understood
- Recent press releases, earnings calls, and strategic announcements reviewed
- LinkedIn profiles of CEO, direct manager, and board members reviewed
- Glassdoor and employee review data reviewed for culture signals
- Context of the role understood: new role, replacement, or restructured?
- 3-5 strategic talking points developed linking your track record to their priorities

STORY BANK & NARRATIVE

- SOAR method internalised not just understood but practised out loud
- 10-12 core SOAR stories drafted and practised (2-3 minutes each)
- Stories cover: crisis leadership, strategic transformation, people leadership, failure/recovery, cross-cultural, ESG
- Quantified results confirmed for every key story
- 'I' language used throughout not 'we'
- Leadership narrative (career arc) can be delivered confidently in 3-4 minutes

INTERVIEW-SPECIFIC PREPARATION

- Interview format confirmed: panel, board, assessment centre, case study, or informal

- Interviewers researched individually where names are known
- 20-30 prepared questions ready to ask across all rounds
- 100-day plan drafted and ready to discuss if asked
- Response to compensation question prepared: market data researched, ask-first strategy ready
- AI fluency story prepared: 2-3 specific examples of AI or digital transformation
- ESG story prepared: specific initiative with measurable business impact
- Cross-cultural example prepared (for global roles)

LOGISTICS - VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

- Video platform downloaded, tested, and account verified 48 hours before
- Camera, microphone, lighting, and background all tested
- Dial-in number saved as backup
- Notifications disabled on all devices for the duration
- Full interview outfit prepared and worn (not just top half)
- Logging in 10 minutes early confirmed as a commitment

LOGISTICS - IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

- Location confirmed and journey dry-run completed or route mapped precisely
- Departure time set to arrive 15 minutes early
- Copies of CV / supporting materials prepared
- Portfolio or strategic document prepared if relevant
- Interview outfit prepared, pressed, and appropriate to company culture
- Phone on silent before entering the building

POST-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- Personalised thank-you email sent to each interviewer within 24 hours
- Key themes, pain points, and opportunities noted immediately after the interview
- Strategic one-page perspective or 30-60-90 day plan offered as follow-up collateral
- Follow-up timeline confirmed and noted
- Reflections on what went well and what to adjust for the next round captured

13 | Elite CV: Global Executive Career Services

Helping senior leaders present with the precision and power their career deserves

Elite CV partners with executives and senior leaders across the globe to build career assets that command attention at the highest level. Our team combines executive hiring expertise with world-class design to ensure you enter every process looking and feeling like the leader you are.

EXECUTIVE CV & COVER LETTER	ATS-optimised, board-ready CV crafted by senior writers with deep knowledge of C-suite hiring standards across global markets. Every CV is tailored to role, industry, and geography.
LINKEDIN OPTIMISATION	Full executive LinkedIn transformation: keyword-optimised for recruiter search, strategically positioned for thought leadership, and aligned with your personal brand narrative.
CAREER PRESENTATION / EXECUTIVE BIOGRAPHY	A high-impact, designed career narrative document used for board introductions, speaking engagements, investor meetings, and executive search processes. Available as a print-ready PDF or PowerPoint presentation.
DIGITAL CV & PERSONAL WEBSITE	Elevate your digital presence with a professionally designed digital CV or personal executive website built to rank in search, drive inbound enquiries, and reinforce your brand 24/7.
EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW COACHING	One-on-one coaching with an experienced executive coach including mock board interviews, SOAR story bank development, compensation negotiation preparation, and virtual presence training. Available globally via video.
GLOBAL MARKET ADAPTATION	Localisation of all career documents for specific markets: US, UK, Europe, Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Africa. Includes cultural calibration of tone, format, and positioning.

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This guide is updated annually by the Elite CV research and editorial team. All frameworks, data references, and market insights reflect global executive hiring standards as of 2026. For bespoke interview preparation and career strategy, contact our team directly.