

# The VP's Guide To Getting C-Suite Support

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## Don't let your idea die upon arrival.

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You are an executive on the fast track to the C-suite, and you've come up with an initiative that is going to skyrocket the success of your entire organization. You know that the next thing you need is a series of meetings with the relevant C-suite individuals. Once you get those meetings, they will see the brilliance of your plan and put their full support behind it, right?

Probably not.

It's most likely that you are going about gaining C-suite support entirely wrong.

Too often, we try to tell others about our business goals or ideas by conveying what is important to us. The best way to get someone to commit to support you mentally, verbally and financially is by understanding how your ideas and initiatives affect the things they need as well. Too many people skip this step, and their ideas, no matter how compelling, never make it out of that first meeting.

You don't want your idea dead on arrival. That is why you need a strategic approach for how to gain the support of your C-suite. One officer may be your key to budget, while support from others may be critical to securing resources and support from their departments to ultimately make your initiative so successful that it skyrockets your career.

### Before the Meeting: Learn C-Suite Goals

The best way to gain support is to demonstrate the value your initiative has for *them*. You need to clearly articulate how *your* initiative supports *their* goals (and this is the most important part!) by using *their own words*.

Before you can do this, you must get to know the goals of each C-suite person from whom you need support. This goes beyond knowing your company's annual and five-year goals. (If you don't know your company's goals for this fiscal year and the next five years, then you need to find out right now. You won't get very far without that.)

You must understand each C-suite functional leader's business goals and, when possible, their personal goals. This will help you understand their mindset. Once you know and understand company goals, individual business goals, career goals and personal goals, you can put all of these together to form your speaking points for gaining support of each individual within your C-suite.

## In the Meeting: How to Gain Support of Each C-Suite Individual

Once you get a meeting, don't waste time. You only have so long to convey your idea and get buy-in, so structure your C-suite meetings strategically.

- » **Make it extremely clear how your proposed initiative will help them.** For example, if you want to pitch a customer experience initiative to the CFO, you should paint a picture of how this increases revenue with existing customers, enhances NPS to gain new customers and overall increases your profitability margin. Or, if you want to pitch employee engagement to the CMO, you should speak to how engaged employees increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as product innovation to increase sales.
- » **Get their feedback.** Do not go into a 30-minute meeting with 30 minutes of content. This is a rookie mistake. Structure the meeting so there is time between points and also time at the end for an exchange of ideas. Let them tell you what they love and what they hate, and give them opportunities throughout to ask questions and provide concerns.

Remember: You can only address their concerns if you give them time to express them. There needs to be an interactive conversation about this initiative. Additionally, they will feel more ownership when they are given time to ask and problem-solve alongside you.

- » **Ensure they have action items.** Almost any action item, no matter how simple, is a sign of success. They will more actively sponsor the initiative going forward if they have committed to something before you leave the room.

So, before you go into the meeting, figure out what this action item might be (and have flexibility with this as the meeting progresses). The action item might be as simple as having them agree to meet with you again to

discuss how to gain buy-in from other leaders, or as complex as getting them to create a sponsorship committee to help you manage your initiative. If they have committed to a next step, then they have mentally committed to the initiative.

## After the Meeting: Track and Share Success

Congratulations on getting C-suite support for your initiative! Now it's time to rock it and track it.

Document success metrics based on goals for your department, the company as a whole, and what you heard from each C-suite sponsor. Before you begin, take baseline numbers, and ensure you can track the results. Proactively report back to everyone what you accomplished as it pertains to personal, departmental and companywide goals.

If you follow the steps above, your ideas are more likely to get attention, support and the budget you need to skyrocket the success of your company and your career.