



## S&P 500 C-Suite Snapshot 2025: Profiles in Functional Leadership

We have long tracked the evolution of key functional C-suite roles as part of our client work. Specifically, senior functional roles have become more strategic and enterprise-focused as the challenges facing businesses have become increasingly complex. It is more important than ever not only to have the right people in these critical leadership roles, but also for the CEO's team to be aligned and collaborative rather than just a collection of talented leaders.

This year, we mapped the profiles of executives in the nine most common functional leadership roles in S&P 500 C-suites, looking at tenure, career backgrounds and personal characteristics. What did we find?

- » The makeup of senior leadership teams can vary widely. Our analysis of S&P 500 C-suites, for example, identified 503 CEOs — several companies have co-CEOs — but only 284 chief operating officers, a role that is sometimes temporary. Chief financial officer and chief legal officer are the next most common roles after CEO. Companies are somewhat less likely to have heads of communication, marketing and supply chain in the C-suite: Roughly two-thirds of S&P 500 companies have chief marketing officer or chief supply chain officer, and three-quarters have a chief communications officer. Some companies organize functions by regions or business units, while others combine functional responsibilities, for example, sales and marketing, branding or customer experience.
- » We see significant differences across industry sectors and roles in areas such as average tenure, external hiring, prior experience and diversity. It can be difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about what's driving these differences from the data alone. Company structure, health or performance, internal talent pipelines, candidate perceptions about the company and sector, and the presence of an activist investor all play a role in leadership decisions.
- » Nearly 60 percent of C-suite functional leaders are internal appointments to their roles, underscoring the importance of leadership development and succession planning to create robust talent pipelines for the future.

We will continue to track this data annually to gain a better understanding of shifts in leader profiles over time. Here are a few observations from this year's analysis:

## The S&P 500 C-suite at a glance

5.2<sup>yrs</sup>

Average tenure

43%

Women and executives from historically underrepresented groups

59%

Internally appointed executives

33%

Executives with previous experience in the same role

## Promoted from within or hired from outside? It depends on the role

Most S&P 500 C-suite leaders, 59%, were promoted from inside their company. Chief operating officers and CEOs were most likely to be insiders, with 80% of COOs and 76% of CEOs promoted from within their companies. Conversely, top leaders in communications, information technology and legal were most likely to be external hires, with 57%, 54% and 53% hired from outside the company, respectively, for those roles.

Larger companies and those with more business units can have an advantage in leadership development, as they typically have more functional management roles to develop and test high-potential leaders, giving them more internal options when the time comes. Hiring external talent can allow companies to level up expertise in highly specialized areas like technology.

We see differences across industry sectors. C-suite leaders in the industrial and consumer sectors were most likely to be insiders (61% and 62%, respectively), compared to 56% of C-suite leaders in healthcare and technology, the sectors with the lowest share of internally appointed leaders.

When companies do look externally for leadership talent, there are different expectations about the need for industry expertise, depending on the role. Sector experience appears to be most important for CEOs and COOs, with less than 20% of external hires coming from outside companies' respective industry sectors. By contrast, more than half of externally hired chief information officers (52%) and chief communications officers (53%) came from another industry. In both cases, newly hired leaders were more likely to come from the tech sector than other industries.

Consumer companies were most likely to look outside the sector when hiring external leaders. Executives from outside consumer accounted for 44% of external appointments, versus the 42% average for all sectors. Consumer companies were most likely to hire from outside the industry for COOs, CFOs and general counsel.

We also see variance in the preference for prior experience across functional roles: more than 40% of CHROs, CIOs and chief legal officers previously served in the role, compared with 33% of functional leaders overall. Just 16% of CEOs and 12% of COOs have had prior experience in the role. While, overall, CEOs are less likely than most C-suite leaders to have prior experience, [our research shows a growing preference](#) among boards for CEOs with previous public company CEO experience.

## BACKGROUNDS

Role	Internal hires	External hires	External hires from a different industry	Prior experience in the role
Chief executive officer	76%	24%	17%	16%
Chief operating officer	80%	20%	14%	12%
Chief financial officer	64%	36%	31%	33%
Chief human resources officer	57%	43%	46%	45%
Chief information officer	45%	54%	52%	44%
Chief marketing officer	62%	38%	43%	27%
Chief legal officer	47%	53%	49%	42%
Chief supply chain officer	57%	41%	37%	31%
Chief communications officer	43%	57%	53%	37%
<b>Average</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>33%</b>

## CEOs, chief legal officers have the longest tenures

The average tenure of sitting S&P 500 C-suite leaders is 5.2 years. C-suite leaders in financial services collectively serve almost a year longer on average, while consumer C-suite leaders about a half year less.

CEOs have the longest average tenure, at 7.6 years, three years longer than the 4.7-year average of all other C-suite leaders. Chief legal officers have the next longest average tenure at 6.1 years. In two sectors — consumer and industrial — the average tenure of the chief legal officer is longer than the average CEO tenure, largely due to the share of legal officers with a tenure of 10 or more years.

COOs have the shortest tenure, averaging 3.3 years — likely because the role often is meant to be a temporary development position for CEO aspirants — followed by CMOs at 4.1 years.

## AVERAGE TENURE BY INDUSTRY AND ROLE

Role	Average tenure (years)
Chief executive officer	7.6
Chief operating officer	3.3
Chief financial officer	4.7
Chief human resources officer	4.6
Chief information officer	5.2
Chief marketing officer	4.1
Chief legal officer	6.1
Chief supply chain officer	4.8
Chief communications officer	4.7
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.2</b>

Fifteen percent of S&P 500 C-suite functional leaders took their roles within the past year. About one-quarter of COOs are in their first year, compared with just 10% of chief supply chain officers.

## NEWLY APPOINTED C-SUITE LEADERS

Role	Newly appointed*	Count
Chief executive officer	11%	56
Chief operating officer	24%	68
Chief financial officer	17%	85
Chief human resources officer	18%	84
Chief information officer	12%	54
Chief marketing officer	18%	63
Chief legal officer	13%	63
Chief supply chain officer	10%	34
Chief communications officer	11%	44
<b>Average</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>61</b>

\* Executives who took their roles between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025.

## Women and ethnically diverse leaders hold more than 40% of C-suite roles

Overall, 43% of S&P 500 C-suite roles are held by women and people from historically underrepresented ethnic and racial groups. Representation varies widely by role; fewer than one-quarter of CEOs and COOs have these backgrounds, compared with 78% of CHROs and 70% of chief communications officers.

Digging deeper, 35% of functional C-suite roles are held by women and 13% by leaders from historically underrepresented ethnic and racial groups. Women are most likely to hold chief HR, communications and marketing roles. CIOs as a group are the most ethnically diverse.

Looking across sectors, healthcare has the highest percentage of women in the C-suite (40%). At 27%, healthcare also has the highest percentage of female COOs, an important steppingstone to the CEO role, followed by financial services at 20%. The industrial and technology sectors have the lowest share of women in the C-suite, 32% and 33%, respectively. However, the technology sector has the highest percentage of ethnically diverse leaders, and 26% of technology company CEOs are from historically underrepresented ethnic groups.

### DIVERSITY

Role	Women	Historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds*	Total**
Chief executive officer	9%	13%	22%
Chief operating officer	16%	8%	23%
Chief financial officer	19%	13%	29%
Chief human resources officer	73%	14%	78%
Chief information officer	19%	21%	36%
Chief marketing officer	50%	9%	56%
Chief legal officer	38%	13%	43%
Chief supply chain officer	23%	10%	32%
Chief communications officer	67%	8%	70%
<b>Average</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>43%</b>

\* Per EEO guidelines, defined as people with one or more of the following origins: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic.

\*\* Total includes women who also self-identify as a member of a historically underrepresented racial or ethnic group.







## Methodology

Leadership team makeup varies widely across large companies. Our research focuses on the most common functional roles. Interim executives are not included in the mapping. When a company has a co-CXO, both are included. The mapping bundles related titles; for example, the head of human resources at some companies carries the title chief people officer. The snapshot reflects executives in their roles as of June 30, 2025.

All percentages calculated based on the total number of executives identified on the snapshot date:

- » Chief Executive Officer: 503
- » Chief Operating Officer: 284
- » Chief Financial Officer: 491
- » Chief Human Resources Officer: 476
- » Chief Information Officer: 459
- » Chief Marketing Officer: 346
- » Chief Legal Officer: 491
- » Chief Supply Chain Officer: 334
- » Chief Communications Officer: 392

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