

(Ebook pdf) Riding Shotgun: The Role of the COO

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Nathan Bennett, Stephen A. Miles
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RIDING SHOTGUN

THE ROLE OF THE COO



"The critical role of COO has received little of the attention it deserves. A must-read for anyone aspiring to make the leap, and for those who recruit, oversee, and coach them."
MICHAEL WATKINS, Author of
The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels

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Nathan Bennett, Stephen A. Miles : Riding Shotgun: The Role of the COO before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Riding Shotgun: The Role of the COO:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Why the COO is probably "the toughest job in a company" By Robert Morris The is the updated edition of a book first published a decade ago in which Nathaniel Bennett and Stephen Miles focus on the defining characteristics of a high-impact COO or equivalent, probably "the toughest job in a company." That is especially true now when the global marketplace is more volatile, more uncertain, more complex, and more ambiguous than at any prior time that I can recall. Moreover, I include the

word "equivalent" because all organizations – whatever their size and nature may be – need personal growth and professional development at all levels and in all areas of the given enterprise. The COO is typically the key individual responsible for delivery of those and other results day to day, quarter to quarter. The COO plays a critical leadership role in executing the strategies developed by the top management team. In many cases, the COOs are groomed to be – or actually being tested as – the organization's CEO-elect. Even in the effort has not been made to groom the successor, it may have been assumed. Moreover, as Bennett and Miles correctly point out, the COO could be any one or a combination of seven different jobs. That is, 1. the heir apparent 2. the true co-leader 3. a mentor 4. a change agent 5. a trusted partner 6. an executor, and/or 7. an MVP the company promoted to retain. For the role to create value, the COO incumbent had to be able to fit the COO archetype to a T. Bennett and Miles shared what they learned from wide and deep research that involved dozens of CEOs as well as COOs in a diverse range of organizations. These are among the subjects of special interest and value to me:

- o How the role of the COO has changed since 2006
- o How firms now use their COOs
- o How CEOs view those who occupy the number two job
- o The search for prospective COOs
- o Attracting and managing a COO
- o Contemporary shifts in the COO role

For example, through their ongoing interactions with COOs, it became apparent to Bennett and Miles that during the last ten years an interesting variety of factors were directly and significantly impacting the nature of the COO's work. The most dramatic change since 2006 is the need for the COO to balance a concern for the future with operational success today. Years ago, leadership teams could more cleanly separate the CEO's worry about tomorrow from the COO's worry about today. No longer can a COO be satisfied that a head-down approach meeting today's challenges is sufficient; COOs have had to adapt to become head-up leaders, thinking about and immersed in the external world. And the skill set necessary has expanded accordingly, especially in the areas of finance and technology. Over the past several decades, I have worked closely with hundreds of small-to-midsize companies and can personally attest to the accuracy of those observations insofar as COO equivalents are concerned. Although lacking an equity position, they are expected to think like an owner/CEO while also minding the shop. In fact, the most profitable small-to-midsize companies are those within which almost everyone thinks like a CEO. I commend Bennett and Miles on the abundance of valuable information, insights, and counsel they provide in this book. For me, some of the best material is to be found within the mini-case studies of Walt Disney, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, and Hewlett-Packard. Yes, all are huge organizations but there is much of direct relevance to small-to-midsize companies, also, with regard to division of labor, channels of communication, chains of authority, and effective delegation. The dozens of conversations with CEOs and COOs are also very well-done. For leaders in companies now thinking deploying a COO structure or have only recently embarked on that deployment, this book really is a "must read"; I agree with Nathaniel Bennett and Stephen Miles that efforts to study the COO role need to begin with appreciation of the situational contingencies that apply. In all, our contention remains that the effectiveness of both the CEO-COO structure and the COO as an individual should be thought of as the product of a multidimensional fit that includes executive fit between the COO and the CEO (e.g., with regard to skills, trust, and personal relations), person-job fit (e.g., the capabilities of the COO with regard to motivation for creating the position), and person-opportunity fit (e.g., a match between the firm's succession plans and COO aspirations... The pace of change, the centrality of the position in the company hierarchy, the diversity of skills required, and the complexity of the challenges faced together provide a tremendously exciting position from which to lead and contribute to the successful pursuit of strategy. Ultimately, these are not executive issues, organizational issues, strategy issues, or operational issues; rather, they are business issues that have immensely important implications and potential impact for everyone involved, both now and in years to come.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read for all Aspiring COOs and the CEOs who Need Them

By Adam Kaplan

If you ever doubted that there was a key role for the COO in Corporate America - those doubts will be allayed upon reading this book. Using examples from the tech world and traditional industry, and conducting person to person interviews with many of the key CEOs and COOs themselves, Bennett and Miles highlight "seven motivations" behind the COO position. Clearly worth the read for any CEO looking for his / her #2, as well as a COO or budding operations leader who wants to make an impact.

33 of 35 people found the following review helpful.

Enjoyable, but not too insightful

By Tom Smith

If you are looking for an easy read and enjoy anecdotes about the experiences of successful COOs at very large organizations, you may want to read this book. A large portion of the book is devoted to interviews of well-known COOs or former COOs. The main messages are 1) constant communication between the COO and the CEO (and board, if accessible) is important, 2) clear cut allocation of responsibilities between the COO and the CEO is critical for success and 3) the job is whatever the COO and CEO decide it is. The book provides numerous interesting and entertaining stories of successes and failures. If you get those concepts, you don't need to read the book. This is the kind of book I put on my 'train reading' list (easy read, not too meaty, and no big deal if I fall asleep halfway through a chapter), but it did not add materially to my understanding of the role of a COO or the unique tools/skills necessary to be successful.

The role of Chief Operations Officer is clearly important. In fact, it has been argued that the number two position is the toughest job in a company. COOs are typically the key individuals responsible for the delivery of results on a day-to-day, quarter-to-quarter basis. They play a critical leadership role in executing the strategies developed by the top management team. And, in many cases, they are being groomed to be or are actually being tested as the firm's CEO-elect. Despite all this, the COO role has not received much attention. *Riding Shotgun: The Role of the COO* provides a new understanding of this little-understood role. The authors—a scholar and a consultant—develop a framework for understanding who the COO is, why a company would want to create this position, and the challenges associated with successful performance in the COO role. Drawing heavily on a number of first-person accounts from CEOs and other top executives in major corporations, the authors have developed a set of strategies or principles to inform individuals who aspire to serve in such a position. The executives who share their experiences in this book are from some of the most established and important companies in today's economy: AirTran; American Standard Companies; Amgen; Adobe Systems, Inc.; Autodesk, Inc; eBay; Heidrick Struggles; InBev; Kohlberg Kravis Roberts Company; Mattel, Inc; Motorola; PepsiCo; Raytheon Company; Starbucks; and many others.