

Your Career Is a Strategic Asset.

Are You Managing It Like One?

6 minute read

When a board reviews a material asset, it asks a familiar set of questions: what value the asset currently delivers, whether it is being used effectively, whether it is becoming more or less valuable, what investment is needed to maintain or increase that value, what risks could erode it and where it could be deployed to generate a greater return. Senior executives apply that discipline routinely to the businesses they lead, yet many will recognise that their own careers receive nothing like the same scrutiny until a restructure, a change of ownership or an unexpected call from a search firm forces the question.

Why shouldn't executives apply the same thinking to their careers? A career is a portfolio of assets built over many years: skills and experience, a track record of delivering results, relationships, reputation and brand, market positioning and future potential. None of them has a fixed value and an executive's real worth lies in the unique combination they bring. Experience that was highly prized five years ago may be less differentiated today while individual skills carry no inherent market value of their own; what they are worth depends on how they are combined, where they are applied, the business problems they solve and the strategic priorities of the organisation employing them. The challenge is to measure those assets and put them to use.

Boards are also filling the most senior roles more selectively. For example, Russell Reynolds Associates' Global CEO Turnover Index recorded 101 CEO departures across the world's largest listed companies in the first half of 2026, the lowest first-half total in its nine years of tracking, and 23% of incoming CEOs had already led a public company, the highest first-half share it has recorded. When senior seats open less often and boards favour proven leaders, executives who understand the value of their portfolio, and can articulate it, are far better placed when an opportunity does appear.

WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER ASSETS WORTH NOW?

In brief, these are the assets you should be consciously measuring against changing market values:

Skills and experience: Are they relevant to the roles and business challenges emerging in the market?

Track record: Can you demonstrate measurable commercial or organisational results?

Relationships: Would influential people in your target market actively recommend you?

Reputation: What would a search consultant or chair say about your leadership proposition?

Market positioning: Are you being considered for the roles you actually want?

Future potential: What capabilities will make your experience more valuable over the next three to five years?

These questions are as relevant to a senior leader negotiating an internal or external executive transition.

A senior job title tells the market – and your current organisational hierarchy - where you sit but says very little about the results or capabilities behind it. Salary reflects the deal struck when you joined and the increments since while market value depends on how many organisations need what you offer now and how many credible alternatives they have. The two can drift apart for years without anyone noticing.

Executives should start with an honest audit of each asset in their personal portfolio and the value it currently delivers. Then consider which parts of your experience carry the most weight with the position you would like or organisations you would want to join? Which achievements would a Chair recognise as distinctive? Where does your profile stand out and where would it need strengthening?

Each of these assets can be measured against evidence the market, or a specific board, would recognise. Skills and experience can be tested against the requirements in current role specifications for the positions you want next while a track record is only as strong as the results a board can see, quantified and clearly attributable to your leadership. Relationships can be gauged by how many senior people know your work well enough to recommend you and reputation and brand by how search consultants, chairs and peers describe you when you are not present. Market positioning shows in the roles you are approached about and whether they match the ones you want, while future potential depends on how closely your capabilities align with where demand is heading, AI included.

An asset can also be undervalued simply because it is under-used. Many capable leaders hold relationships, sector knowledge or a commercial record that the market cannot see, perhaps because their networks lapsed during a long tenure or they have never set out a clear account of what they offer. As we explored in What Boards Want to Hear, executives with near-identical records can receive very different receptions; the test of a leadership narrative is whether a search consultant can describe you accurately to a chair in two sentences, almost always in a conversation that happens without you in the room.

ARE YOU GAINING OR LOSING VALUE?

Capabilities can depreciate or play a different role, much as equipment does, as the market requirements change. Any decline or mismatch can be easy to miss while you are delivering results and receiving good feedback. AI is speeding up that process.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025, based on a survey of more than 1,000 large employers, estimated that, on average, workers can expect 39% of their existing skill sets to be transformed or to become outdated by 2030. The effect will, of course, differ across professions, industries and leadership roles but we are certainly seeing it now. The figure has come down from 57% in 2020, perhaps a sign the redeployment process is already in progress.

In some areas AI is likely to automate tasks or change the skills employers value, while in others it will create new opportunities or raise demand for particular kinds of expertise. Being able to read the evolving market, understand the direction of travel and respond proactively is crucial in any career planning, as is being able to interpret and demonstrate the strengths of your proposition for the target role.

Boards are already adjusting what they look for. When Rialto asked board directors, C-suite executives and senior HR leaders how the most market-relevant executives of 2030 will be best described, the AI-enabled Growth Strategist emerged as the leading profile, with 25% of responses. That description would barely have featured even two years ago.

You are probably more exposed than you think if your most recent achievements look much like the ones you were promoted for, or if you routinely hand conversations about AI to colleagues. Leaders in this position should identify which of their assets are gaining value, which are holding steady and which are fading, and decide what investment would maintain or increase their value, whether that means developing a particular capability, broadening their industry knowledge or building relationships in a market they have not previously considered. The same review should bring to the surface the risks that could erode value further, including over-reliance on a single sector, a target market where demand is changing and an inaccurate sense of how your profile is perceived from outside.

WHERE COULD THEY EARN A GREATER RETURN?

Because skills have no fixed value, the same portfolio can be worth considerably more across different settings. A commercial record built in a mature consumer business might be exactly what a scale-up needs, while a functional leader with deep operational experience might create more value in a general management role. Some executives will find their strongest opportunity in a different type of organisation altogether, such as a business backed by private equity.

As AI alters the relative value of individual tasks and capabilities, the distinctive combination of skills, experience, judgement and business understanding that an executive brings may become an increasingly important source of differentiation. For example, routine analysis may become easier to automate, while the ability to interpret uncertain information, make commercial decisions, allocate resources and lead organisational change may become more important.

Executives seeking transition or a pivot into a growth sector should test their options against market realities: which roles are realistic, which would represent a meaningful step forward and which organisations could have a compelling reason to hire someone with their particular combination of achievements. The aim is to find a new north star, made up of the roles, industries and opportunities most worth pursuing, and to understand what it would take to secure them.

Timing is also important, whether you are actively seeking a move, weighing up options or just preparing for any unanticipated challenge. A move planned from a position of strength offers broader options to choose the sector, the ownership model and the moment; an enforced one, after a restructure or a change of chief executive, usually means accepting what the market offers in the weeks available.

PUTTING YOUR CAREER PORTFOLIO TO WORK

Understanding your market value is only the beginning. The next step is to translate the insights into an operating plan: which opportunities to prioritise, which organisations to approach, how to position your experience and what to do over the coming months to improve your prospects, reviewed once or twice a year and always before any major decision.

This is where strategic career advisory differs from conventional career advice. It combines an external perspective on the market with an honest assessment of your professional assets and a clear view of the actions most likely to move you towards your objectives. A polished CV and an improved LinkedIn profile still matter, but they work far harder when they follow from a well-informed view of your options and a credible strategy for pursuing them.

Few leaders can carry out that assessment objectively from the inside. Rialto Executive Career Intelligence is designed to help executives understand where their particular combination of capabilities creates the greatest value, through an evidence-based assessment of their market value and demand profile, a gap analysis against what boards are looking for now and a target list of the organisations and roles where their profile is strongest. Combined with executive coaching, it turns that analysis into a credible strategy for what comes next, whether the next move is twelve months away or five years.

Your career is one of your most important assets, and it deserves the same strategic attention you would give to a significant business decision. To understand how our team can support, contact Rialto for a confidential conversation about your career strategy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How often should I review my career?

Once or twice a year is a sensible rhythm, and always before a big decision such as accepting a counter-offer, taking a non-executive role or responding to a headhunter. The point is to check that your direction still holds before circumstances check it for you.

I'm happy in my current role. Why bother?

Because that is the best time to do it. You can assess your position calmly, close gaps at your own pace and keep your options open. The review may well confirm that staying put is the right call and let you make that call with far more confidence.

Why would two executives with similar skills have different market values?

Skills on their own are worth surprisingly little. Their value comes from how they are combined, where they are applied and the business problems they solve, so positioning and deployment can make a very large difference to what the market will pay.

Will AI make my experience less valuable?

Some elements of it may become less relevant, while others could become more valuable. AI is changing the balance of capabilities organisations need, increasing the importance of people who can identify commercial opportunities, make sound decisions, lead transformation and understand the implications of new technology. The challenge is to understand how your experience fits into that changing picture and where you may need to develop further.

What does Executive Career Intelligence include?

An evidence-based assessment of your market value and demand profile, a gap analysis against what boards want now and a target list of organisations and roles where your profile is strongest. Add executive coaching and you have a plan as well as a picture. Get in touch to find out more.

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