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The executive in transition

Program Executive 2.0 guides leaders to the next chapter in their careers.

Executive A. has a good job as a general manager, but she has the feeling that she is not moving forward because she gets too few challenges in her current job. She is 50 years old and feels that this is the right moment to take her career to the next level. A. wants to make a switch and prefers to move to another industry. But which industry? And how does she go about that?

Executive B. is a CEO and wants to change jobs every two years. This is not so common, in his opinion. He is particularly satisfied when he has the opportunity to use his managerial skills in companies or departments in dire straits. Every time, after a thorough analysis and systematic intervention, he succeeds in achieving a turnaround, restoring the company to a position where it can once again post successful results. What does that say about B. and what he really wants in his career?

Executive C. has a successful twenty-year career behind him, with the most recent spent as the managing director of a large international company. He has worked in several countries, led innovative projects and excelled in solving problems. Due to changing market conditions and merging business units, he has had to look for another job. How does he deal with that? Writing a CV is already a challenge for him, because he hasn't done it in years. What's more, doesn't he find it difficult to explain in three pages in which way he has developed over the past twenty years?

These are just a few examples that Eelco van Eijck, partner at Amrop executive search, has come across. In more than ten years of experience with executive search projects, he still often sees a mismatch. "This is partly because people don't know how to present themselves well enough and, even more importantly, what to focus on when it comes to their wishes and talents," says van Eijck. Despite their high-ranking position, they often don't know what skills they have, what they can deliver and what opportunities there are for them. "Sometimes they are not aware of what they want and what they can do. First of all, it's about getting those insights, and that can be done by means of a career analysis."

In 2016, van Eijck developed the Executive 2.0 coaching program, because he noticed that there was a clear need for executives to be supported in an analysis like this, as well as in the process that followed. Together with a program partner, a former McKinsey associate, he guides top executives to take a well-considered new step in their careers.

In short, the program focuses on executives in transition. The people who apply can be in different phases. The role they had until recently has either ended or will end soon, or they are currently in a good position but want change in the long term.

The central question for the participants is always: *What do I want my career to look like in the next ten to twenty years?* Once they figure that out, they have to think about the story they want to tell about themselves to potential employers and stakeholders. What is their 'executive-story' and what part of it is relevant to relate? And how should they formulate it?

Van Eijck explicitly wants to eliminate one particular misconception or prejudice: "In essence, Executive 2.0 is not about how to present yourself with a beautiful PowerPoint or CV to a future employer. It is mainly about self-reflection, structuring (what you want and what you can do) and making strategic choices." This whole process does not develop from one day to the next, it takes time. Executive 2.0 seeks to guide participants step-by-step with concrete tools.

Van Eijck's fundamental advice is: "Take the leadership in your own career." It is important that the executive sees him- or herself as a brand. So working on your personal brand is very important. The goal is to make sure that the personal brand gets into the heads of new potential employers so that, based on that brand, they want you to be the leader of their company. Van Eijck starts his sessions with an explanation of what a personal brand is. It is



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in someone's behavior (for example, how reliable are you?), in someone's image (clothing, car, office) and in the tone of voice (the way of talking, (telephone) etiquette, online profile). *If you hire me, this is what you get.* That is the *brand promise* you're promoting. "Above all, a personal brand must be consistent and authentic," says van Eijck, "which is why you must build it with care."

The first step he asks participants of Executive 2.0 to take is to analyze their most important motives. What are the ten most important elements they want to see in their new job? To find out, they first have to formulate what they found attractive in their positions and roles over the past few years and what they found a turn-off. "In this phase, it's explicitly not about what you can do, but about what you want", says van Eijck. "It is important that you are honest with yourself when discovering these motives. So if it is important to you to always be number one, you have to come up with that. Just as when it comes to a high salary, or a good work-life balance."

The second step is to draw up a list of the jobs you aspire to and compare these with your ten most important motives. That way, you get the feeling whether a job suits you or not. Again, according to van Eijck, the trick is to limit yourself and ultimately focus on no more than five roles or jobs that, according to your analysis, match your wishes.

Mapping out the motives and the desired roles doesn't mean the process is finished. After that it is important to make an assessment of your qualities and experience and to filter these through your wishes. What relevant things have you done and delivered? Which cases are worth raising with a future employer? In this part of the process, Executive 2.0 again provides an extensive step-by-step plan, in which the magic words are once again: *focus* and *structure*.

When the executive story is drawn up, what's next? "This is followed by a presentation that gives the executive a 100 percent 'wow effect' in the network that is important to him or her," says van Eijck. You do not just send that presentation by email to people or companies but save it for a second or third interview in which you illustrate it verbally and personally".

Van Eijck often sees that people are too modest or 'wait-and-see' when they are looking for a new job. They wonder: *What can I offer this company, and do I fit into this position?* "But that is a one-sided way of thinking and this is a two-way street. So also ask the question: what can this company offer me? Moreover, it is also important that you check during a first or second interview whether your image of the position corresponds with reality. Do you really get the mandate on certain matters that you want to decide on, in that position?"

According to van Eijck, if people get into the wrong job too quickly and without thinking carefully, it can cause irreparable damage. "Executives must also aim to prevent this from happening in the final phase of their careers. Executive 2.0 ensures focus, and the right executive in the right place.



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BOX:

Comments from participants (names known to Eelco)

CSO global FMCG non-food company:

"Executive 2.0 has helped me enormously to work out my profile in a concrete and to-the-point manner and to present it in a very accessible and catchy way. Moreover, the program puts you in a much more pro-active and stronger role in terms of re-orientation and taking control of your career. This result is achieved through a highly structured approach and a focus on actual evidence of your personal and professional strengths and experiences."

CEO technical trading and service company:

"The starting point is not to fill a vacancy but to know what your impact is. Leadership is about taking time for honest reflection and above all a structured mapping of where your real impact has been and will be. Formulating and mirroring well, and thereby formulating a new vision of your own future and finding the challenges that come with it."

Senior manager in the Dutch healthcare sector:

"He will help you to present your knowledge and skills in a systematic way across different axes. I do not know a better way to develop your own elevator pitch".

Managing Director international FMCG company:

"A good tool that has given me extra insights on what I should focus on in particular when searching for a new personal growth opportunity. By means of a very analytical and result-oriented approach in a sympathetic, no-nonsense way leading to a beautiful outcome."

General Manager international retail company:

"A very personal approach in which in-depth soul-searching forms the basis of the next steps. The structured steps helped me determine what I wanted for myself and what I considered to be important core values. Practical and very effective."