



Confidential Late-Stage Startup • DTC E-commerce • Retail Tech

Turning Startup Executives into Fast & Fearless Leaders

Hiring a Chief of Staff and developing an Office of the CEO roadmap for a hypergrowth DTC e-commerce startup

Executive Summary

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Team

This case study explores the strategic partnership between Cedar, a global leadership consulting firm, and a confidential, 9-figure topline, hypergrowth e-commerce startup. The project focused on hiring a Chief of Staff and defining the Office of the CEO roadmap to support the executive team’s rapid expansion and increased operational complexity.

SECTOR

Retail

DTC

E-Commerce

SERVICES

Leadership Assessment

Executive Search

Office of the CEO Roadmap

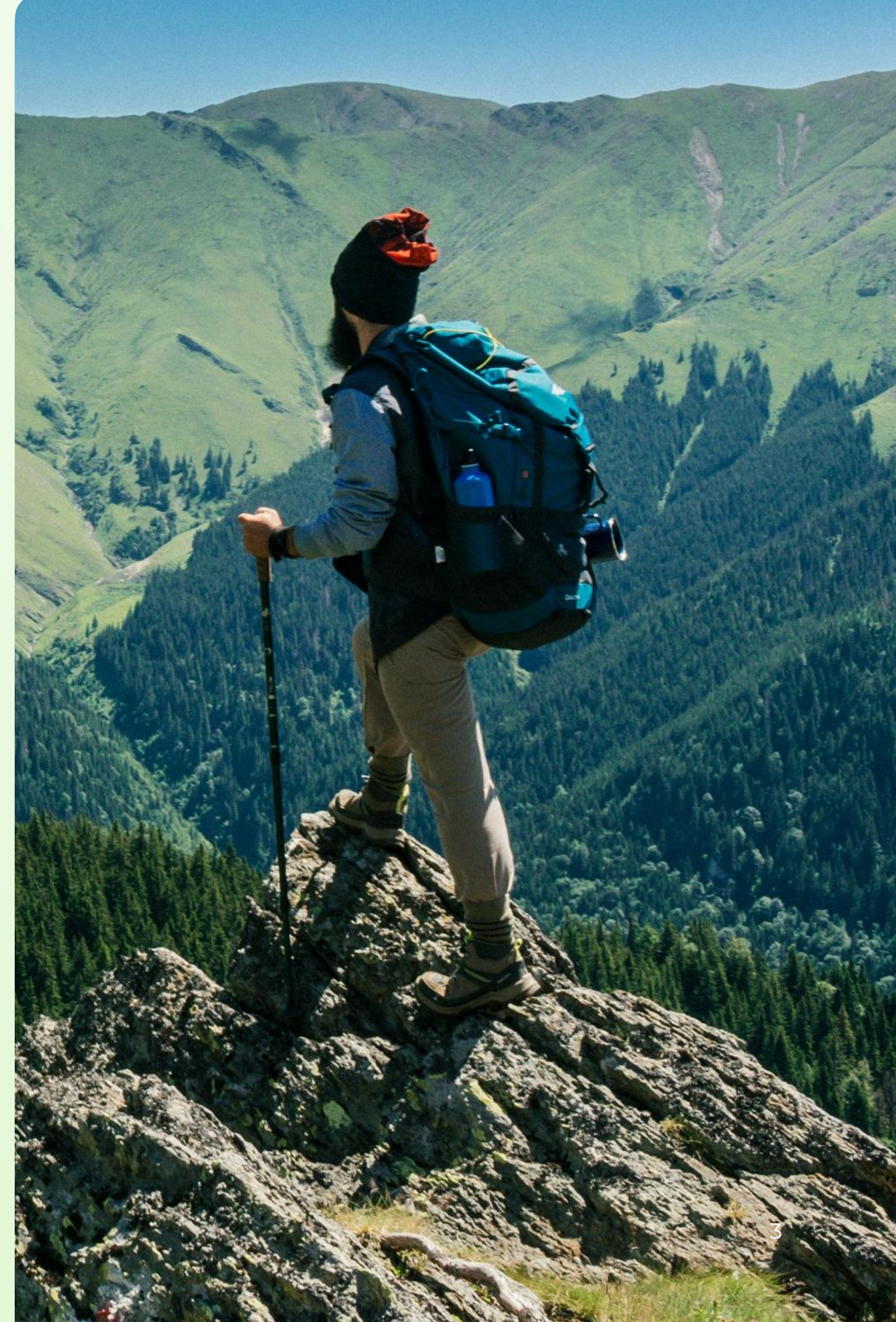
Executive Summary

CHALLENGE

A \$XXXM startup's recent growth into new business lines and AI product features led to increased operational complexity and overwhelmed the leadership team. Executives were bogged down by low-priority tasks and inefficient processes, detracting from strategic focus.

OPPORTUNITY

Recognizing these issues, the startup seized the opportunity to hire an exceptional Chief of Staff, establish the Office of the CEO and build a strong Executive Operations function that would help the CEO and President save time and grow the company faster while preparing for a near-term sale.



Executive Summary

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN

Central to this transformation was a comprehensive leadership assessment, definition of an Office of the CEO roadmap and the placement of a skilled Chief of Staff.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

The successful Chief of Staff hire led to a notable reduction in unnecessary leadership meetings and faster execution of tasks. Furthermore, the partnership with Cedar received high satisfaction ratings, demonstrating the effectiveness and positive reception of the strategies employed.



Challenge

The Context

The \$XXXM startup's recent growth into new business lines, recent leadership hires and new AI product features led to increased operational complexity. The leadership team - CEO, President, CFO and 3 General Managers - were simply overwhelmed. Executives were bogged down by low-priority tasks and inefficient processes, detracting from strategic focus.

The Ask

When the executive team committed to streamlining leadership operations, they partnered with Cedar to develop a customized Office of the CEO roadmap and conduct a search for a perfect-fit Chief of Staff who would drive the executive team's day-to-day activities.

The Issue

The startup operated in a fast-paced, remote-only environment, dealing with thousands of orders with a small 100 person team. This complexity greatly complicated daily operations for leadership. Further, the most recent Chief of Staff hire was not successful in terms of temperament, domain knowledge and work ethic and had to be terminated.

The Stakes

The timing of this initiative was especially critical for the executive team, as the startup was investing in growth and preparing for a near-term sale. Facing unprecedented pressures, the executive team leadership saw hiring an exceptional Chief of Staff as a pivotal step to support future growth and secure an attractive exit valuation.

Opportunity

While planning significant future expansion, the leadership team already felt overextended by their current workload. The executive team felt they struggled to focus on strategic priorities and often found themselves caught up in low-level work.

During the leadership assessment, Cedar found that executives held far too many back-to-back meetings and decisions were being escalated to the team too often. Project management discipline was lacking in some key areas of the business.

Finally, there was a cultural mismatch with the previous Chief of Staff, so getting the right replacement hire was crucial.

Development areas

Too many
executive meetings

Unclear decision authority
and too many escalations

Difficulty tracking and
implementing projects

The startup had a critical opportunity to address these specific issues to build a more effective organizational structure and to deliver on significant growth targets in the years ahead.

Approach

LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT

Cedar delivered a targeted leadership assessment, blending quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the current Office of the CEO and how leaders operated in the day-to-day.

We spoke with **6 senior stakeholders** and **reviewed 8 key documents**.

The outcome was a detailed readout with bright spots and polish opportunities.

CHIEF OF STAFF SEARCH

Cedar developed a customized Chief of Staff role for the startup's leadership team and built out the ideal candidate profile.

Cedar then executed the search for the new Chief of Staff, building relationships with **200+ target candidates** and creating a proprietary pipeline of **50+ qualified, top-tier candidates** from new pools of talent.

OFFICE OF THE CEO ROADMAP

Cedar worked to define a clear Office of the CEO roadmap for the incoming Chief of Staff to deliver on **8 different milestones**.

Specific initiatives ranged from project management, cross-functional communications and confidential strategic projects.

Impact

Top-tier
Chief of Staff

↓ Less meetings

↑ Speed to execution

Client satisfaction survey results (average score among C-suite respondents on 0-5 scale):

4.8 Satisfaction with level of knowledge and expertise demonstrated by Cedar team

5.0 Overall satisfaction with Cedar engagement

5.0 Likelihood of recommending Cedar advisory solutions to others

“Cedar delivered an exceptional Office of the CEO engagement and helped us hire a fantastic Chief of Staff.”

\$XXXM DTC E-commerce Startup
CEO

Our Team of Experts

Our consulting team helped the startup executive team become fast and fearless leaders.



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