

# How Engineers Become CEOs

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The career pinnacle for most people in business is that of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This aspiration extends to individuals that have moved into managerial positions from specialist or technical areas. Engineers are one such group. It follows that there are other specific skills and attributes that may identify someone as having the ability to become a CEO. Therefore, by identifying the attributes and skills CEOs required to reach their positions, it should be possible to adjust the career management, education and training to maximise the career progression. This paper provides results of an investigation into the career progression of engineers in Australia, determining the skills and qualities they need to become large company CEOs and thus recommend strategies for long term career development. Findings indicate: CEOs often reach their position as natural career progression rather than actively seeking management; key attributes and skills are perceived as being more important than qualifications; Leadership, communication skills and financial training are the most important training requirements; most universities do not cover some highly desirable skill sets and attributes. Implications: University courses can be adjusted to better reflect the needs of industry; students and engineers can plan careers more effectively by considering their personal attributes and the skill sets required of executives; professional development programs can be designed to maximise proficiencies at the most beneficial stage of their career.