

WHAT IS A CHIEF SERVICE OFFICER (CSO)?



A Chief Service Officer (CSO) is responsible for managing service initiatives related to the people, products, and processes in a business. This C-level individual is accountable for optimizing service technology and operations for the greatest benefits in profit margin, customer retention, and revenue growth.

CSOs develop strategies to ensure that service technologies and solutions impact all aspects of the business. This includes developing a company architecture that integrates a service focus across all elements of the business, from operations to customer service departments.

In this article, we'll look at the role of Chief Service Officer—both its emergence and the daily tasks and responsibilities of CSOs.

The Chief Service Officer role

The Chief Service Officer is one of several C-level positions that have emerged in the 21st century. The CSO is particularly responsible for how your service is designed, developing tools and processes that maximize value for all enterprise stakeholders with the smart, efficient use of your human resources.

The new role is a shift—away from product revenue, towards service as a primary growth agent.

Making this shift requires a service transformation that is cross-departmental. The benefits of this transformation are intended to include revenue, profits, competitive differentiation, and a

strengthened customer relationship.

Sometimes the CSO position overlaps with the Chief Operating Officer (COO), with some companies using one or the other interchangeably. Other companies separate the CSO and the COO, designating the COO for more product development purposes. The executive occupying this role will work with the CEO, technology and operational department leaders and even field service employees to ensure that in all ways the company is using service as a proponent for growth.

CSOs as Service Leaders

CSOs are individuals dedicated to service in a multitude of ways. This function requires the type of leader who remains committed to serving **all** levels of employees. ServeToLead.com defines the type of individual that will flourish as a CSO:

"Leaders who create the greatest value will be serving the greatest number of people and organizations most effectively, with unprecedented adaptive capacities."

As a service leader, you'll have to meet business needs that range from logistics to overarching corporate initiatives. That means a CSO is accountable for:

- Managing relationships with service and logistics providers
- Bolstering communication between service and manufacturing
- Making business decisions related to manufacturers, retailers, and suppliers

This leader will need to unite people working in different branches of the organization. The cross-departmental nature of this role may be a challenge, as CSOs must synthesize all business efforts to pursue service goals and maximize profits.

Responsibilities of CSOs

CSOs are responsible for service technology decisions which will improve business processes. CSOs will utilize every department in this effort, including operations, manufacturing, marketing, sales, customer services, HR, and finance. To make service a revenue-generating center, not simply an expense, the CSO will:

- Plan the roll-out of new strategies
- Measure efficacy
- Ensure that each change is working in unison

The CSO also determines how best to leverage technology solutions for service operations. It is critical that the goals of minimizing overhead and strengthening customer relationships are **aligned**—not in conflict. The service operations changes must improve customer satisfaction and customer retention, while also increasing service-related revenue.

Tasks and functions of CSOs

Making service a growth agent means developing a strategy that spans all aspects of your business. As CSO, you must also develop metrics to evaluate whether service strategies are positively impacting the business growth.

The CSO can enact a complete service transformation by focusing on the following tasks:

- Developing both internal and external processes to support service operations goals
- Creating SOPs that support service-based revenue models
- Developing KPI measurement for service execution
- Fulfilling overarching company goals in congruence with service initiatives
- Improving current service offerings to stay competitive within the industry
- Evaluating operational and customer-facing service efficacy
- [Choosing the best service technologies](#) for improving established business processes

Qualifications for CSOs

This unique role requires an in-depth understanding of operations and product as well as the technical side of service management. It demands senior level leadership, years of experience, and technical know-how. This foundation is needed in order to easily navigate both product-side and operational decisions. Each process decision has service as its foundation.

Here are common skills and experience you'll have in order to be a successful CSO:

Years of industry experience

The role of CSO demands years of experience in the industry coupled with an advanced degree. Often only an internal promotion, not an external hire, will have enough operational exposure to a business to be able to fulfill this role comprehensively. The high level of expertise required will be essential for navigating between departments and defining service strategies.

Ability to execute a comprehensive service plan

CSOs must be able to create a plan for service management adoption and execution. The CSO must determine precisely how service will be integrated across the manufacturing, sales, and marketing processes, among others.

Revenue growth evaluation

CSO must possess business acumen to make sure [service becomes a profit center](#). Developing service-based revenue models involves a thorough knowledge of the company's historic P&L activity. The CSO define benchmarks showing how improved profit margin and revenue growth are a direct result of service transformation.

Cross-departmental mediation

In addition to overseeing the processes for service implementation, the CSO must leverage relationships with people at many levels of the business to ensure growth targets are met. As CSO, you must be able to mediate between the CTO, COO, and CEO as well as field employees, particularly across customer service departments.

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