

The Secret Lives of CEOs and Senior Leaders: New CareerBuilder Survey Reveals Common Characteristics of Senior Management

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CHICAGO, March 12, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- CEOs: They're just like us (for the most part). While movies and TV want us to believe every company's senior executives travel via chauffeured limousine, eat only five-star gourmet meals and sport wardrobes worthy of British royalty, the reality for most company executives is much less extravagant. A lighthearted, newly released survey from CareerBuilder takes a closer look at the personalities and preferences of those who occupy the corner office.

The study was conducted online in November to December 2014 by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder among more than 500 executives (hiring and human resources managers in senior leadership positions including CEOs, CFOs, COOs and Senior VP).

Dressing the Part

Unlike "30 Rock" head honcho Jack Donaghy, only 1 in 5 executives (20 percent) consider a business suit typical office attire. Most executives (57 percent) outfit themselves in business casual clothing, while 18 percent regularly wear jeans or shorts to work.

Black is the clothing color of choice for 32 percent of executives, making it the most popular choice for this group. Navy blue is the second most popular color worn by executives (31 percent), followed by grey (10 percent).

Riding in Cars with Bosses

Don't expect to see the chief executive pulling up to the office in a chauffeured town car like top dog Miranda Priestley in "The Devil Wears Prada." Most executives (79 percent) take themselves to work in an automobile, with 1 in 4 (24 percent) driving an SUV, 1 in 5 (22 percent) opting for a mid-sized sedan, and 1 in 10 (10 percent) cruising around in luxury sedan.

Nearly 1 in 5 executives (18 percent) use environmentally friendly ways to get around, with 9 percent taking public transportation (bus or train), 4 percent driving hybrids, 4 percent walking, and 1 percent riding their bikes.

Wining and Dining

"Scandal" bigwig Olivia Pope might have a penchant for red wine and the partners of Sterling Cooper on "Mad Men" may sip whiskey on the regular, but in reality, more than 3 in 5 of executives (62 percent) abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages at company happy hours. Instead, they opt for soda (23 percent), water (19 percent), coffee (13 percent) or nothing at all (7 percent). Thirteen percent of executives kick back with a beer, and the same number (13 percent) opt for wine, while 8 percent opt for mixed drinks.

When it comes to their dining habits, nearly half of executives (42 percent) bring their lunch from home, while the rest opt for fast food (22 percent) or food from a sit-down restaurant (14 percent). One in ten (10 percent) of executives say they don't eat lunch on a typical day.

Righties vs. Lefties

Right-handers outnumber left-handers by nearly 7 to 1 (80 percent versus 13 percent); however, 8 percent of executives claim to be ambidextrous.

When it comes to parting their hair, 3 in 10 executives (29 percent) favor the right side, 19 percent go down the middle, and 15 percent part on the left. One in four (25 percent) don't part their hair at all, while 11 percent sport a shaved or bald head.

Working Hard, Working Out

When asked how many hours they work in a typical week, 40 was the minimum for most head honchos. Fifty-eight percent of executives say they work 40 to 49 hours a week, and 32 percent work 50 hours or more. Only a lucky few (9 percent) say they work less than 40 hours a week.

Despite having a packed schedule, the vast majority of executives (82 percent) are able to squeeze in at least one work out a week, with 39 percent working up a sweat four or more days a week. Nearly 1 in 5 (18 percent) say they "rarely" or "never" work out.

Emulating the CEO: Will It Help You Get Ahead?

They say you should dress for the job you want, but will dressing and acting like a senior executive help you get there? "Certainly, getting ahead in your career is based largely on your performance," says Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer of CareerBuilder. "The way you present yourself, however, is to many a reflection of how seriously you take your job." Haefner offers the following tips to dress – and behave – for career success.

1. **Follow the leader...**The CEO and other senior leaders should set the tone for how to conduct yourself in the workplace, so look toward them for direction when it comes to not just dressing the part, but conducting yourself like a leader as well.
2. **Dress for success.** But don't get caught in a "who wore it better" situation. Showing up in the exact same Brooks Brothers suit the boss wore on Monday could be perceived as sucking up – or simply creepy. Remember who you are as an individual. Adding accessories like jewelry, scarves or ties to a classic black pant suit, for example, creates a look that is both professional *and* reflects your personal style.
3. **Be the brand.** Even when they're not at the office, CEOs and senior executives are considered the "face" of the brand; therefore, even when they're not at work, they are living by the company's brand values. Take this into consideration when you're out socializing—and posting on social media. Remember that you're a representation of your company's (and your personal) brand and how you act reflects on that brand.
4. **Ask for what you want.** Don't wait around for your manager to recognize your leadership potential. Take the initiative and ask your manager for more responsibility. Be clear about your career goals and see if you can together to create a clear plan for the future.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder among 552 executives (hiring and human resources managers in senior leadership positions including CEOs, CFOs, COOs and Senior VP) ages 18 and over (employed full-time, not self-employed, non-government) between November 4 and December 2, 2014 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset, based on their responses to certain questions). With a pure probability sample of 552, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 4.17 percentage points. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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