

A Guide to Executive Social Purpose Roles

Introduction

Integrating social purpose into corporate strategy has become a key differentiator in today's competitive landscape. As companies embrace a social purpose as their meaningful reason to exist, executive leaders must weave this purpose into their core responsibilities to drive strategic, authentic and impactful implementation.

This guide outlines key social purpose roles for senior executives, designed to support the integration of social purpose across the enterprise. Rather than replacing existing roles, these responsibilities complement and expand upon traditional executive functions. The guide offers draft job description responsibilities for the following six executives:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chief People Officer
- Chief Revenue Officer
- Chief Product and Marketing Officer
- Chief Strategy Officer

How to Use This Guide

1. For Individual Executives:

- Review the recommendations specific to your role
- Identify opportunities to integrate social purpose into your position
- Use this guide as a resource for informed discussions with peers and teams
- Explore how social purpose can drive both business success and positive societal impact within your area of responsibility

2. For Leadership Teams:

- Collaborate as a group to discuss embedding social purpose across your functions
- Use this guide as a framework to align efforts and responsibilities
- Develop a cohesive strategy for implementing social purpose across all executive roles

3. For Other Roles:

- Utilize the [Social Purpose Departments Checklist](#) to develop roles for executives not included in this guide
- Adapt the principles and responsibilities outlined here to fit other leadership positions

It's important to note that these job descriptions should be tailored to each organization's unique context, industry, and specific social purpose. Organizations can phase in these social purpose responsibilities gradually, recognizing that not all companies will be at the same maturity level in their purpose journey. As social purpose continues to evolve, executives in these roles should engage in ongoing professional development and learning to stay current with social purpose trends and practices.

For more detailed guidance on crafting job descriptions for dedicated social purpose roles, such as a Chief Social Purpose Officer, Social Purpose Director and Social Purpose Manager, refer to the [Guide to Social Purpose Job Descriptions](#). This comprehensive companion resource offers in-depth insights into defining the scope, responsibilities, and qualifications for these specialized positions,

Chief Executive Officer

Overarching Accountability

The CEO is accountable for leading the organization to fulfill its social purpose, by ensuring the purpose steers strategy, operations, and culture, advancing purpose-driven growth. Champions and advocates for a Purpose Economy.

Key Accountabilities

- Leads the organization in advancing social purpose, ensuring enterprise-wide engagement and fostering innovation in social purpose business models.
- Achieves purpose-led growth, enhancing revenue and profitability.
- Serves as a visible advocate for the company's social purpose, influencing industry standards and public policies to advance the purpose.
- Signs [A Call to Purpose](#) and promotes social purpose business models to peers, other business leaders, and business networks.

Chief Financial Officer

Overarching Accountability

The CFO is accountable for advancing the company's social purpose by integrating it into financial strategies, resource allocation, procurement practices, investment decisions and reporting, establishing a social purpose finance and investment framework that supports purpose-led growth.

Key Accountabilities

1. Resource Allocation and Budget Oversight

- Ensure that financial resources, including investments and capital, are allocated in a manner to advance the company's social purpose, and that purpose is integrated into operational, compensation, and capital budgeting processes and decisions.
- Provide strategic oversight of financial decisions, including mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, and major reorganizations to ensure they advance the company's purpose.
- Direct the integration of purpose considerations into investment strategies and due diligence including the corporate pension plan and treasury management.

2. Purpose Reporting and Accountability

- Oversee the tracking, measurement, and reporting on the commercial and financial impact of the company's purpose initiatives, including the share of revenues from social purpose products and services and financial returns from social purpose investments.
- Ensure robust systems for tracking, accounting, and [reporting on social purpose performance](#), supporting transparency, accountability, and positioning the company as a leader in transparent purpose disclosures.
- Establish and maintain controls for social purpose reporting, using internal and external audits or assessments to ensure the reliability of systems and progress reports.

3. Supplier Engagement

- Ensure that strategies are in place to encourage adoption of social purpose across the supply chain and foster strategic supplier collaboration on the company's social purpose.

4. Social Purpose Finance and Investment

- Lead the development of financial instruments and models to support social purpose initiatives, such as social purpose equity shares, deposits, bonds, and linked loans.
- Lead and contribute to the development of the [social purpose investment](#) and finance field.

- Advance [social purpose valuation practices](#) internally and externally by tracking the ROI of social purpose investments and collaborating with academics and experts to establish industry social purpose ROI standards.

5. Champion

- Champion and advocate for social purpose within the accounting and finance profession, advancing financial professionals' expertise in integrating social purpose into their practices.
- Represent the company at industry forums, community events, and strategic partnerships to promote the company's social purpose and advance the purpose economy.

Chief People Officer

Overarching Accountability

The Chief People Officer is accountable for championing and advancing the organization's social purpose across all dimensions of human capital management, ensuring that purpose drives the culture, engages employees, and is embedded into the employee experience, and lead workforce initiatives to advance the company's social purpose priorities.

Key Responsibilities

1. Culture

- Define, drive, embed, and manage the desired culture to achieve the purpose.
- Oversee [employee engagement strategies](#) to ensure employees are motivated and contribute meaningfully to the company's social purpose.
- [Embed purpose into HR policies.](#)
- Ensure employees are equipped to contribute to the company's purpose through comprehensive education, training, and capacity-building programs that integrate social purpose into the company's culture and roles.

2. Executive Accountability

- Ensure social purpose is incorporated into the incentives, roles and performance objectives of the CEO and executive team.

3. Champion

- Champion and advocate for social purpose within the HR profession, advancing HR professionals' expertise in integrating social purpose into human capital management practices.
- Represent the company at industry forums, community events, and strategic partnerships to promote the company's social purpose and advance the purpose economy.

Chief Revenue Officer

Overarching Accountability

The Chief Revenue Officer is accountable for advancing the company's social purpose across all commercial and retail channels, driving growth, increasing adoption of social purpose products, deepening customer relationships, fostering a broad ecosystem of social purpose businesses, and positioning the company as a social purpose leader through strategic customer engagement, sales, business development, ecosystem partnerships, and advocacy.

Key Responsibilities

1. Sales and Business Development and Customer Engagement

- Lead the integration of the company's social purpose into sales and business development, equipping customer-facing employees to effectively communicate the company's purpose, differentiate the company in the marketplace, and connect customer needs with the company's purpose-driven solutions.

- Deliver customer experience strategies that drive adoption of social purpose products and services, improving customer social purpose outcomes and fostering long-term customer engagement and loyalty.
- Oversee customer engagement strategies that enable customers to contribute to and benefit from the company's social purpose offerings, ensuring processes are in place to identify emerging customer needs to inform social purpose innovation.
- Develop and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) that align revenue goals with social purpose objectives.
- Oversee revenue forecasting and budgeting processes that incorporate social purpose considerations.
- Contribute to investor relations efforts by articulating the value of social purpose in driving revenue growth.

2. Champion

- Lead efforts to influence and encourage business customers and other businesses to adopt and implement a social purpose, creating a broader ecosystem of social purpose business.
- Represent the company at industry forums, community events, and strategic partnerships to promote the company's social purpose and advance the purpose economy.

Chief Product and Marketing Officer

Overarching Accountability

The Chief Product and Marketing Officer is accountable for advancing the organization's social purpose through product development and marketing strategies, ensuring purpose-led innovation and customer engagement. This role drives the integration of social purpose into all aspects of the company's products, services, and customer experiences, while fostering a culture of innovation to advance the company's purpose. The CPMO ensures that the company's purpose is visible and meaningful at every customer touchpoint.

Key Responsibilities

1. Products

- Oversee the development and implementation of purpose-centric business models, products and services to position the company as a leading provider of purpose solutions.
- Ensure market research drives product development that meets customer needs and preferences, advancing the company's social purpose.
- [Ensure that all products and services meaningfully contribute](#) to the company's social purpose.
- Drive and oversee innovation and R&D processes focused on purpose-centric solutions, collaborating with third parties to pilot and scale new purpose-driven innovations.

2. Marketing and Customer Experience

- Ensure social purpose is integrated into all aspects of marketing, branding and customer experience strategies and is clearly communicated and visible at all customer touchpoints, and that strategies are executed to mobilize and engage customers in contributing to social purpose achievement.
- Ensure customers understand and value the company's purpose and its impact on society.
- Develop a compelling narrative around the company's social purpose that resonates with customers and aligns with their values, fostering deeper emotional connections to the brand.

3. Champion

- Champion and advocate for social purpose within the Marketing profession, advancing Marketing professionals' expertise in integrating social purpose into marketing practices.

- Represent the company at industry forums, community events, and strategic partnerships to promote the company's social purpose and advance the purpose economy.

Chief Strategy Officer

Overarching Accountability

The Chief Strategy Officer is accountable for embedding social purpose into the company's strategic vision, plans, and initiatives, ensuring alignment across all departments to drive purpose-led growth. This role leads the integration of social purpose into the company's decision-making, operations, and relationships, fostering accountability and inspiring engagement at all levels. The CSO is responsible for shaping the company's external stakeholder strategy, cultivating social purpose partnerships, and positioning the company as a recognized leader in the purpose economy. By overseeing strategic initiatives, partnerships, and policy advocacy, the CSO ensures that social purpose is at the core of the company's long-term value creation.

Note: *In organizations with a Chief Social Purpose Officer (CSPO), some responsibilities of the Chief Strategy Officer may overlap or be shared with the CSPO, depending on the structure and focus of the company. For more detailed role descriptions of the CSPO, Director of Social Purpose, and Social Purpose Manager/Coordinator, Specialist, please refer to our [Social Purpose Job Descriptions Guide](#).*

Key Responsibilities

1. Strategy

- Oversee the integration of social purpose into the company's vision, [corporate strategy](#), business plans, dashboards and scorecards, driving alignment across all departments and functions to achieve purpose-led growth and impact.
- Oversee enterprise-wide social purpose integration, including into behaviours, decisions, operations and relationships, fostering accountability and inspiring commitment and engagement at all levels.
- Ensure that social purpose is consistently integrated into all departmental strategies and objectives, facilitating alignment and cooperation across the entire organization to deliver on purpose-led growth.
- Drive the company's external stakeholder strategy, ensuring effective cultivation of strategic social purpose partnerships and collaborations and leading efforts to position the company as a recognized social purpose leader, advocating for broader systemic change for the company's purpose and the Purpose Economy.
- Seek out and provide strategic oversight of partner ecosystems, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, ensuring they advance the company's social purpose and contribute to long-term value creation.
- Provide leadership and accountability for the company's social purpose goals, overseeing the execution of purpose-related initiatives.
- Oversee the development of relationships with other social purpose businesses to create a supportive ecosystem that strengthens the company's ability to achieve its purpose through collaboration and partnership.
- Oversee advocacy efforts for public policies to advance the company's purpose and promote the adoption of social purpose initiatives across the industry.

2. Champion

- Champion and advocate for social purpose within the strategy profession, advancing strategy professionals' expertise in integrating social purpose into strategy practices.
- Represent the company at industry forums, community events, and strategic partnerships to promote the company's social purpose and advance the purpose economy.

Acknowledgement

This guide was prepared by Coro Strandberg, Co-founder and Chair of the Canadian Purpose Economy Project and President, Strandberg Consulting.

About the Canadian Purpose Economy Project

The Canadian Purpose Economy Project exists to accelerate the transition to the purpose economy. It engages national ecosystem actors to create an enabling environment for social purpose businesses to start, transition, thrive and grow. This paper is one in a series of reports exploring the roles of key actors to advance social purpose in business including accountants, boards, investors, associations, business schools and others. We are grateful to Coast Capital, our Founding Purpose Champion, for their support.

Subscribe to our updates at <http://www.purposeeconomy.ca> and sign our [Call to Purpose](#) to help us advance social purpose in business.