

2025

Chief Executive Guide to CEO Peer Networks



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What are CEO peer groups?

Interchangeably called CEO peer groups or networks, these organizations generally arrange regular meetings in confidential environments where CEOs can share ideas, best practices, experiences and advice. High performing executives value the perspective of other leaders, as well as the wisdom that comes from the practical experiences learned by others in similar circumstances and those who have gone down the same road before.

It is truly lonely at the top: most CEOs do not have “safe” environments where they can share all their concerns. CEOs often feel that any public show of vulnerability or uncertainty risks losing the confidence or respect of their boards of directors, employees or customers. Rightfully, most CEOs are reluctant to open up to consultants or other subject matter experts because these vendors have conflicting interests (after all, they live off client fees, and succeed maximally when they create client dependency).

Furthermore, people who haven’t walked in a CEO’s shoes often do not have the perspective to balance competing interests that CEOs need to weigh, which can include employee interests and morale, investor demands, customer focus and the ever-present tension between growth and profitability.

For these reasons, CEOs often make the best advisors to other CEOs, and an increasing number of CEOs find that peer groups are the best way to obtain such perspective.

“We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change.”

—Peter Drucker

Types of CEO Peer Groups

CEO Peer Groups can be meaningfully categorized as either local or national groups.

LOCAL

Local groups are convenient: they meet in a nearby location, and are typically comprised of members from your community. Relationships with local peers often lead to social relationships. The downside is that your peer group is limited to a small pool of potential members, defined primarily by proximity to one another.

Local groups typically consist of a range of company sizes, types and CEO backgrounds. In mixed-sized groups, CEOs running smaller companies often like to learn from the experiences of larger-company CEOs. On the other hand, larger company CEOs are, in such situations, often left unsatisfied as they benefit most from interaction with peers who run companies with a comparable level of complexity.

NATIONAL

National groups have the relative inconvenience of requiring travel, though they often meet less frequently than local groups. On the upside, nationally-organized CEO peer groups may feature expert speakers or resources that might not be available as frequently in local groups.

National groups may have higher quality peers as members are selected from a larger pool. Another large benefit to nationally-organized groups is that they may be industry-specific, providing each member with expertise more closely related to his/her own challenges.

Types of CEO Peer Groups

CEO Peer Group meetings are either Professionally or Member facilitated.

Member Facilitated

While they have national staffers, several CEO peer networks are actually run by the members at the local level. This means it's up to each member to "take a turn" as host, agenda-setter and facilitator to their group (sometimes for as long as for 12 or 24 month "terms").

Professionally Facilitated

Other CEO peer group meetings are run by professionals who plan meetings, organize member communications and facilitate discussions.

Professional facilitators are trained to get to the root of issues, keep discussions on track and efficient, prevent anyone from dominating the discussion and focus on creating "take-aways" that the members are looking for.

**“Excellence is not an act
but a habit.”**

—Aristotle

Benefits of CEO Peer Groups

Members report multiple benefits to CEO Peer Groups.

1

IMPROVE

the growth and profitability of your organization

2

OBTAIN

accurate benchmarks and best practices on key issues

3

PROVIDE

outlet to continuously learn and improve in confidential setting

4

TIME & PLACE

to work "on" vs. "in" your business regularly

Benefits of CEO Peer Groups

5

DEVELOP

friendships and networks with other CEOs that can enrich your professional and personal life

6

EXPOSURE

to new ways of doing things

7

BENEFIT

from the hard-won lessons and experience of other leaders

8

RECEIVE

honest advice and feedback from peers who have no conflict of interest

Benefits of CEO Peer Groups



Faster Growth (On Average)

Members of Peer Networks experienced average revenue growth rate just above 5% last year compared to an industry average of only 1.62%—more than 200% faster growth.



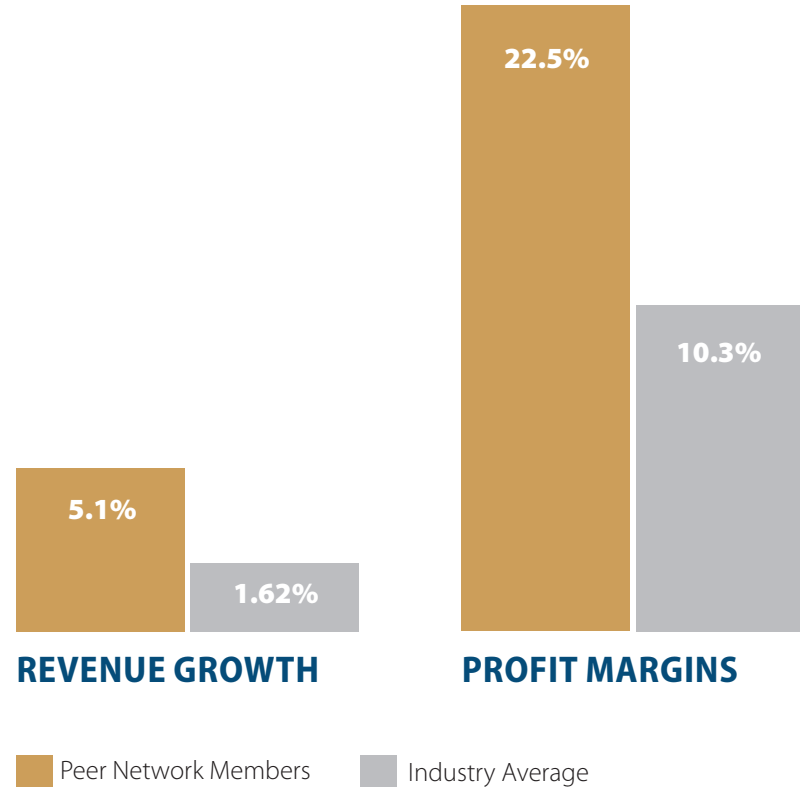
More Profitable

Members of Peer Networks enjoyed operating margins of 22.6% last year vs. an industry average of only 10.26%—more than twice the profitability.



Overall Performance

Executives who set aside the time to attend industry specific meetings in order to exchange best practices and work on their businesses experienced dramatically superior operating results.



**“It’s fine to celebrate success, but
it is more important to heed the
lessons of failure.”**

—Bill Gates

Why Member Size Matters

To the uninformed observer (and the media), it appears that all CEOs do the same thing: run an organization. But any real understanding of business recognizes the significant differences faced by CEOs of different-sized organizations.



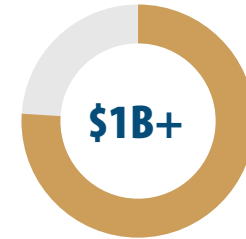
The smallest businesses almost always require a CEO to actively DO many of the functions needed on a day-to-day basis. Some days' tasks may be as mundane as ordering supplies and interviewing job candidates, as well as participating in front-line, customer-facing roles. Outside capital is often non-existent. As a business grows and matures, the CEO must adapt and change his/her style and role (e.g., develop and document processes, upgrade talent in high impact areas, and establish personal relationships with key customers).



The lower-mid-market company CEO (annual revenue \$10-\$100 million) is no longer fighting for survival, and now faces strategic planning with a longer time horizon. With basic processes established, this CEO may be consumed with issues like quality and efficiency or growing new markets or products to provide diversification. Capital becomes available at this size, and the CEO must think strategically about partners and alliances. Talent issues are still critical and consume increasing time even as the CEO delegates to and upgrades key people.



An upper-mid-market CEO (annual company revenue \$100-\$1 billion) faces many of the same challenges as a large-company CEO, but without the same resources. This places added demands on the individual, as they must assume additional responsibility in key functions like strategic planning, corporate finance, mergers/acquisitions/divestitures, international issues, talent development and management, technology and more.



The large company CEO (annual revenue \$1 billion +) is typically engaged in strategic issues over a long time frame. This CEO must often deal with questions like which business lines to invest in, harvest or divest, how to motivate, groom and attract up-and-coming talent and key executives, how to deal with investors and/or regulators, and more. Given the size and scale of this organization, every word uttered by this CEO is closely scrutinized and parsed, with interactions between the CEO and average workers being infrequent.

Key Point

- ◆ **The size of the enterprises being run by peers in your group will directly impact your ROI in membership—in both time and money.**
- ◆ **Meeting with peers who run comparably sized enterprises—and face similar challenges—can accelerate value and time efficiency.**

Why Industry Focus Matters

When mixed with CEOs from a variety of industries, every meaningful conversation requires background explanations of industry norms, competitive dynamics, technological threats, and even language. Key business drivers and metrics vary widely by industry, so evaluate a potential peer group's real ratio of "explaining" to "insight".



Key Point

- ◆ **You will likely receive the highest quality, highest quantity insights about your business from non-competing industry peers.**

**“An expert is a person who
has made all the mistakes
that can be made in a very
narrow field.”**

—Niels Bohr

Who Should Join Peer Networks?

CEO peer groups are not for every leader. To benefit, a leader must have the following characteristics:



COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT

Those who believe that holding a CEO title is the end of a journey should probably not participate. On the other hand, members who value continuous learning and believe every CEO must invest in their ongoing professional development make excellent candidates.



WILLING TO MAKE TIME COMMITMENT

Consistent participation is often an important ingredient in bonding peers and building the trust required to discuss key issues. All CEOs are busy, and prospective members in any group should view participation as a priority.



SELF-AWARENESS

In addition to improved organizational performance, successful members aim to increase levels of satisfaction and performance in their own work as well as that of their employees, customers and investors.



HUMILITY

Peer group members must demonstrate a willingness to share their personal triumphs—and, as importantly—their failures. Hard-won experience (good and bad) is what provides depth and meaning for leaders of substance.

Leading CEO Peer Network Profiles

LEADING PEER GROUP PROFILES

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The Wall Street Journal's CEO Council was excluded from this report because it's not a CEO peer network like the other listed organizations. The WSJ CEO Council is focused on giving large company CEOs access to exclusive on-the-record conferences and WSJ editors and visibility—and less about intimate peer networks focused on solving your specific issues.

Chief Executive Network (CEN)

ChiefExecutiveNetwork.com • Tel: 785-832-0303 • Email: rob@chiefexec.com



Membership count:

1,000

Personal membership criteria

Must be a CEO, President, or Business Owner.

Company membership criteria:

Most members run companies with \$5 million to \$1 billion in revenues and are grouped with CEOs in their industry (who are not competitors) and size range.

Time Commitment Required:



Cost



BACKGROUND

After leading numerous CEO groups, organizational expert Dr. Ronald E. Wiley came to the realization that the take-home value of peer meetings dramatically increased when CEOs met with peers who were in their industry (but not competitors) and/or ran similarly sized companies. Industry focus gave CEOs not only outside perspective, but also specific, actionable ideas based on directly relevant, real-world experience. Chief Executive Network (CEN) was launched on this principal in 1990, and receives accolades from members for practical peer feedback on critical issues. National industry groups meet several times per year in convenient, airport-hub locations to maximize the return on time invested. CEN also rolled out a CEO100 Group for CEOs who run complex organizations with at least \$100 million in revenues. In 2022, CEN acquired Chief Executive Boards International which runs local CEO peer groups in the mid-west and southeast metro areas.

INSIDER INFO

While serving a variety of industries, CEN has particular strength in manufacturing, distribution, tech, software, architecture, engineering and construction industries. CEN doesn't have networks for CEOs in every industry, so check if they have a network for your specific industry. Their new CEO 100 Network also has cross industry groups specifically for CEOs who run companies with at least \$100 million in revenues and now has groups for CEOs who lead \$100 to \$500 million, \$500 million to \$1 billion and over \$1 billion revenue companies..

WHAT SIZE COMPANIES DO THEY PRIMARILY SERVE?

Mid-Market and Upper Middle-Market (has networks from \$5 Million to \$ 2.5

UNIQUE ELEMENTS

Grouped With Non-Competing CEOs In Your Industry and Size Range

Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO)

eonetwork.org • Tel: 703-519-6700 • Email: info@eonetwork.org



Membership count:

17,500

Personal membership criteria

Must be a founder, co-founder, owner or controlling shareholder of a company.

Company membership criteria:

Company must gross at least \$1 million annually..

Time Commitment Required:



Cost



BACKGROUND

Founded in 1987 by a group of young entrepreneurs as YEO (Young Entrepreneurs Organization), EO enables small business owners to learn from each other, leading to greater business success and an enriched personal life. Their mission is to support entrepreneurial education and engage entrepreneurs to learn and grow. They offer resources in the form of events, leadership-development programs, an online entrepreneur forum, and business owner education opportunities, among other resources designed for business growth.

INSIDER INFO

While EO's 213 chapters across the globe provide an extensive network of entrepreneurs, participation in the organization is primarily focused on local chapter meetings. It is important to keep in mind that each chapter varies in terms of industries represented, size of peer companies and the number of members in the local chapter.

WHAT SIZE COMPANIES DO THEY PRIMARILY SERVE?

Smaller Companies (Median member had revenues of \$4.1 million)

UNIQUE ELEMENTS

Entrepreneurs Only

G100 (A Division of World 50)

G100.com • Tel: 212-332-6373 • Email: G100@G100.com

G100

Membership count:

Not known but estimate is <200.

Personal membership criteria

Invitation only extended to CEOs and Presidents.

Company membership criteria:

Only large, global companies are welcome in G100.

Time Commitment Required:



Cost

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BACKGROUND

G100 was formed in 2005 when two separate organizations, G100 and Six Sigma Academy, were purchased and put together. G100 targets “the largest and most significant global companies” for membership and allows members to counsel and connect with each other in a private, off-the-record atmosphere of candid and informed discussion. Meetings are led by a core group of recent chief executives and senior advisors to CEOs. Membership provides access to two meetings a year in which presentations are facilitated and prepared by top representatives from various advisory firms regarding businesses most pressing issues. G100 was acquired by World 50, a leading peer network company that has peer networks for senior HR, Finance, IT and other CXO positions at large enterprise organizations.

INSIDER INFO

G100 is an exclusive organization comprised mainly of large public company CEOs. The meetings tend to focus on guest speaker and advisor led discussions which include leading former CEOs.

WHAT SIZE COMPANIES DO THEY PRIMARILY SERVE?

Large (Over \$1 Billion)

UNIQUE ELEMENTS

Large Company Executives Only

Vistage

Vistage.com • Tel: 858-523-6800

VISTAGE

Membership count:

45,000 executives including their non-CEO Groups

Personal membership criteria

Must be a CEO, or business owner to be in their CEO/Owner groups but they also have key executive groups for executives who aren't CEOs.

Company membership criteria:

Companies must have minimum annual revenue of \$5 million. Most members are in the \$5 to \$50 million range.

Time Commitment Required:



Cost

\$\$\$\$\$

BACKGROUND

Vistage membership includes a local, monthly group meeting plus an individual solo meeting with your group coach. Monthly group meetings are hosted by the members on a rotating basis. Founded in 1957 as The Executive Committee (TEC), the organization underwent a name change to Vistage in 2006 (though not all the company's licensees adopted the new name and still operate as "TEC").

INSIDER INFO

Vistage groups are recruited and run by local coaches (called "Chairs") who split member dues with the national organization. Many of these coaches depend upon cross-selling their consulting services to members to supplement their income. There is a significant time commitment (one half-day per month for group meetings, plus an additional 2 hour coaching session each month with your coach. Be aware that your Vistage experience is heavily dependent upon the experience base and skill level of the specific chair you are assigned and the 15 other members in your group from various industries and sizes..

WHAT SIZE COMPANIES DO THEY PRIMARILY SERVE?

Lower Mid-Market (\$5 Million to \$ 25 Million)

UNIQUE ELEMENTS

Personal Coach

YPO (formerly known as Young Presidents' Organization)

YPO.org • Tel: 972-587-1500



Membership count:

36,000 members in over 142 Countries

Personal membership criteria

Must join before age 45.

Company membership criteria:

50 employees or \$2 million payroll, plus \$15 million valuation or \$12 million revenue.

Time Commitment Required:



Cost



BACKGROUND

Founded in 1950, YPO is the largest CEO peer organization with chapters in 120 countries (approximately 50% of the membership is outside the U.S.) Members join a local “chapter,” which are further broken down into one or more “forums” (each forum is comprised of 8-12 local members in a mix of business sizes and industries). Forums meet monthly for a half day, typically hosted and facilitated by each member on a rotating basis. Chapter members also typically meet on a monthly basis with a guest speaker, and YPO hosts national and international meetings and conferences. Members pay local chapter dues, international dues and fees for special national or international events. At age 50, each member is “transitioned” out of YPO chapters and “graduates” to sister organization YPO Gold.

INSIDER INFO

The impression of YPO is that it has a heavy concentration of second- and third-generation sons and daughters of business founders, lending the organization its unofficial nickname, “YPO: Your Parents’ Organization.” Due to its rule that new members must qualify and join before age 45, membership is skewed toward the inherited set, but there are many entrepreneurs and professional managers as well.

WHAT SIZE COMPANIES DO THEY PRIMARILY SERVE?

Lower Mid-Market (\$12 to \$100 Million)

UNIQUE ELEMENTS

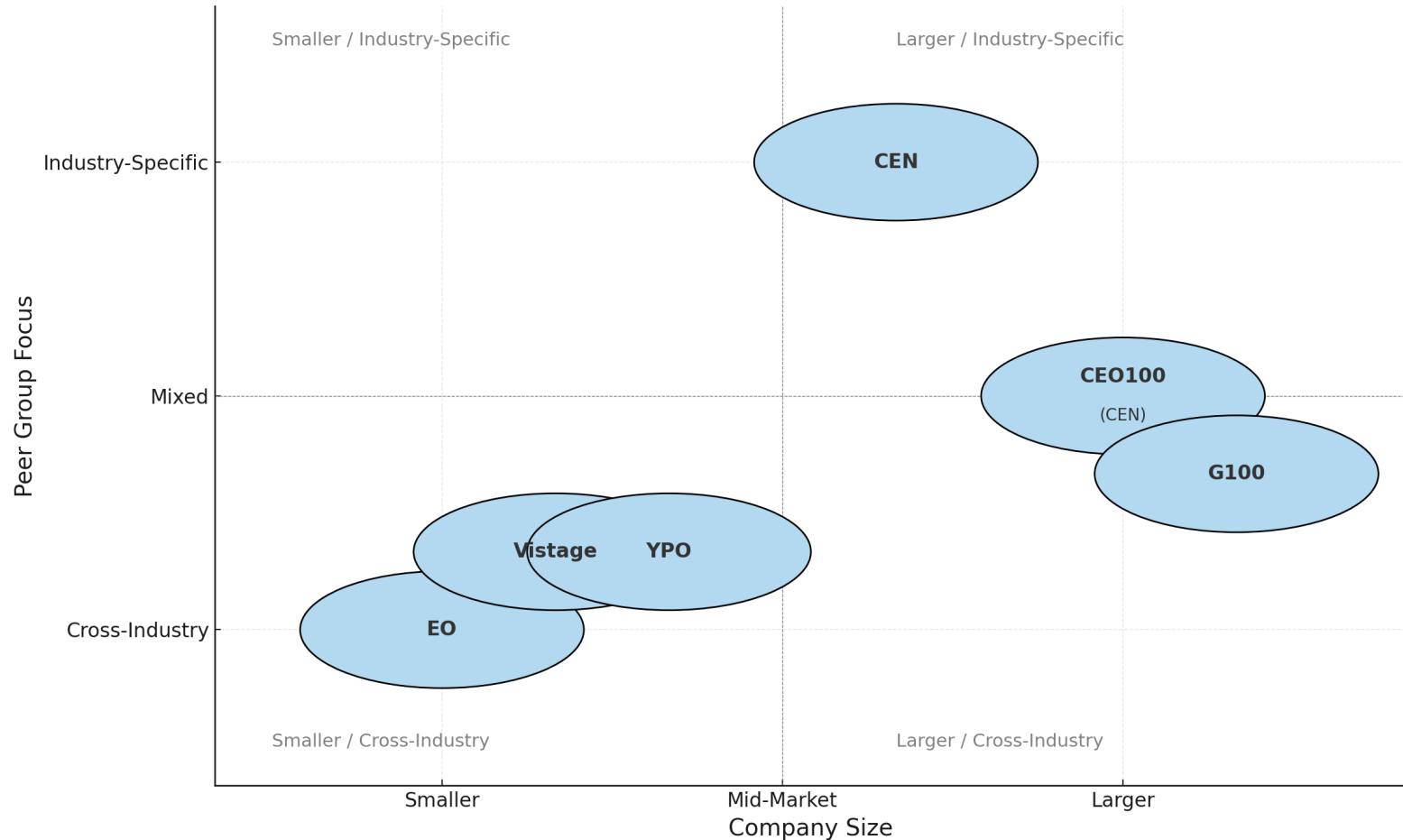
Strong social and personal network

Comparison of Leading CEO Peer Networks

	Chief Executive Network (CEN)	Entrepreneurs Organization	G-100	Vistage	YPO (Young President's Organization)
Member Size Range	Mostly mid –market (\$10 million to \$2 billion +)	Mostly small companies (Under \$5 million)	Large companies only (Over \$1 Billion)	Mostly lower mid-market (\$5 million to \$20 million)	Mostly lower mid-market (\$12 million to \$50 million)
Peer Groups Organized By Industry (Non-competitors) and Size	✓				
Meetings Are Professionally Facilitated	✓		✓	✓	
Local Meetings	Local, regional and national groups	✓	National only	✓	✓
Global Member Access	✓		✓		✓
Annual Fees	\$5,250 to \$25,000 (Based on co size)	\$5,000 for local chapter and Int'l dues	>\$75,000	\$24,000 (Excluding conferences)	Local chapter and Int'l Dues @\$10,000 (Excluding conferences)
Comments	Includes Research and Conference	Additional \$3,500 initiation fee			Additional \$10,000 initiation fee

CEO Peer Network Market Map

(by Company Size & Peer Group Focus)



Which Network Is Right For You?

Each network caters to different types of CEOs. Here are some factors to consider:

Network	Chief Executive Network (CEN)	For More Information
Chief Executive Network (CEN)	If you run a mid-market company in one of CEN's target industries – manufacturing, distribution/wholesale, professional services (e.g., architecture, engineering), software/tech or construction—and are looking to tap into the benchmarks, best practices and experiences of other CEOs who have experience with the business issues you face, this network could be a great fit for you. Their cross industry CEO100 network is a great option for CEOs running companies with \$100 million to \$2.5 billion as well.	ChiefExecutiveNetwork.com
Entrepreneurs Organization (EO)	If you are leading an entrepreneurial enterprise with revenues of at least \$1 million (but probably under \$10 million) and are looking to join a group of entrepreneurs for monthly meetings and presentations, EO is a network you should consider.	eonetwork.org
G-100	If you are the CEO or CXO of a \$1 billion plus company and want to meet with other CXOs who run similarly sized organizations to network and discuss business challenges and best practices, G-100 could be a good option for you.	g100.com
Vistage	If you are a CEO or CXO in a company with revenues over \$5 million and are looking for a local business coach and group of peers to discuss your business challenges with and hold you accountable, Vistage could be a good option.	vistage.com
Young Presidents Organization (YPO)	If you are a young CEO or President (under 44 years of age), run a mid-market company with revenues over \$12 million and are looking for other young CEOs to network with across industries, on business, family and personal issues, YPO is worth checking out.	ypo.org

Chief Executive



About This Guide

This guide was created by Chief Executive Group, which exists to improve the performance of business leaders, build stronger organizations, and drive meaningful results.

We serve more than 100,000 CEOs, CFOs, CHROs, and other senior executives by providing peer insights, benchmarking data, research, and practical resources to help leaders make better decisions and lead more effectively.

Chief Executive Group is the publisher of *Chief Executive* and *Corporate Board Member*, and the producer of peer networks and leadership events across disciplines and industries.

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