

What Got You Here Won't Get You There

by Joe Hunt

The New Reality of Leadership, Talent, and Value Creation

Every day, *The Wall Street Journal* posts new stories of companies laying off droves of white-collar workers. Record numbers of professional jobs are being eliminated. I'm hearing from candidates—ranging from the C-suite down to director-level roles—how tough a time they're having landing new positions. Unemployment for professionals aged 20–25 now hovers around 10%.

As a **C-suite recruiter** at **Hunt Executive Search** and owner of the **TalentGate** agency, which focuses on building teams under the C-suite roles I fill, you'd think I'd be worried about our businesses in the current environment. At first, I was.

But then I realized the opposite is true. There has never been a greater need for what I do. Because across industries and around the globe, a seismic shift is underway—a transformation so profound that it renders one of leadership's oldest maxims truer than ever:

What got you here won't get you there.

For decades, companies have relied on the same playbook for talent, structure, and leadership. That playbook no longer works. The world of work has changed—fundamentally and permanently.

The “way we've always done it” isn't just obsolete—it's now the single greatest obstacle to progress. Every enterprise, from global conglomerates to PE-backed middle-market companies, must **rethink what leadership work needs to be done, redefine the skills and mindsets required to do it, and reinvent how talent is linked to value creation.**

The Corporate Bloodletting: A Symptom of Structural Change

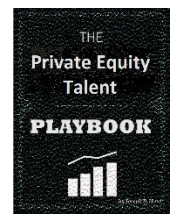
In recent months, the headlines have been relentless:

- Amazon plans to cut another **14,000** corporate jobs, on top of previous reductions.
- Nestlé is eliminating **16,000**.
- Procter & Gamble (P&G): **7,000**
- UPS: **14,000**.
- Estée Lauder: **7,000**.
- Target: **1,800** corporate roles.
- BP: **7,700**.
- Chevron: **9,000**.
- UPS: **14,000**.
- Panasonic: **10,000**.
- Burberry: **1,700**.
- Coty: **700**.
- Kroger: **1,000** corporate roles.

These aren't cyclical cost cuts. They're **structural redesigns**—proof that white-collar work itself is being reinvented.

Automation, AI, and analytics are taking on routine cognitive tasks in every functional vertical within the enterprise. **Delaying** and **zero-based budgeting** have become table stakes. And while productivity soars to record levels, the workforce continues to shrink. The expectation is clear: **do more with less—and deliver better results while you're at it.**





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Even recent graduates, once the bright hope of the talent pipeline, are struggling to find meaningful work. In a cruel twist, it's now harder to get a good job post-COVID than it was during the pandemic itself.

Agentic AI and the Next Productivity Revolution

The new productivity engine isn't human labor—it's **agentic AI**: autonomous, intelligent systems that learn, adapt, and execute faster than any human ever could.

This isn't a future scenario—it's already here. Across industries, AI copilots and intelligent agents are handling planning, reporting, analysis, and even elements of strategy execution. The **C-suite is being forced to evolve—fast.**

Executives who once relied on intuition must now master **AI-augmented decision-making**. Leadership has shifted from managing effort to **orchestrating intelligence**—both human and machine.

And while many leaders feel threatened by this transformation, the best are seizing it as the **ultimate career advantage.**

The LeaderShift Gap: Why Legacy Executives Are Struggling

Most companies' senior leaders simply weren't built for this new world. They were promoted for mastery of past systems, not adaptability to new ones.

As I wrote in *Enterprise GPS: The 7 Levels of LeaderShift*—and in my forthcoming book *Enterprise GPS & the LeaderShift Architect*—executives fail not because they're unintelligent or unmotivated, but because **they don't shift their work values as they rise.**

At each level of leadership, the work changes:

- From **doing** to **leading**.
- From **controlling** to **enabling**.
- From **optimizing functions** to **orchestrating enterprise value creation**.

When leaders cling to the work that got them promoted, they unknowingly **strangle organizational growth** and ultimately render themselves obsolete.

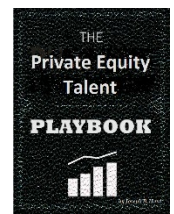
The companies that thrive are those that **continuously redesign the “work to be done” (WTBD)** and **align the right talent to that work.**

Linking Talent to Value: The Enterprise GPS Framework

That's why I developed the **Enterprise GPS** and **LeaderShift Architect** models—a new way of connecting people to the work that creates enterprise value.

Think of it as the organizational equivalent of **Google Maps**—a clear, navigable system that defines:

1. What results are expected at each leadership level.
2. How those results connect directly to value creation.
3. Which competencies, mindsets, and behaviors are required to deliver them.



The LeaderShift Architect extends that system by **linking jobs to value creation**, ensuring that every role—especially the critical 20% that drives 80% of the enterprise’s outcomes—has an **A-player** in the seat.

When we apply the **80/20 principle** to talent, we find a brutal truth:

In most organizations, 20% of the people create 80% of the value.

Our job as leaders isn’t to make everyone equal—it’s to ensure that the right 20% have the **clarity, capability, and culture** to multiply value exponentially.

The New Equation: 70% Role / 30% Talent

Traditional HR orthodoxy has long argued that **talent is 70% of success** and **role design is 30%**. That thinking is now upside down.

Today, **role clarity drives performance**.

It’s no longer about hiring “best athletes” who can “figure it out.” It’s about designing **precise, outcome-based roles** tightly coupled to the **Value Creation Plan (VCP)**—then matching those roles with leaders whose skills, motivations, and cognitive wiring align perfectly.

We call this **Linking Talent to Value (LTV)**—a process originally developed by CEO.Works and McKinsey, and one that I’ve integrated into the LeaderShift Architect framework.

The formula is simple but transformative:

Clarity of the Work (70%) × Capability of the Talent (30%) = Enterprise Value Creation

The Human Side of Reinvention

All of this sounds analytical—and it is. But the implications are deeply human.

When roles evolve faster than people do, **legacy leaders are left behind**. Many find themselves overwhelmed, underperforming, or quietly marginalized. It’s not because they’re bad—it’s because **the work has changed, and they haven’t**.

That’s where **coaching, assessment, and disciplined development** come in. Using multi-point evidence—behavioral, motivational, cognitive, and emotional—we can identify who has the **LeaderShift DNA** to thrive in the new world, and who does not.

The goal isn’t punishment—it’s precision.

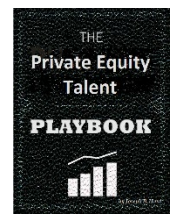
The right person, in the right role, at the right time—**every time**.

The Future of the C-Suite: Leaner, Smarter, More Human

The future C-suite won’t be bigger—it will be **smarter and smaller**.

Instead of sprawling hierarchies, we’ll see **networked teams** of multi-disciplinary leaders augmented by intelligent systems. Titles will matter less than **value contribution**.

CEOs will think like **portfolio managers**, allocating human and digital capital with the same rigor they apply to financial capital.



Boards will demand **evidence-based succession plans** rooted in capability analytics—not personal loyalty.

And recruiters like me? We'll no longer sell résumés—we'll **architect value**.

The LeaderShift Imperative

“What got you here won't get you there” isn't just a catchy phrase. It's the strategic reality of our time.

Every company—and every executive—must confront one critical question:

Am I evolving as fast as the work I'm responsible for?

The organizations that win will be those that **institutionalize LeaderShift**—a system for perpetual reinvention that connects jobs to value, leaders to outcomes, and strategy to execution.

Because in this new age of the intelligent enterprise, **talent is still the ultimate lever of value**—but only when it's connected, calibrated, and continuously reinvented.

About the Author

Joe Hunt is the Founder & CEO of the **Hunt Group, Inc.**, Managing Partner of **Hunt Executive Search** and the **TalentGate agency**, creator of the **LeaderShift Architect** and **Enterprise GPS** frameworks. His firm partners with private equity and corporate clients to align talent with value creation and reinvent leadership architectures for the digital and AI age.

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