

**MAX PARADOX**

**THE  
ABSURDITIES  
OF BEING A  
CEO**

**URGENT!**

**FIX THIS!**

**WHY?**



*A Calm, Exhausting, Slightly Uncomfortable Study of  
Power, Responsibility, and Pretending Everything Is Fine*

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# INTRO

There is a moment when someone becomes a CEO.

It is usually quiet.

No choir.

No thunder.

No one claps.

Most of the time it happens in a calendar invite.

You open it.

You read it twice.

You pretend you understand what just happened.

From that point on, you are no longer a person with opinions.

You are a role with expectations.

You still wake up tired.

You still forget passwords.

You still wonder why meetings exist.

But now your exhaustion has a title.

Being a CEO is often described as leadership, vision, courage, and responsibility.

This description usually comes from people who are not CEOs.

Or from CEOs who are currently on stage, holding a microphone, and lying professionally.

The reality is quieter.

Weirder.

More administrative.

You don't run the company.  
You host it.

You host problems.  
You host emotions.  
You host decisions no one wants to own.

- You are expected to know everything without asking questions.
- You are expected to ask questions without revealing you don't know anything.
- You are expected to decide quickly after a discussion that was designed to avoid decisions.

At some point, you realize that being a CEO means translating chaos into sentences that sound intentional.

You don't say "We don't know."  
You say "We're exploring options."

You don't say "This failed."  
You say "There were learnings."

You don't say "I'm exhausted."  
You say "It's a challenging but exciting time."

The role slowly eats your normal reactions.

You stop reacting like a human.  
You start reacting like a PowerPoint slide.

People look at you differently.  
Not because you changed.  
Because now everything you say might mean something.

A joke becomes a signal.  
Silence becomes a strategy.  
A raised eyebrow becomes a roadmap.

- You cannot be tired, only busy.
- You cannot be wrong, only early.
- You cannot be confused, only considering.

The absurdity doesn't come from power.  
It comes from distance.

You are close enough to feel responsible for everything.  
Far enough to never fully touch the consequences.

You approve budgets you will never personally feel.  
You cancel projects people emotionally married.  
You talk about "culture" while eating alone between meetings.

Being a CEO means constantly explaining reality while slowly losing contact with it.

You speak in summaries.  
You think in risks.  
You sleep in fragments.

Everyone assumes you have answers.  
You mostly have phrasing.

- You learn to sound calm while internally recalculating everything.
- You learn to nod while disagreeing strategically.
- You learn that confidence is often just fatigue standing upright.

This book is not about how to be a better CEO.  
It wouldn't work anyway.

This book is about the strange, quiet, often ridiculous  
experience of being one.

About the meetings that should not exist.  
About the decisions that happen before the discussion.  
About the authority that feels heavier than it looks.

It is about pretending the system is rational while surviving  
inside it.

If you have ever been a CEO, you will recognize yourself and  
feel slightly exposed.  
If you have never been one, you will finally understand why  
they sound the way they do.

Not wiser.  
Just tired.

And very, very practiced at pretending this all makes sense.

Say the word.

# Chapter 1 – The Title Changes Everything

The moment your title changes, nothing changes.

And yet everything does.

You still sit at the same desk.

You still drink the same coffee.

You still open the same inbox that already hated you yesterday.

But now your name carries weight it didn't ask for.

The word "CEO" attaches itself to your email signature and immediately starts behaving like a personality.

People respond differently.

Sometimes slower.

Sometimes faster.

Sometimes with a strange, polite enthusiasm that feels rehearsed.

You haven't gained authority.

You've gained interpretation.

Every sentence you write now exists in multiple versions at once.

There is what you meant.

There is what they heard.

There is what they forwarded.

- A casual "Let's talk later" becomes a scheduling emergency.

- A neutral "Okay" becomes approval.
- A joke becomes a rumor.

You learn this very quickly.  
Usually by accident.

Someone thanks you for a decision you don't remember making.

Someone apologizes for something you didn't notice.

Someone looks relieved just because you nodded.

You start to realize the title doesn't give you power.  
It gives other people anxiety.

And anxiety is loud.

Meetings change first.

Not in content.

In posture.

People sit up straighter.

They bring slides.

They over-explain things they used to say in one sentence.

The same data.

More words.

- People stop saying "I think" and start saying "We believe."
- People stop saying "This might be a problem" and start saying "This is an opportunity."
- People stop disagreeing and start "adding context."

The room becomes softer.  
Less honest.  
More careful.

You miss the old conversations.  
You can't say that.

Because now, when you speak, the room listens differently.

Not attentively.  
Cautiously.

You notice it when you pause.

Silence stretches.  
People wait.

Not because they need more information.  
Because they're checking if this is the part where something important happens.

Sometimes nothing happens.  
That confuses them.

The title creates expectations you didn't agree to.

You are suddenly supposed to be decisive at all times.  
Even when the situation is undecidable.

Especially then.

- You are expected to have a vision even when there are no clear options.
- You are expected to be confident even when the data disagrees with itself.

- You are expected to look calm while quietly questioning all recent life choices.

The hardest part is not making decisions.

It's being watched while making them.

Before, a wrong call was a mistake.  
Now it's a signal.

A signal about strategy.  
A signal about values.  
A signal about who you are as a person.

You become careful without noticing.

You choose words like stepping stones.  
You avoid absolutes.  
You postpone certainty.

Not because you're afraid.  
Because you've learned how easily meaning spreads.

You also learn something else.

People don't want you to be right.  
They want you to be reassuring.

They don't ask, "Is this correct?"  
They ask, "Are we safe?"

So you learn to sound stable.

Even when you aren't.