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GHN CAREER ACADEMY · EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE SERIES · WHITE PAPER 2 OF 3

## Executive Positioning

*Why the story you are telling about yourself is the most expensive problem in your search  
— and the framework that fixes it*

*"A resume is a record. A narrative is an argument. Most executives in transition have a meticulous record and no argument. And a hiring panel — especially at the VP and C-suite level — is not looking for a record. They are looking for a reason to believe that this specific person, with this specific combination of experience and perspective, is the right answer to the specific problem they are trying to solve right now. That argument does not write itself. It has to be built. And most executives in transition have never built it."*

— CRN, Founder, GHN Career Academy · 30 Years Executive Technology Recruiting

### The Positioning Problem Nobody Names Directly

In thirty years of executive technology recruiting, I have reviewed tens of thousands of executive profiles, resumes, and LinkedIn pages. The positioning failures cluster into patterns that are consistent, predictable, and — once named — immediately recognizable to every executive who has been in a search that was not producing the results their experience should warrant.

The common thread is not a lack of accomplishment. The executives who come to GHN with positioning problems are not underqualified. They are frequently among the strongest candidates in their market. The problem is that their positioning — the story their profile, their resume, and their interview answers tell about who they are and what they offer — is not making the argument their experience is capable of making.

They have a record. They do not have an argument. And in the executive market in 2026, the argument is what gets you the role.

**90sec**

time a recruiter or hiring manager spends on a LinkedIn profile before making a first-impression decision

**3**

narrative failure patterns that account for the majority of executive positioning problems at VP and C-suite level

**30sec**

time it takes a clear Strategic Positioning Statement to establish differentiation in an executive interview

## The Three Narrative Failure Patterns

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### Pattern 1 — The Thread Problem

Many senior executives have parallel career threads running simultaneously — a primary operational role alongside advisory work, board service, startup involvement, consulting engagements, or interim leadership. Each thread represents real, legitimate experience. Together, they tell an incoherent story.

The hiring panel reviewing this profile cannot determine what this person does at their core. They cannot map the experience onto the problem they are trying to solve. They cannot answer the question — "what would this person actually do in this role on day one?" — because the positioning does not give them a clear enough signal.

The instinctive response to this problem is wrong: most executives try to simplify by choosing one thread and minimizing the others. This is not the fix. The fix is a unifying narrative that shows how the threads are not competing identities but evidence of a single, coherent leadership thesis. The operator and the advisor are not two different people. They are two expressions of one specific capability at the intersection of execution and strategy. But that argument only lands if someone builds it explicitly. The resume and profile will not build it on their own.

### Pattern 2 — The Legacy Framing Problem

Executives who spent a decade or more at a single organization — particularly large enterprise environments — almost universally make the same mistake: they describe their experience in the vocabulary of that organization. Internal initiative names. Company-specific methodologies. Proprietary platform references. Cultural language that was completely legible inside the company and is entirely opaque to anyone outside it.

"Led the Enterprise Transformation Accelerator" means nothing to a recruiter who has never worked at that company. "Drove adoption of the NextGen Platform" cannot be evaluated by a hiring manager who does not know whether that was a ten-person implementation or a ten-thousand-person organizational change. The experience is real. The framing makes it unreadable.

The fix is translation, not simplification. Every significant accomplishment from inside the organization needs to be reframed in market-legible language — specific enough to be credible, universal enough to be evaluable by anyone with relevant sector experience. "Led a \$40M enterprise data infrastructure migration across 12 business units, reducing time-to-insight from 72 hours to 4 hours for a leadership team of 200" is readable. "Drove adoption of the NextGen Platform" is not.

### **Pattern 3 — The Pivot Positioning Problem**

An executive moving from one sector to another — from financial services to healthcare technology, from enterprise software to industrial IoT, from corporate leadership to startup operator — faces a specific positioning challenge that most get exactly wrong.

The instinctive approach is to lead with the sector they are leaving and ask the new sector to see past it. "Healthcare technology executive transitioning from fintech" puts the deficit first. The hiring panel's initial response — reasonable, if unhelpful — is to register a risk: this person does not know our market.

The right approach is the opposite: lead with the transferable capability and position the sector experience as the evidence base for that capability. "Enterprise systems leader who has driven data architecture decisions at scale in regulated environments — including financial services — now focused on healthcare technology where those capabilities are directly applicable" moves the conversation from transition to translation. The liability becomes the credential. But only if the positioning makes that argument explicitly rather than leaving the hiring panel to make the inference on their own.

## **The Strategic Positioning Statement — The Most Important Piece of Writing in Your Search**

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Every executive in transition needs a single, clear answer to the question: "What do you do, and why does it matter to the organizations you are targeting right now?" That answer is not a title. It is not a resume summary. It is not an elevator pitch. It is a Strategic Positioning Statement — a two-

to-three sentence argument that connects your specific experience to the specific problems your target market is trying to solve in 2026.

The distinction matters. A title describes what you have been. A positioning statement argues for what you offer next. The difference between a candidate who can answer the positioning question in thirty seconds — specifically, clearly, with obvious relevance to the role and the organization — and one who defaults to their most recent title and tenure is not a difference in experience. It is a difference in preparation. And in an executive interview, that difference is legible in the first five minutes.

### The Three Inputs a Positioning Statement Requires

**Input 1 — A Point of View on Your Target Market:** Where is your target sector going, and what leadership challenges does that trajectory create? Not a generic industry trend observation — a specific, defensible perspective on the two or three problems that organizations in your target market are going to spend the most leadership energy on in the next twenty-four months. This is the market intelligence layer that transforms a positioning statement from a description of your past into an argument for your future relevance.

**Input 2 — A Specific Capability Claim:** What is the specific thing you do — the capability that your experience has proven at scale — that is directly relevant to those problems? Not "strong leadership skills" or "strategic thinker." A specific, nameable capability: "building AI-governance frameworks for regulated financial environments," "scaling distributed engineering teams through hypergrowth," "turning around underperforming product organizations in enterprise software." The more specific the capability claim, the more credible and differentiating the positioning statement becomes.

**Input 3 — Evidence That the Capability Is Real:** Three to five concrete outcomes from your career that prove the capability claim is not aspirational. Each outcome needs a situation (the specific challenge), an action (specifically what you did), and a result (a quantified outcome). Not "led a major transformation initiative." "Reduced time-to-market for a twelve-product portfolio from fourteen months to six months by redesigning the product development operating model across three engineering organizations."

Component	What It Does	Common Mistake	What Strong Looks Like
	Shows you understand where		Specific, defensible view on 2–3 leadership challenges your

<b>Market Point of View</b>	the market is going — not just where you have been	Generic industry trend statement that any executive could make	target organizations will face in the next 24 months
<b>Capability Claim</b>	Names specifically what you do — not your title, your function	"Strong leader with broad experience across multiple domains"	"Builds AI-augmented operations teams that reduce cost per transaction by 30–40% without headcount reduction"
<b>Evidence Base</b>	Proves the capability claim with specific, quantified outcomes	Responsibilities listed as accomplishments: "Led team of 45 engineers"	Outcomes with context: "Restructured 45-person engineering org around AI-native principles, reducing time-to-deployment from 6 weeks to 8 days"

## The LinkedIn Positioning Problem — Your Ninety-Second First Impression

A positioning statement is only as effective as the channels through which it is delivered. In 2026, the first delivery channel for executive positioning is not the interview room. It is LinkedIn — specifically, the ninety-second window during which a recruiter, hiring manager, or peer executive scans a profile and decides whether to invest sixty more seconds in it.

Most senior technology executives fail this ninety-second screen not because their experience is insufficient but because their profile is structured as a resume rather than a positioning document. The headline announces a title rather than a value proposition. The About section summarizes a career rather than making an argument. The experience entries list responsibilities rather than outcomes. The result: a profile that accurately represents what the executive has done and completely fails to argue for why they are the right person for what the market needs next.

The six signals that a profile sends in ninety seconds — headline, photo, About section, recent activity, technology currency markers, and network density — each have a strong version and a weak version. Most senior executive profiles score on one or two and fail on the ones that actually drive engagement decisions: the About section argument, the recent activity signal, and the AI and technology currency markers that tell a hiring panel whether this leader's professional worldview was built for 2026 or for 2019.

## The About Section — The Single Highest-Leverage Change

Of all the elements of a LinkedIn profile, the About section is the one that most directly delivers or fails to deliver the Strategic Positioning Statement. It is the one place in the profile where the executive has the space to make an argument rather than list facts. And it is the place where most senior executives either leave the space blank, paste their resume summary, or write something so generic that it could describe ten thousand other professionals at their level.

An effective About section does three things in four to five paragraphs: it establishes a specific, credible point of view on the market (not an autobiography), it names the capability that defines the executive's differentiated value, and it gives the reader a clear sense of who this person is beyond their job history — what they think, how they lead, and why the organizations they work with are better for it. The reader should finish the About section knowing something they could not have inferred from the headline and experience entries alone.

### THE POSITIONING AUDIT QUESTION

Read your LinkedIn About section as if you were a hiring manager who has never met you, reviewing it in ninety seconds before deciding whether to schedule a call. Does it make a specific argument for why you are the right person for the roles you are targeting in 2026? Or does it describe, accurately and competently, who you were at your last company? The gap between those two versions is the positioning work. And it is worth doing before your next interview, not after.

## Positioning in the Interview Room

The Strategic Positioning Statement is not only a written asset. It is the foundation of every substantive conversation in an executive interview. The candidates who are most compelling in the room are not the ones who have prepared the most answers — they are the ones who walk in with the clearest argument for why they specifically are the right person for this specific organization at this specific moment.

That argument is established in the first five minutes and either holds or erodes for the remainder of the conversation. The executives who hold it are the ones who have done the positioning work before they walked in — who know their capability claim, their evidence base, and their point of view on the organization's market well enough to deliver them without hesitation and hold them under the pressure of follow-up questions.

The executives who erode it are the ones who defaulted to their resume in the absence of a positioning statement — who answer "tell me about yourself" with a chronological recitation of their work history rather than an argument for their relevance. That answer is not wrong. It is simply not the argument the panel was hoping to hear. And by the time they realize it, the dynamic of the conversation has already been set.

#### THE TWO-SENTENCE TEST

Before your next executive interview, write this down: "I am the right person for this role because \_\_\_\_\_, and the evidence for that is \_\_\_\_\_." If you cannot fill in both blanks with something specific, quantified, and directly relevant to this organization's current situation — the positioning work is the preparation that matters most. Everything else is secondary.

### Ready to Stop Guessing and Start Running a System?

GHN Career Academy is a career intelligence system built specifically for technology executives — Directors, VPs, SVPs, and C-suite leaders — navigating the modern job market. We assess your positioning, your AI readiness, your narrative, and your search strategy against what hiring panels are actually evaluating in 2026.

We do not sell hope. We build the system. If you want to know whether your specific situation is one the system is built to serve:

**Connect with CRN directly on LinkedIn:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/coachronnash/>

No intake form. No Calendly gate. A direct conversation with someone who has been on both sides of the executive hiring table for three decades.

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