

The Chief Operations Officer role defined

It's easier to manage the operations of some businesses than others. When I say operations, I am talking about the function that creates and delivers the product or service to the customer. It fulfills the sales/marketing promise made to the customer. For example, a weight loss center will promise to help you lose weight, and the operations of the business will provide a service or product to execute that promise for the customer.

Generally, businesses that are operationally harder to manage require you to spend more hours per week working in or managing the operations. A business with a more challenging COO role is better suited for people who enjoy operations, like managing people and systems, suppliers, materials, and employees. In other words, people who enjoy keeping things organized, steady, and marching forward.

How does that sound to you? Does it make you want to run away, or do you like taking on operational challenges? Remember, we want to choose a business idea that will tilt the game in your favor.

Look at this table.

	Difficult	Not Difficult
More Hours	Challenging Operating Officer Role	Average Operating Officer Role
Less Hours		Easier Operating Officer Role

Depending on the business idea you choose, your Chief Operating Officer role would be challenging, average, or easier.

As you can see from the table, the intensity of the role depends on two factors. The amount of time required to run the operations, and the difficulty of the operations.

Let's get into examples to make this come to life.

Easier Operating Officer Role

In an easier operating role, you'll spend less time on operations, and the operations won't be difficult. Companies that sell and market a product and then outsource the production fall into this category.

An example would be an e-commerce store that dropships the product. This business generates leads and converts them into customers, and then asks their supplier to ship the product to the customer with the business's name on it. The little time that you would spend on the operations of this business would include setting up the suppliers and managing the logistics.

Average Operating Officer Role

Let's move on to an average-level operating role, where there is more time spent in operations but the operations are still not difficult. Companies that actually make their product or administer a service usually fall into this category.

An example would be a restaurant or prepared meals company. People who own and run restaurants spend a lot of time managing the kitchen and front of the house. However, the work generally does not take a high level of skill, which gives the operating role an average level of difficulty.

Challenging Operating Officer Role

Finally, what makes the operating role a proper challenge? These are businesses where there is more time spent on operations, and the operations are difficult. Two dimensions

that make operations difficult to manage are when they are harder to systemize, and when the tolerance for error is very small. Let's look at an example for each.

A landscaping company would be hard to systemize. This is because there is inherent unpredictability in the operations of this business. Managing unskilled labor, dealing with vehicles and equipment breaking down, and digging into the ground and hitting pipes and lines can turn any day into chaos. If you don't have an inherent interest in operations and the mindset to manage them calmly, you're going to hate your work.

The other dimension that makes the operations of a business difficult is a low tolerance for error. A plastic surgeon's practice or a parts manufacturer for the airline industry would need to tightly control their operations and quality to avoid costly mistakes and protect lives.

Now that we've looked at the different degrees of difficulty you could face in this role, consider what would work for you – a COO role that is challenging, average, or easy? How much of your time do you want to spend on working with and talking about operations, or would you rather spend time elsewhere? If you enjoy operational challenges, and are adept at them, choosing a business idea with a challenging COO role will give you an edge over your competitors. If not, you'd be better off looking at a business idea with an average or easy Operations role.

Self Assessment for The Chief Operations Officer Role Types

Based on Your Search Reflections and Natural Preferences:

Choose the Chief Operating Officer Role Type that best fits you:

Easier COO Role Type

If during your search you gravitate toward simple, outsourced operations:

- Loves to keep things simple and delegate/outsource wherever possible
- Natural talent for finding and managing good suppliers/partners

- Prefers coordinating others rather than doing operational work
- Gets excited about automation and hands-off systems
- Well-suited for businesses like dropshipping or digital products

Key Strengths that Make Them Prefer This:

- Excellent at finding and managing partnerships
- Strong delegation abilities
- Quick to spot automation opportunities
- Good at high-level coordination
- Skilled at simplifying complex processes

Key Weaknesses that Make Them Prefer This:

- Gets frustrated with repetitive tasks
- Tends to avoid detailed process documentation
- Can be impatient with operational hiccups
- Sometimes oversimplifies operational needs
- These weaknesses are okay here because operations are mostly outsourced

Average COO Role Type

If during your search you're comfortable with moderate operational complexity:

- Comfortable managing day-to-day operations but not obsessed with perfection
- Good at creating basic systems that work consistently
- Natural team leader who can train and manage staff
- Likes routine and predictable work environments
- Well-suited for businesses like restaurants or retail stores

Key Strengths that Make Them Prefer This:

- Good at maintaining consistent quality
- Natural people manager
- Skilled at creating repeatable processes
- Strong at staff training
- Reliable execution of established systems

Key Weaknesses that Make Them Prefer This:

- Struggles with highly unpredictable situations
- Can be resistant to changing established processes
- Sometimes misses opportunities for innovation
- Might avoid tackling complex operational challenges
- These weaknesses are manageable because operations are standardized

Challenging COO Role Type

If during your search you're drawn to complex, problem-solving intensive operations:

- Actually enjoys solving operational puzzles and challenges
- Natural tendency to create backup plans and contingencies
- Stays calm when dealing with multiple crises at once
- Good at making quick decisions with incomplete information
- Well-suited for businesses like landscaping or construction

Key Strengths that Make Them Prefer This:

- Thrives under pressure and complexity
- Excellent problem-solving abilities
- Quick decision-making skills
- Strong adaptability
- Good at crisis management

Key Weaknesses that Make Them Prefer This:

- Can get too energized by fighting fires
 - Might create unnecessary complexity looking for problems to solve
 - Sometimes thrives on chaos rather than preventing it
 - Can burn out from constant problem-solving mode
 - These weaknesses actually help in managing unpredictable operations
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Key Insight:

In small business context, it's less about formal operational expertise and more about natural problem-solving style and tolerance for unpredictability. Someone who gets anxious about daily surprises shouldn't run a landscaping business, while someone who loves solving operational challenges might be bored running a dropshipping business.

The key is being honest about how you naturally approach daily work - not how you think you should operate, but how you actually handle tasks and challenges when running a business. For example, if unexpected problems energize you rather than drain you, you might be suited for a challenging operational role. If they stress you out, you should look for businesses with simpler operations.

This is especially important in small business because you'll be much more hands-on with operations than in a corporate setting. Your natural tendencies will have a direct impact on daily business success and your personal satisfaction.