

# MASHA'S FIT FOR OAKNORTH OPERATING PARTNER ROLE

## Comprehensive Strategic Analysis

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Overall Assessment:** STRONG FIT with strategic positioning required

Masha brings a rare combination of:

- Hands-on operational excellence from managing £70M+ portfolios
- Cross-functional leadership and team-building from scratch
- Systems design and process optimization (ETRM implementation, 60% efficiency gains)
- Crisis management under extreme pressure (Ukraine JV)
- Strong quantitative foundation (MSc Finance, LBS EMBA with PE/Credit focus)
- Entrepreneurial mindset (prop-tech startup founding)

**Key Positioning Challenge:** Translating energy/prop-tech narrative into fintech scale-up operating leverage story

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### 1. DETAILED EXPERIENCE MAPPING TO JD REQUIREMENTS

**JD Requirement:** "8+ years in top-tier consulting/IB/PE/hyper-growth tech"

**Masha's Evidence:**

- **10 years total experience** in high-stakes, complex operational environments

- **£70M portfolio management** - comparable complexity and pressure to PE portfolio management
- **15+ counterparty relationships** - mirrors the multi-stakeholder complexity of IB/PE deals
- **Full startup founding experience** - hyper-growth tech startup mindset and execution
- **LBS EMBA with PE/Credit focus** - formal training in PE frameworks and thinking

#### Gap & Mitigation:

- Traditional path would be MBB/BB/PE → Operating Partner
  - Masha's path: Domain expertise + operational excellence + formal PE training
  - **Positioning:** "Non-traditional but operationally proven path. While others have consulting frameworks, I have P&L; accountability, crisis management, and real execution scars from building in high-stakes environments."
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## JD Requirement: "Work shoulder-to-shoulder with CEO and Exec team"

#### Masha's Evidence:

- **JV Leadership through geopolitical crisis** - required constant strategic alignment with senior leadership during Ukraine crisis, ensuring operational continuity under extreme uncertainty
- **Startup Co-Founder** - direct experience working with founding team on strategic decisions
- **Cross-functional stakeholder management** with 15+ counterparties - demonstrated ability to influence without authority
- **Comfort with ambiguity** - energy trading and crisis management = rapid pivots, incomplete information, high-stakes decisions

**Strength:** Experience operating at strategic AND operational levels simultaneously. Not afraid to challenge, debate, and own outcomes.

**Positioning:** "I've advised CEOs through existential crises and co-founded a startup. I know when to push back, when to execute, and when to bring solutions not just problems."

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## JD Requirement: "Drive strategy into execution, build operating leverage"

#### Masha's Evidence:

- **ETRM Implementation** - drove full end-to-end system transformation, reducing reporting overhead by 60%

- **Built cross-functional teams from scratch** - recruited, trained, and scaled teams to execute on strategic initiatives
- **Performance system design** - implemented OKRs, dashboards, and reporting rhythms in trading environment
- **Process architecture** - redesigned complex workflows to create scalability

**Unique Strength:** Not just strategy → execution, but **SYSTEMS THINKING**. Masha doesn't just execute tasks; she builds the infrastructure that allows teams to execute repeatedly and at scale.

#### **Example Translation for Interview:**

"In energy trading, I inherited manual processes and fragmented systems. I architected and implemented a full ETRM solution that didn't just solve today's problem - it created leverage. We went from drowning in spreadsheets to having real-time visibility and 60% less overhead. That's the kind of operating leverage that scales."

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## **JD Requirement: "Own mission-critical initiatives, build cross-functional teams"**

#### **Masha's Evidence:**

- **£70M portfolio ownership** - full P&L; accountability, not just project management
- **Ukraine JV continuity** - mission-critical stakes (literal geopolitical crisis), ensured zero operational disruption
- **Prop-tech MVP in 3 months** - owned end-to-end, recruited team, shipped product
- **Cross-functional by necessity** - coordinated across trading, risk, finance, legal, IT in matrix org

**Strength:** Experience with TRUE ownership - not PMO coordination, but "if this fails, it's on me" accountability.

**Positioning:** "I've owned initiatives where failure wasn't an option - geopolitical crises, £70M portfolios, startup survival. I know the difference between managing a project and owning an outcome."

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## **JD Requirement: "Design OKRs, KPIs, dashboards, reporting rhythms"**

#### **Masha's Evidence:**

- **Trading dashboard design** - created real-time performance visibility for £70M portfolio
- **KPI frameworks** - designed and implemented performance metrics across trading operations

- **ETRM reporting transformation** - 60% reduction in overhead means fundamentally redesigned what to measure, how to measure, and how to act on data
- **Financial modeling** - MSc Finance + structured financing experience = numerate, data-driven decision-making

**Strength:** Designed performance systems in an environment where bad data = millions in losses. Understands the difference between vanity metrics and actionable KPIs.

**Positioning:** "I've built performance systems in environments where getting it wrong means real financial consequences. I know how to design KPIs that actually drive behavior, not just look good in board decks."

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## **JD Requirement: "Architect scalable processes, leverage GenAI and automation"**

### **Masha's Evidence:**

- **ETRM implementation** - full systems architecture and automation project
- **60% overhead reduction** - achieved through process redesign and technology leverage
- **Startup tech stack decisions** - hands-on with modern tech tools and platforms
- **Quantitative background** - comfort with technical systems and automation logic

### **Potential Gap & Mitigation:**

- May not have direct GenAI implementation experience (this is true for MOST candidates in Jan 2025)
  - **Positioning:** "I've architected automation solutions in energy trading. While I may not have deployed LLMs specifically, I understand the principles: identify high-friction manual processes, design the automation logic, measure impact. GenAI is a tool; the real skill is knowing where and how to apply it for leverage."
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## **JD Requirement: "Be thought partner to CEO, filter and focus CEO time"**

### **Masha's Evidence:**

- **Crisis management during Ukraine conflict** - required rapid synthesis of complex information, clear recommendations under pressure
- **Strategic financing structuring** - LCs, covenants, waterfall structures = ability to grasp complex financial/strategic trade-offs

- **Cross-stakeholder navigation** - 15+ counterparties = ability to synthesize multiple perspectives and distill to decision
- **Entrepreneurial experience** - startup founding = understanding of CEO pressures, priorities, and time constraints

**Strength:** Has experienced what it's like to be the decision-maker under extreme pressure. Knows what "good" looks like in terms of decision support.

**Positioning:** "I've been the person making the call during crises. I know what I needed then: clear options, trade-offs articulated, recommendation with reasoning, and confidence in execution. That's what I bring as a thought partner."

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## JD Requirement: "Highly numerate, MBA preferred"

### Masha's Evidence:

- **MSc Finance** - strong quantitative foundation
- **LBS EMBA with PE/Credit focus** - not just an MBA, but from a top-tier program with directly relevant specialization
- **Structured financing expertise** - LCs, covenants, waterfall structures = financial modeling sophistication
- **£70M portfolio management** - real-world application of financial analysis at scale

**Strength:** Not just academically numerate, but operationally numerate. Has applied financial rigor in high-stakes environments.

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## 2. UNIQUE STRENGTHS (DIFFERENTIATORS)

### A) Real P&L; Accountability in High-Stakes Environment

Most Operating Partner candidates come from consulting (no P&L), banking (deal advisory, not operations), or PE (portfolio oversight, not hands-on). Masha has actually OWNED operational outcomes with real money on the line.

**Value to OakNorth:** Someone who's been in the operator's shoes, not just advising operators.

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## B) Crisis Management & Operational Resilience

Managed JV through Ukraine geopolitical crisis - maintained operational continuity under extreme uncertainty. This is RARE executive experience that most candidates won't have.

**Value to OakNorth:** Scale-ups face crises (market shifts, regulatory changes, competitive threats). Masha has proven composure and execution under fire.

**Interview Story:** "When the Ukraine crisis hit, our JV faced existential risk. I had to simultaneously maintain operations, navigate geopolitical uncertainty, manage stakeholder concerns, and keep the team focused. We didn't just survive - we maintained full operational continuity. That's the kind of resilience OakNorth needs in a scale-up environment."

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## C) Systems Thinking & Operating Leverage

ETRM implementation (60% overhead reduction) demonstrates ability to:

1. Identify systemic inefficiencies
2. Design scalable solutions
3. Drive adoption across stakeholders
4. Measure and deliver tangible impact

**Value to OakNorth:** This is the CORE of the Operating Partner role - building leverage so the CEO and exec team can focus on strategy, not execution quicksand.

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## D) Entrepreneurial Mindset with Corporate Rigor

Rare combination: disciplined processes from corporate trading environment + startup agility and resourcefulness.

**Value to OakNorth:** Scale-ups need both - can't be pure chaos (startup) or pure process (corporate). Masha bridges both.

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## E) Cross-Functional Leadership WITHOUT Title Authority

15+ counterparties, matrix org coordination, startup co-founding = influence through credibility, not hierarchy.

**Value to OakNorth:** Operating Partner role is inherently cross-functional. Success requires influence without direct reporting lines.

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## F) Strong Quantitative + Strategic Foundation

MSc Finance + LBS EMBA (PE focus) + structured financing = rare blend of analytical rigor and strategic frameworks.

**Value to OakNorth:** Can operate at CFO-level financial rigor AND CEO-level strategic thinking.

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# 3. POTENTIAL GAPS & MITIGATION STRATEGIES

## Gap 1: No Traditional Consulting/IB/PE Background

**Likely Interview Concern:** "Why should we hire someone without MBB/BB/PE experience when we can get those candidates?"

**Mitigation Strategy:**

1. **Reframe as strength:** "Traditional candidates have frameworks. I have execution scars. I've built teams, owned P&L; delivered results in high-stakes environments. The question isn't whether I have the right background - it's whether I can drive outcomes. My track record says yes."
  2. **Highlight relevant PE training:** "I specifically pursued LBS EMBA with PE/Credit focus because I wanted those frameworks. But I learned them while actively applying them to real operational challenges, not in a theoretical vacuum."
  3. **Point to pattern-matching:** "Look at successful Operating Partners - many come from operator backgrounds, not just consulting. You're hiring for execution, not slide decks."
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## Gap 2: No Direct Fintech Experience

**Likely Interview Concern:** "Can you translate your energy/prop-tech experience to our fintech business?"

#### **Mitigation Strategy:**

1. **Focus on transferable capabilities:** "Operating leverage is domain-agnostic. Whether it's trading operations, prop-tech, or fintech, the fundamentals are the same: identify bottlenecks, design scalable processes, align cross-functional teams, measure impact."
  2. **Demonstrate fintech literacy:** Research OakNorth's business model, competitive landscape, regulatory environment. Come to interviews with informed perspectives on their challenges.
  3. **Highlight relevant intersections:** "Structured financing experience (LCs, covenants) directly translates to fintech credit operations. I understand credit risk, underwriting, compliance."
  4. **Entrepreneurial curiosity:** "I've made career pivots before - energy to prop-tech. I learn quickly, I'm intellectually curious, and I bring fresh perspectives because I'm not stuck in fintech orthodoxy."
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## **Gap 3: Limited GenAI Implementation Experience**

**Likely Interview Concern:** "How can you architect GenAI solutions if you haven't deployed them?"

#### **Mitigation Strategy:**

1. **Focus on principles over tools:** "I've architected automation solutions. GenAI is a tool - the real skill is identifying where automation creates leverage. I've done that repeatedly."
  2. **Demonstrate learning agility:** "I've rapidly absorbed new technologies throughout my career - ETRM platforms, prop-tech stack, financial systems. I'll do the same with GenAI."
  3. **Partnership approach:** "I don't need to be the technical expert - I need to know how to identify opportunities, scope projects, and work with technical teams to deliver. That's exactly what I did with ETRM."
  4. **Proactive research:** Before interviews, do homework on GenAI applications in fintech. Come with ideas specific to OakNorth.
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## **Gap 4: No Operating Partner Experience**

**Likely Interview Concern:** "This is a unique role. How do we know you can do it?"

#### **Mitigation Strategy:**

1. **Break down the role:** "Let's look at what the role actually requires: [list key capabilities]. Here's where I've done each of those..."

**2. Highlight parallel experience:** "I've effectively been an operating partner to the CEO during the Ukraine crisis and in my startup. The title was different, but the function was the same: strategic thought partner, execution owner, systems builder."

**3. Coachability:** "I'm not claiming to know everything about this specific role. What I am claiming is a track record of rapid learning and exceptional execution. Give me the context, and I'll deliver the results."

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## 4. COMPELLING NARRATIVE: "WHY THIS ROLE, WHY NOW"

### The Story Arc

#### Act 1: Building Foundation (Early Career)

"I started in energy trading because I wanted to operate in high-stakes, complex environments. Managing a £70M portfolio taught me the fundamentals: quantitative rigor, risk management, stakeholder navigation, and accountability."

#### Act 2: Leadership & Systems Thinking (Mid-Career)

"As I grew, I realized that individual execution only scales so far. The real leverage comes from building systems and teams. I led the ETRM implementation - not because I loved technology for its own sake, but because I saw the bottleneck. We reduced overhead by 60%, creating operating leverage that freed the team to focus on higher-value work."

#### Act 3: Crisis & Resilience (Recent)

"The Ukraine crisis tested everything I'd learned. I had to maintain operational continuity, navigate geopolitical uncertainty, and lead through ambiguity. We succeeded because I'd built resilient systems and trusted teams. That experience crystalized something: I'm at my best when I'm building leverage for others to operate at their highest level."

#### Act 4: Entrepreneurial Pivot (Recent)

"I co-founded a prop-tech startup because I wanted to test myself in a different domain and learn what it takes to build from zero. Launching an MVP in 3 months, recruiting a team, navigating startup chaos - it reinforced my passion for operational excellence in high-growth environments."

#### Act 5: Next Chapter (Why OakNorth, Why Now)

"Here's what I've realized: my unique zone of genius is building operating leverage in high-stakes, complex, fast-moving environments. That's exactly what OakNorth needs in an Operating Partner. You're at a stage where the next 2-3 years will determine whether you scale to become a category leader or plateau. You need

someone who can work shoulder-to-shoulder with the CEO to translate strategy into scalable execution, build the operating infrastructure for 10x growth, and own mission-critical initiatives end-to-end.

I've done this before - in different industries, but the fundamentals are the same. I've owned P&L;, built teams, architected systems, managed crises, and delivered results. I don't have the traditional consulting/banking background, but I have something more valuable: proven operational excellence and execution scars.

This isn't a stepping stone for me - it's the culmination of everything I've built my career toward. I'm all in on helping OakNorth scale."

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## Key Narrative Principles

1. **Authenticity over polish:** Don't try to sound like an MBB consultant. Own the operator identity.
  2. **Results over resume:** Every story should end with "...and here's the impact."
  3. **Future-focused:** Connect past achievements to future value for OakNorth.
  4. **Confidence without arrogance:** "I know I can do this because I've done hard things before."
  5. **Specificity:** Use numbers, examples, real stories - not generic platitudes.
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## 5. VALUE PROPOSITION TO OAKNORTH

### What Masha Brings That Others Don't

#### For the CEO (Primary Stakeholder):

1. **True Thought Partner:** Someone who's made high-stakes decisions under pressure, not just advised on them. Can challenge, debate, and own outcomes.
2. **Execution Credibility:** Won't just recommend solutions - will roll up sleeves and deliver them. Team will respect her because she's been in the operator's seat.
3. **Operating Leverage Architect:** Proven ability to identify bottlenecks and build systems that create scalability (60% overhead reduction, ETRM implementation).
4. **Crisis Resilience:** When (not if) things go sideways, she's proven she can maintain composure and execution under extreme pressure.

**5. Fresh Perspective:** Won't bring "that's how we did it at McKinsey" energy. Will bring first-principles thinking and challenge assumptions.

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#### **For the Organization:**

- 1. Cross-Functional Credibility:** Has led without title authority. Can influence across silos.
  - 2. Systems + People:** Not just a "process person" or "people person" - understands both and how they interact.
  - 3. Quantitative Rigor:** Can engage at CFO-level on financial models, at COO-level on operational metrics, at CEO-level on strategy.
  - 4. Entrepreneurial Energy:** Brings startup urgency and resourcefulness, balanced with corporate discipline.
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#### **For This Specific Moment:**

OakNorth is at inflection point: scale-up mode, likely dealing with:

- Growing pains (processes that worked at 50 people breaking at 200)
- Cross-functional coordination challenges
- Need for more sophisticated performance management
- Pressure to demonstrate continued growth while maintaining unit economics
- Automation/GenAI opportunities to create leverage

#### **Masha's Specific Value:**

- 1. Process Scalability:** Has taken manual, fragmented processes and architected scalable systems. That's EXACTLY what scale-ups need.
  - 2. Performance Infrastructure:** OKRs, KPIs, dashboards - she's built these in high-stakes environments where bad metrics = real losses.
  - 3. Mission-Critical Ownership:** Can take the 2-3 initiatives that MUST succeed for the next stage and own them end-to-end.
  - 4. CEO Time Leverage:** Knows how to be a force multiplier, not a bottleneck. Filter, focus, decide, execute.
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## 6. INTERVIEW PREPARATION: KEY TALKING POINTS

### Opening Pitch (2 minutes)

"I've spent 10 years building operational excellence in high-stakes, complex environments - from managing £70M trading portfolios to leading through geopolitical crises to co-founding a startup. What ties it all together is a passion for building operating leverage: creating systems, processes, and teams that allow organizations to scale efficiently.

I'm here because OakNorth is at exactly the stage where operating leverage becomes the difference between scaling successfully and hitting a growth ceiling. You need someone who can work shoulder-to-shoulder with the CEO to translate strategy into scalable execution, own mission-critical initiatives, and build the infrastructure for 10x growth.

I don't have the traditional consulting background many Operating Partners have, but I have something more valuable: proven P&L; accountability, crisis management, systems architecture, and execution scars. I'm not here to give advice - I'm here to deliver results."

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### Key Stories to Prepare (STAR Format)

#### Story 1: Operating Leverage (ETRM Implementation)

- Situation: Trading operations drowning in manual processes, fragmented systems, high overhead
- Task: Implement end-to-end ETRM solution to create scalability
- Action: Led cross-functional team, designed system requirements, managed implementation, drove adoption
- Result: 60% reduction in reporting overhead, real-time visibility, scalable foundation for growth

**Interview Lesson:** "This is what I mean by operating leverage. I didn't just solve today's problem - I built infrastructure that created exponential returns over time."

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#### Story 2: Crisis Management (Ukraine JV)

- Situation: Geopolitical crisis threatened JV operational continuity
- Task: Maintain operations, navigate uncertainty, keep team focused
- Action: [Specific actions taken - need more details from Masha]
- Result: Zero operational disruption, maintained stakeholder confidence, emerged stronger

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**Interview Lesson:** "Scale-ups face constant surprises. I've proven I can lead through chaos and maintain execution under extreme pressure."

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### Story 3: Cross-Functional Leadership (Portfolio Management)

- Situation: £70M portfolio requiring coordination across 15+ counterparties and internal stakeholders (risk, finance, legal, IT)
- Task: Drive alignment and execution across silos without direct authority
- Action: Built relationships, established clear communication rhythms, created shared visibility through dashboards
- Result: Successful portfolio management, stakeholder satisfaction, zero major incidents

**Interview Lesson:** "The Operating Partner role is inherently cross-functional. I've built credibility and influence without title authority throughout my career."

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### Story 4: Startup Agility (Prop-Tech MVP)

- Situation: New venture, needed to validate market fit quickly
- Task: Launch MVP in 3 months
- Action: Recruited team, prioritized ruthlessly, shipped iteratively
- Result: MVP launched on time, learned from market, pivoted based on feedback

**Interview Lesson:** "I bring startup speed and resourcefulness balanced with corporate rigor. That's the sweet spot for scale-ups."

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## Questions to Ask (Demonstrate Strategic Thinking)

### 1. On Strategy & Priorities:

"What are the 2-3 mission-critical initiatives that, if the Operating Partner nails them in Year 1, would make this role a clear success? And conversely, what are the failure modes you're trying to avoid?"

### 2. On CEO Partnership:

"How do you envision the day-to-day working relationship with the Operating Partner? What does 'shoulder-to-shoulder' look like in practice?"

### 3. On Operating Leverage:

"As you look at the organization today, where are the biggest bottlenecks preventing you from scaling efficiently? Where would automation or process redesign create the most leverage?"

#### **4. On Organizational Dynamics:**

"What's working well in the operating model today that we'd want to preserve? What needs to evolve for the next stage of growth?"

#### **5. On Success Metrics:**

"How will you measure whether the Operating Partner is succeeding? What KPIs or outcomes matter most?"

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## **7. RISK MITIGATION: ADDRESSING ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM**

### **Proactive Approach**

Don't wait for interviewer to raise concerns. Address head-on with confidence.

#### **Example:**

"I know my background is non-traditional for an Operating Partner role. Most candidates you're seeing probably come from MBB, bulge bracket, or PE. So let me address that directly: I don't have those credentials, but I have something more relevant - actual operational accountability in high-stakes environments. I've owned P&L;, built teams, architected systems, and delivered results. The question isn't whether I have the 'right' background - it's whether I can drive the outcomes OakNorth needs. My track record says yes."

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### **Objection Handling Matrix**

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## **8. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Pre-Interview Homework**

#### **1. Research OakNorth deeply:**

	<b>Response Strategy</b>
perience"	"I have something better: operational accountability. Consultants recommend; operators deliver. I've been the operator."
ence"	"Operating leverage principles are domain-agnostic. Plus, I bring fresh perspectives unburdened by fintech orthodoxy."
ence"	"I've architected automation before. GenAI is a tool; the skill is knowing where to apply it. That's my strength."
"	"I thrive in ambiguity. My entire career has been defining roles, building structure, creating order from chaos."
	"I've operated in corporate (energy), startup (prop-tech), crisis (Ukraine), and academic (LBS) environments. I adapt quickly and build credibility."

- Business model, revenue streams, growth trajectory
- Competitive landscape, market positioning
- Recent news, funding rounds, strategic announcements
- Leadership bios (especially CEO)
- If possible, talk to current/former employees

#### **2. Prepare specific ideas:**

- 2-3 concrete initiatives you'd prioritize in first 90 days
- Examples of where GenAI/automation could create leverage for OakNorth specifically
- Questions or hypotheses about their operating model

#### **3. Refine stories:**

- Practice STAR format for key stories
- Quantify everything possible
- End each story with clear impact and learning

#### **4. Mental preparation:**

- Own your non-traditional path with confidence
  - Remember: they're evaluating fit, but you're also evaluating them
  - This role needs to be right for YOU, not just for them
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## **Interview Day Strategy**

#### **1. Energy & Presence:**

- Confident, not arrogant

- Curious, not interrogative
- Collaborative, not competitive
- Operator, not consultant

### **2. Demonstrate, Don't Tell:**

- Use specific examples, not generic claims
- Draw on whiteboard if needed to explain systems thinking
- Show how you think through problems in real-time

### **3. Listen > Talk:**

- Pay close attention to CEO's language, priorities, concerns
- Mirror back their language to demonstrate understanding
- Ask clarifying questions before jumping to solutions

### **4. Close Strong:**

- Reiterate enthusiasm and fit
  - Address any lingering concerns directly
  - Clear next steps
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## **Post-Interview Follow-Up**

- 1. Thank you note:** Personalized, references specific conversation points, reiterates fit
  - 2. Thoughtful artifact:** Consider sending a brief memo on one topic discussed (e.g., "Initial thoughts on OKR framework for OakNorth" or "3 automation opportunities I'd prioritize"). Shows initiative and thought partnership.
  - 3. Maintain momentum:** If interested, follow up proactively on timeline
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## **CONCLUSION**

**Masha is a strong, unconventional fit for this Operating Partner role.**

**Strengths:**

- Proven operational excellence with P&L; accountability
- Systems thinking and operating leverage creation
- Crisis management and resilience
- Cross-functional leadership
- Quantitative rigor + strategic frameworks
- Entrepreneurial energy + corporate discipline

**Positioning Challenge:**

- Translate non-traditional background into compelling "why this candidate" story
- Requires confidence in owning the operator identity vs. trying to mimic consultant profile

**Key to Success:**

- Authenticity + specificity + results focus
- Own the gaps, reframe as strengths
- Demonstrate thought partnership through preparation and questions
- Show don't tell through concrete examples

**Bottom Line:**

If Masha can articulate her value proposition clearly and demonstrate her systems thinking in interviews, she has a genuine shot at this role. The key is confidence in the non-traditional path and laser focus on outcomes over credentials.

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**Next Steps:**

1. Refine personal narrative using framework above
2. Prepare 4-5 key stories in STAR format with quantified results
3. Research OakNorth deeply and develop specific ideas
4. Practice articulating value proposition concisely
5. Develop thoughtful questions that demonstrate strategic thinking
6. Mental preparation: own the operator identity with confidence