

OCEANS TALENT

The Chief of Staff Network Playbook

ONE CHIEF OF STAFF 2X'S AN EXECUTIVE.
A NETWORK 10X'S THE COMPANY.

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01 — The Leverage Gap

You already solved this problem — for yourself.

Somewhere along the way you hired a Chief of Staff, or an executive assistant who grew into one. Someone who protects your time, closes loops you'd otherwise chase, and turns "we should really fix that" into a system that runs without you. Probably the highest-leverage hire you've made. (Haven't made it yet? This playbook covers that first hire too.)

Now look one level down.

Your department leaders are running the same race you were, without the leverage you gave yourself. Scaling fast, every one of them is juggling four jobs at once: absorbing the demands of growth, pushing for outcomes, onboarding new hires, and reinventing processes that break every time the team doubles. The urgent crowds out the important, and the leaders you hired for judgment spend their days on coordination.

Then the second problem compounds the first: **departments never scale at the same rate**. Sales doubles while operations is still hiring. Each function develops its own trackers, its own cadence, its own version of the truth, and collaboration gets harder exactly when it matters most. Cross-functional work stalls in the gaps, and momentum is dulled by competing priorities that nobody has the bandwidth to reconcile.

Neither problem is a talent problem. Your leaders are capable. It's a leverage problem — and it has a structural fix.

We know because we lived it. The change that moved the needle most at Oceans Talent last year wasn't a new tool, a headcount plan, or an AI workflow. **We ran without a Chief of Staff for three years — then we put one in every department**, and it reshaped how the whole company operates. This playbook is what we learned, plus the client-side receipts from the 600+ companies where we have placed roles.

"A good Chief of Staff isn't just a force multiplier; they're a strategic executive in their own right."

MATT WALLAERT, CHIEF EXPERIENCE OFFICER, OCEANS TALENT

02 — The Chief of Staff Network

Impact starts with a fundamentally different view of the Chief of Staff role.

In most organizations, a Chief of Staff is a dedicated partner to a single executive, usually the CEO, extending that leader's capacity by driving priorities and removing bottlenecks. Valuable, but it concentrates all of the leverage around one person.

The greater opportunity is embedding Chief of Staff capability in every major function and connecting those individuals into a network. Connected, they share systems instead of recreating them, run one operating rhythm, surface risks earlier, and keep cross-functional work moving without executive intervention. The departments scaling at different rates get re-synchronized, not because executives align them in meetings, but because alignment is built into the operating model.

Concretely, at our company the network runs on shared artifacts, each owned by one Chief of Staff and used by several departments: a single pipeline view where Sales and Revenue Ops once kept siloed sheets, one cancellation feed shared by HR and Integration, a bench-to-placement pipeline coordinating Training and Resourcing, and leadership meetings run on a common agenda-and-follow-up template. Every department's system becomes every other department's leverage.

When you build this yourself, connect the roles deliberately: one shared view of the truth for every pair of departments that argue about data, one common template for the meetings your Chiefs of Staff run, and a standing 30-minute weekly sync of the Chiefs of Staff themselves, where each brings one system they've built and one bottleneck they've hit. That one recurring meeting turns four good hires into a network.

That's the claim on the cover: one Chief of Staff roughly doubles an executive's capacity, and the network compounds well beyond that. We don't ask you to take it on faith — the Growth Stories section shows the receipts, from our own four departments and from clients including True Classic, Sharma Brands, Drink Delta, and Cheers.

The model is only as effective as the people selected to operate it.

03 — Need a Great Hire? Start Here.

What follows is a practical framework for hiring your first Chief of Staff, or your next four, and setting them up for long-term success in the role.

What to look for

- **Comfortable starting with unglamorous, invisible work:** Not someone who needs a grand strategy or a fully formed plan before they can start moving the needle.
- **A bias toward documentation:** The instinct to turn tacit knowledge into clear, repeatable systems is non-negotiable.
- **Numerically literate:** Comfortable interpreting data and translating raw numbers into recommendations an executive can act on, not just summaries of what happened.
- **Excellent communicator:** Builds trust quickly, communicates clearly through ambiguity, and thrives in a role defined by the gaps between other people's responsibilities rather than a fixed job description.
- **A generalist, not a specialist:** Able to pick up a project with zero prior context and get up to speed fast, rather than needing deep expertise in the function before contributing.

"Look for someone who is a quick learner, who has executive presence, who can build trust quickly, who has high EQ and IQ... [and] can go pick up a project quickly that they don't have experience in before."

JULIA GOVBERG, CHIEF OF STAFF, CLAY

BEFORE YOU HIRE, DEFINE THE TYPE. Not every Chief of Staff does the same job. Julia Govberg (Clay) describes herself as a "special projects" Chief of Staff, spending most of her time embedded in different parts of the business rather than shadowing the CEO. Get clear on which one you're hiring before you write the job description. (There's a copy-ready job description in the Appendix.)

Where to find one

- **Promote from within:** Every Chief of Staff at Oceans Talent grew into the role rather than arriving fully formed for it, and the advantage is trust that's already been built.
- **Hire directly:** Works well when you have the time to run a full search and the internal capacity to onboard someone with no institutional context.

- **Use a specialized talent partner:** This is where Oceans Talent comes in. We've placed operators in these roles across 600+ companies, sourcing and vetting Chiefs of Staff so you're choosing from a shortlist of people who've already been evaluated for exactly this kind of role, with a match in about two weeks.

The cost comparison

	Hiring in the US	Through Oceans Talent
Annual cost	\$150,000+	Starts at around \$36,000 (≈\$3,000/month)
Time to hire	~44 to 60 days	About two weeks
Vetting	You run the search and screening yourself	Already vetted before you meet them
If it isn't working	You start the search over	We replace the match: guaranteed

How the math works

A number like that deserves an explanation, because it isn't a discount on quality — it's a different labor market.

Our operators are based in Sri Lanka: university-educated, AI-fluent professionals competing for some of the most sought-after roles in the country's job market. That competition is why we accept just 1% of applicants and still fill roles in about two weeks. The savings, typically 60–70% versus a comparable local hire, come from cost-of-living differences, not a lesser candidate.

Three things make the model work day to day. Operators are full-time and dedicated: one operator, one executive, not a shared assistant pool. They work mostly US hours, with enough overlap every single day to work together in real time; as one client's operator put it, "our daily syncs and clear delegation make it feel like we're in the same office." And every placement is managed continuously after the match.

Coaching, support, and accountability stay with us. That's not a vibe, it's a guarantee: if the match isn't good, we replace it. The 14% of first matches that don't work out become our search to rerun, not yours.

One honest caveat: the first month is an investment, not a payoff — your new Chief of Staff shadows and learns before they can own. The milestone ladder in the next section is paced for exactly that ramp.

The math is one part of the decision. The other part is what your department leader does with the 10+ hours a week they get back, which is what the Growth Stories section is about.

WANT TO PRESSURE-TEST THE NUMBERS? Bring your current org chart to a 30-minute call and we'll show you what a shortlist would look like for one department: oceanstalent.com/book-call-with-oceans

04 — A Clear Growth Path

The success of a Chief of Staff isn't determined by the job title or the org chart. It's shaped by where you start, how you structure the role, and the ownership you give them from day one.

- **Start with the loudest pain, not the whole org chart:** Every department starts with one bottleneck, not a company-wide rollout.
- **You don't need a unicorn hire:** Every Chief of Staff at Oceans Talent grew into the role rather than arriving fully formed for it. The milestone ladder below exists because a first-time Chief of Staff can add real value from week one.
- **Three things matter more than the title:** Real access to the numbers, one real project to own end-to-end, and one system with their name on it. Everything else in this guide is detail on top of those three things.

The milestone ladder

Use this as a 30-day check-in agenda with your own Chief of Staff, not a scorecard. The goal is a conversation about what to invest in next, not a pass/fail review.

Milestone	What success looks like
Day 30	Shadowing complete. Understands the department's revenue and cost drivers, and can interpret existing trackers with guidance.
Day 60	Owns the department's weekly information flow (updates, trackers) independently. First small project delivered end-to-end.
Day 90	Running point on one cross-functional special project. Producing decision briefs the department lead uses without editing.
Month 6	Has redesigned at least one recurring process that's now embedded team-wide.
Month 12	Builds and presents a model that directly informs a strategic call. Seen by leadership as the default owner of ambiguity in the department.

The Oceans Talent best practice checklist

One letter, one honest answer, one thing you'll actually hand over. Fill it in for the department you picked, or copy the page for every department lead on your team.

	Question	Your answer
O: Own the business model	What's one KPI or target you could give your Chief of Staff full access to this month?	
C: Command special projects	What's one ambiguous, cross-functional project you could hand off completely, not as a checklist?	
E: Elevate culture and communications	What's one update, cadence, or narrative you could let your Chief of Staff reshape instead of just distributing?	
A: Architect operations	What's one broken recurring process you'd give them the mandate to redesign?	
N: Navigate decision support	What's one decision you've been making off a summary instead of a recommendation?	
S: Synchronize information flow	What's one org-wide system, a dashboard, a decision log, you could hand full ownership of?	

Score yourself: count how many of the six you answered with a real name, number, or system, not "not sure yet."

Score	What it means
0–2 answered	Not ready yet. Pick one project to hand over before you hire.
3–4 answered	You're ready for the first Chief of Staff. Their first 90 days should close the rest.
5–6 answered	Ready now. These answers double as their onboarding brief.

SCORED 3 OR MORE? Your answers above are, word for word, the brief we'd use to match you. Bring this page to a call and we'll turn it into a shortlist: oceanstalent.com/book-call-with-oceans

05 — Growth Stories: Proof

Two kinds of proof follow. First, what happened at client companies when an executive got this kind of operator beside them: nineteen companies, on the record. Then, what happened inside our own four departments when we ran the full network model on ourselves.

At client companies

The role arrives under different titles, including Executive Assistant+, Operations Manager, and Chief of Staff, but the arc is the same in every story: start with one bottleneck, earn ownership, end up running the operating layer of the function.

Ever+Other — the arc, in one hire

Amer Shaar runs a Miami-based fractional CFO firm. His operator now runs operations across six platforms, has built 25+ automations, and owns hiring support and go-to-market setup.

“Within the first month with Sashan, I realized he was capable of far more than EA support and that I could rely on him to build the operational backbone of Ever+Other and own it end to end.”

AMER SHAAR, FOUNDER, EVER+OTHER

True Classic — the model at \$250M scale

True Classic brought in ten Oceans Talent hires in a single year, across e-commerce, warehouse operations, merchandising, and marketing, while opening four international warehouses. A third of the team offshore.

“In just the last year we’ve brought in 10 people from Oceans and we’ve had a fantastic experience, across talent sourcing, onboarding then ongoing support.”

ADAM EISENSTADT, SVP COMMERCIAL, TRUE CLASSIC

Drink Delta — ownership you can measure

Drink Delta’s operations manager took customer experience end to end: 25,000+ inquiries resolved over two years, 2,000+ customers retained through resolution support, and error-related replacements cut roughly 73%, from about 260–270 a month to around 70.

“Nadeesh is a highly talented and valued member of our team... Over the last few years, his partnerships and engagement have been instrumental as we’ve grown, particularly in building our customer service, operational integrations, and consumer engagement processes.”

ERIKA SCHNEID, VP, PEOPLE & ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN, DRINK DELTA

Sharma Brands — leverage a CEO’s peers notice

Nik Sharma's team scaled paid media from 4 to 12 people while client net profit grew 55%, with operators managing \$500K+/month ad accounts.

"Whenever my peers see how he moves or what he does for me, they all ask for an introduction to Oceans."

NIK SHARMA, FOUNDER & CEO, SHARMA BRANDS

The results wall

Every company below is a published case study, with the executive on the record.

Company	Executive	On the record
True Classic	Adam Eisenstadt, SVP Commercial	10 hires in one year (2024); a third of a \$250M business's team offshore
Sharma Brands	Nik Sharma, Founder & CEO	Client net profit up 55%; paid media team scaled 4 → 12
Drink Delta	Erika Schneid, VP, People	Error-related replacements cut ~73%; 25,000+ inquiries resolved
Coffee 'n Clothes	Ryan Glick, Founder & CEO	Team scaled 7 → 20; 500+ qualified leads sourced monthly
Cheers	Brooks Powell, Founder & CEO	Founder's week cut from 70+ hours to a 55-hour cap
MXA	Chuck Sebastiani, Co-Founder & COO	\$200K saved annually with a fully offshore finance team
Luna Bay	Bridget Connelly, Founder & CEO	1,000+ investors managed at a third of the cost of a local hire
Management Controls (MCi)	—	~20 hours/week freed for account managers; 10+ operators added in a year
Frank Darling	Kegan Fisher, CEO + Co-Founder	Organic traffic doubled; keyword rankings up 72%

Plus ten more on the record: Ever+Other, New Seas, Allen & Gerritsen, Fuelfinance, Biolyte, Cosmos Labs, Inbox Collective, Bite, Dental CPA, and AG Consulting Group. Read each case study in full at oceanstalent.com/case-studies.

Inside our own walls

Clients usually start with one department. We went all the way: a Chief of Staff in every function, connected as a network. And yes, these are our own operators inside our own company; discount for home-field advantage if you like. It still transfers: this is the same bench the nineteen client companies above drew from. Four departments, each with its own bottleneck: before and after, in the words of the people who lived it.



The Oceans Talent Chief of Staff network — one executive, three department leads, four Chiefs of Staff.

Founder’s Office

Result for the founder	Cross-department result
Billing, AR, contracts, and two weekly leadership meetings fully off the founder’s plate; \$24K saved in one vendor renegotiation	Contracting process built by the Chief of Staff, now run day-to-day by the sales team

Department lead: Ian Myers, Founder & CEO • Chief of Staff: Mara Galdos-Shapiro

Before: The founder personally checked the bank account daily, marked invoices paid by hand, wired every affiliate payment, produced and redlined every client contract, and kept a manual tracker of every signed contract and churned account.

After: Payment tracking automated via a dedicated Slack channel; billing and accounts receivable fully owned by the Chief of Staff; the contracting process she built later handed to the sales team to run; the weekly leadership and C-suite meetings run end-to-end by the Chief of Staff: agenda, template, and action-item follow-up.

“I hired my Chief of Staff about six months too late. As the business grew, I was stuck between leading and staying involved in day-to-day operations while high-trust work kept piling up. Mara stepped in, took ownership of what was slowing me down, helped me focus where I added the most value, and built the trust I needed to let go. The result was stronger leadership and a far more efficient business.”

IAN MYERS, FOUNDER & CEO, OCEANS TALENT

Mara joined Oceans Talent in January 2023 as its first salesperson, when the company was less than a year old. There was no Chief of Staff role to step into, it emerged over seven or eight months, starting with her noticing something broken and fixing it: an automation to track newsletter leads, because no one else had time. That unglamorous fix is, by her account, how she became Ian’s Chief of Staff. Not a plan. A patch that worked.

“In our first year, Ian and Katie personally handled nearly everything... Today, I fully own billing and accounts receivable... I still run our weekly leadership and C-suite meetings end-to-end, from creating the agenda and managing the template to following up on action items. Along the way, I’ve also delivered meaningful cost savings, for example, by renegotiating a single vendor contract, we saved approximately \$24K.”

MARA GALDOS-SHAPIO, CHIEF OF STAFF TO IAN MYERS

Sales & Revenue

Result for the manager	Cross-department result
10–12 hrs/wk reclaimed on the VP’s calendar	Revenue Ops: one pipeline view instead of siloed sheets

Department lead: Ben Lundberg, VP, Revenue • **Chief of Staff:** Devni Gunaratne

Before: The VP manually scanned dozens of chat channels every day to track deal status, which took roughly half a working day, and forecasting relied on manual CRM exports into spreadsheets.

After: An automated, human-reviewed tracker cuts deal tracking to under two hours, and a forecasting model is in progress to replace manual exports entirely. She built it in her first month in the role.

“Devni has been a force multiplier. She’s equal parts Chief of Staff and RevOps engineer, a genuinely rare combination. She owns the operational layer, from pipeline visibility and reporting to the rhythms that keep the business running... Without a Chief of Staff, I’d be buried in spreadsheets and reconciling data. Instead, I’m focused on scaling the business.”

BEN LUNDBERG, VICE PRESIDENT OF REVENUE, OCEANS TALENT

“I try to take on the recurring operational tasks and drive them through to completion myself, so Ben gets the outcome without having to pull his focus away from the bigger decisions.”

DEVNI GUNARATNE, CHIEF OF STAFF TO BEN LUNDBERG

Integration Success

Result for the manager	Cross-department result
50+ hrs/yr by removing two recurring meetings	HR & Integration: share one cancellation feed

Department lead: Katie Scarpa, Co-Founder & VP of Integration Success • **Chief of Staff:** Amaani Inthikab

Before: The department manually covered 150+ accounts with no standardized handoff when someone left, and client churn was tracked by hand into a weekly report.

After: A 5-person team now covers 100+ accounts each with a standardized handoff document for every operator, and churn tracking is fully automated into a live, shared feed.

“I have a lot of energy; I like to be in 500 places at once. Every meeting, every action item, every little problem, my evergreen tactical solution is to throw myself at it. In the early days, it was absolutely a necessity. As we grew, it was absolutely the thing that held me back.”

KATIE SCARPA, CO-FOUNDER & VP OF INTEGRATION SUCCESS, OCEANS TALENT

“If it’s not written down, it doesn’t exist. Now that we have documentation and reports, we can always track things back.”

AMAANI INTHIKAB, CHIEF OF STAFF TO KATIE SCARPA

Operator Success

Result for the manager	Cross-department result
400 operators now supported by one published playbook	Training & Resourcing: coordinate via bench-to-placement pipeline

Department lead: Kavitha Gunsekera, VP of Operations • **Chief of Staff:** Jezla Latiff

Before: 400 operators ran through a single undocumented process held together by one person's memory, and bench-cost reporting was a single flat, company-wide figure.

After: A published Operator Success Playbook documents every process and the reasoning behind it, and bench-cost reporting is segmented by role and level, detailed enough to directly inform hiring decisions.

"Before I had a chief of staff, I had an extremely long list of things to do. I had a lot of tacit knowledge stored in my head and other people's heads, which I wasn't sure how to capture and put down on paper... people were just running into walls trying to remember what the process was while also breaking them. It was frighteningly worrisome."

KAVITHA GUNSEKERA, VP OF OPERATIONS

06 — Your Next 90 Days

OCEANS TALENT

Ready to Build Your Own Chief of Staff Network?

You've seen the model hold up in nineteen client companies and our own four departments. Here's the 90-day plan, whichever route you take.

When	What happens
Weeks 1–2	Pick one department: the loudest pain, not the whole org chart. Its leader fills in the checklist from A Clear Growth Path; three or more real answers means you're ready.
Weeks 3–4	Source the person: promote from within, run your own search with the Appendix job description, or start from a vetted shortlist (matched in about two weeks).
Month 2	Onboard against the milestone ladder. Day 30: shadowing complete, drivers understood. Give them real access to the numbers from day one.
Month 3	Day 60: they own the weekly information flow and ship a first project. Day 90: one cross-functional project running, decision briefs used without editing, pick department two.

Do it yourself: Pick the department with the loudest pain, hand its leader the checklist and the Appendix job description, and start the search, internally first. Everything you need to structure the role is in this playbook.

Or let us bring you the shortlist: Book a 30-minute call. We'll take your checklist answers, scope the first role, and put a vetted shortlist in front of you, from a talent pool with a 1% acceptance rate. Most placements match in about two weeks, 86% succeed with the first match, and when one doesn't, we replace it, guaranteed. Starts at around \$3,000/month instead of \$150,000+ a year.

A note on timing, from our own founder: "I hired my Chief of Staff about six months too late." Six months at 10+ reclaimed hours a week is more than 250 hours of a leader's judgment — per department. That's the real price of deciding later.

Somewhere in between? Take the checklist to your next leadership meeting, and read any of the nineteen client stories in full at oceanstalent.com/case-studies. This playbook works at whatever speed you do.

One Chief of Staff doubles an executive. A network compounds the company. The first call is where the network starts.

Book your call → oceanstalent.com/book-call-with-oceans

Appendix — A Chief of Staff Job Description You Can Copy

Paste this into your careers page. Bracketed lines are yours to fill in; everything else comes from this playbook.

Chief of Staff — [Department / Executive]

Mission: Extend [executive name]’s capacity by owning the department’s operating layer, including its information flow, recurring processes, and cross-functional projects, so the leader’s time goes to judgment, not coordination. Full-time, dedicated, reporting to [executive name]. [Compensation / location / remote details.]

What you’ll own

- The department’s weekly information flow: updates, trackers, and reporting the leadership team actually uses.
- One ambiguous, cross-functional project at a time, end to end, from [example: pipeline reporting / vendor consolidation / onboarding redesign].
- The redesign of recurring processes that break as the team grows, and the documentation that makes them transferable.
- Decision support: turning raw numbers into recommendations, not summaries.

Your first 90 days

- Day 30: Shadowing complete; you understand the department’s revenue and cost drivers and can interpret existing trackers with guidance.
- Day 60: You own the weekly information flow independently and have delivered your first small project end-to-end.
- Day 90: You’re running point on one cross-functional project and producing decision briefs your executive uses without editing.

What we’re looking for

- Comfortable starting with unglamorous, invisible work: you don’t need a grand strategy to start moving the needle.
- A bias toward documentation: the instinct to turn tacit knowledge into clear, repeatable systems.
- Numerically literate: you translate data into recommendations an executive can act on.
- An excellent communicator who builds trust quickly and works through ambiguity.
- A generalist who picks up projects with zero prior context and gets up to speed fast.

SHORTCUT: this is the role we place every day. If you'd rather start from a vetted shortlist than a job posting, that's the 30-minute call: oceanstalent.com/book-call-with-oceans