

The Executive Continuity During Cancer Study™

One-Page Executive Summary

A Confidential Research Initiative for Business Leaders

The Silent Crisis of Leadership Continuity

The Executive Continuity During Cancer Study™ explored how business owners, founders, and senior leaders navigate the operational and emotional realities of managing a serious health crisis while continuing to lead.

The findings reveal a significant disconnect between the expectations placed on leaders and the actual preparedness of organizations when a key executive faces cancer.

Key Findings

Leadership Continuity Gaps

- **71%** of respondents reported having **no formal continuity plan** for executive incapacity.
- Only **8%** reported having documented continuity procedures.
- Most respondents represented organizations with fewer than 10 employees, where leadership dependency is often especially high.

Pressure to Keep Performing

- **68%** agreed or strongly agreed that leaders are expected to remain strong and continue performing despite serious illness.
- Nearly **90%** believed executives are likely to manage cancer privately rather than openly seeking support.

Cancer Is Already Affecting Leadership

- More than **42%** of respondents had personally experienced a cancer diagnosis while leading.
- Additional respondents had supported another executive through treatment or survivorship.

Strong Demand for Executive-Level Support

- **79%** indicated confidential strategic support for executives navigating cancer would be very or extremely valuable.
- Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of:

- Confidentiality
 - Real-world leadership experience
 - Practical continuity guidance
 - Delegation and communication support
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Emerging Themes

Several emotional and operational themes appeared repeatedly throughout the study:

- Fear of appearing weak
- Pressure to protect employees and stakeholders
- Difficulty asking for help
- Operational overwhelm
- Founder dependency
- Isolation and emotional burden
- Anxiety surrounding reduced capacity

The study identified a recurring leadership tension best described as an:

“Identity Fracture”

The collision between personal vulnerability and the professional expectation to remain steady, capable, and in control.

Strategic Recommendation

The findings suggest a growing need for specialized business continuity services tailored specifically for founders, business owners, and senior executives facing serious illness.

The greatest opportunities for organizational support include:

- Executive continuity planning
 - Delegation frameworks
 - Confidential strategic advisory support
 - Communication planning
 - Leadership resilience resources
 - Founder-risk reduction strategies
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Final Observation

The Executive Continuity During Cancer Study™ suggests that serious illness in leadership is not solely a medical issue.

It is also:

- A business continuity issue
- An organizational resilience issue
- A leadership identity issue
- And a human issue

This first-of-its-kind research establishes an important foundation for future conversation, executive education, and continuity planning initiatives.

Prepared by:

YourCancerCoach.LIVE Strategic Support for Executives Facing Cancer