Step 4 of 5 · Leaving the vice-president track

EVP vs President

From owning one division to owning how the divisions add up. The EVP argues a case; the President decides between cases that are all good. This is also where the role stops being an HR band and becomes a position named in the corporate bylaws.

	Executive Vice President CURRENT LEVEL Owns a whole division or company-wide function with a P&L large enough to move the enterprise number.	**President** THE STEP UP Runs the whole operating company, or a named business with full P&L and every function under it.
Accountable to	The President or the CEO, for the division's results.	The CEO, and in some structures directly to the Board.
Scope of accountability	An entire division or global function — material to the number the company reports.	The operating company as a whole — or a named business with every function reporting in.
Freedom to act	Sets the division's strategy. The C-suite reviews it rather than dictates it.	Resolves conflicts between divisions. The last stop before the CEO on nearly everything operational.
Type of problem	Decides the envelope itself: which businesses are grown, harvested or exited.	How to allocate across markets that all have a legitimate case for more.
Breadth of management	Leads through SVPs who each run complete functions or units of their own.	Must judge businesses they have never personally run, using other people's expertise.
Who must be persuaded	Presents to the Board as the owner of a business, and often meets investors and analysts directly.	Represents the company — to customers, regulators, press and often the Board directly.
Money authority	Allocates capital — proposes acquisitions, closures and multi-year investment.	Sets the operating plan that every division's capital request is judged against.
Time horizon	Three to five years, and answerable for the business through a full downturn.	Three to five years across the whole portfolio, plus this year's delivery.
Legal & governance standing	Commonly a designated executive officer, which can bring disclosed pay and personal reporting obligations.	Usually the highest legally recognized corporate officer after the CEO, named in the bylaws.

The step up what is genuinely new, not just bigger

1. **Arbitration becomes the job**
Finding good options was the EVP's work. Choosing between good options, and owning the loser's disappointment, is the President's.

2. **Company-level accountability**
Judged on how the divisions add up rather than on any single division's result — including the ones they inherited.

3. **Successor status**
Frequently the designated CEO successor, and in substance often the COO role under a different name.

Where it varies by industry and company size

The least consistent title on the ladder
President can mean number two to the CEO, the head of one division, or a ceremonial founder role. Evaluate the scope, never the word.

Divisional presidents
Retail, restaurants, insurance and hospitality use President heavily for business unit heads. President, North America is a business lead, not a company lead.

Combined with CEO
In many companies one person holds both titles. Splitting them usually signals a succession plan or a scale threshold, not a new layer of work.

Technology and small companies
Tech rarely uses President at all. In small companies the President is the CEO, and the title adds no scope.