



THE ARCHITECT METHOD · FIRST-YEAR CHIEFS OF STAFF

Your First Year as Chief of Staff

*A Structured Advisory Engagement for
the Role Nobody Prepared You For*

coulandgold.com · Advisory Engagement · Programs from \$6,000 · Limited Availability

THE REALITY

Everyone Talks About the First 90 Days. We Know It Takes a Full Year.

The first ninety days framework was never built for the Chief of Staff role. It was imported from general executive onboarding advice and applied to a job that operates on completely different terms.

The CoS role takes a full year to inhabit well, and often closer to eighteen months to do with real authority. The reason isn't capability. It's that trust, influence, and strategic standing are things you build, not things you're given. They accumulate through consistency, transparency, and clear communication over time.

That process has a methodology. Most first-year CoS professionals are left to discover it the hard way. This engagement exists so you don't have to.

"The executives who succeed fastest in this role aren't the ones trying to skip ahead. They understand there's strategic value in the tactical, and they know how to move through early-stage work without getting stuck in it."

THE COUL & GOLD GROUP

THE FRAMEWORK

The Chief of Staff Has Three Jobs. Most People Only Know One.

This is the organizing structure the entire engagement is built around. Until you understand all three, and how to operate across them simultaneously, you will keep getting pulled toward whichever one is loudest.

ROLE 01



Protect & Extend the Executive's Time

You are the steward of the most constrained resource in the organization. This role requires you to defend it, allocate it strategically, and

ROLE 02



Orchestrate & Integrate Leadership

The C-suite needs to be aligned, on target, and moving together. Your job is to surface misalignment early, close communication gaps, and

ROLE 03



Broadly Advocate for the Staff

You are often the most credible voice for the people who cannot speak directly to power. Learning to carry that responsibility, without losing

make every hour count more,
before anyone else asks you
to do anything else.

hold the connective tissue of
the organization, before
dysfunction becomes
entrenched.

your positioning or your
access, is one of the hardest
things this role asks of you.

FRAMEWORK

Trust Is a System. Not an Instinct.

Most first-year CoS professionals treat trust as something that builds naturally if you do good work. It doesn't. It builds through specific, legible behaviors, and it breaks down in specific, diagnosable ways.

Every authority problem you will face in the first year traces back to one of three gaps. Misdiagnosing which one you're dealing with, and responding to the wrong one, makes things worse, not better.

Competence Gap

They don't yet believe you can do it. Closing this requires visible, specific results, not reassurance, explanation, or credentials.

Intent Gap

They're not sure whose side you're on. Closing this requires transparency about your reasoning, not just your actions.

Reliability Gap

They don't know if you'll follow through. Closing this requires a track record, small commitments, kept consistently, over time.

A Methodology Built Around What the First Year Actually Demands

This isn't a leadership development program with a CoS chapter. It was built specifically for this role, this timeline, and the particular difficulties of the first year. Four areas, sequenced deliberately.



01

Trust Is a System, Not an Instinct

We work through the three trust gaps specific to your relationships, mapping where you actually stand with each key stakeholder and building a concrete plan to close the right gap the right way.



02

How You Show Up in the Room

We build a defined approach to leadership meetings, 1:1s, and cross-functional sessions, what your role is in each one, what you should be listening for, and how your follow-up compounds credibility over time.



03

Symptom, System, Root Cause

We develop your diagnostic instincts, the ability to see beneath what's presenting as a problem to what's actually producing it. This is the difference between being reactive and being genuinely useful to the organization.



TACTICAL OPS STRATEGY

04

The Tactical-to-Strategic Progression

We map the arc of your first year explicitly, what to do in each phase, how to move through tactical work without getting trapped in it, and precisely when and how to shift toward strategic authority.

Tangible Outputs. Not Just Better Thinking.

Every session produces something usable. By the end of the engagement, you will have a set of working documents, built around your specific executive, your specific organization, and the specific gaps you came in with. Not adapted from a template. Built from scratch, for you.

Between sessions, you have direct access to both Rachael and Suzi, not a ticketing system, not a community forum. When something comes up between calls, you have somewhere to take it.



A 12–18 Month Role Roadmap

A written document that maps your first year phase by phase, what to prioritize when, how to move through the tactical work that dominates early months, and the specific markers that signal you've earned the shift to strategic authority. Built around your executive and your organization, not a generalized template.



A Meeting Operating Model

A clear, written approach to how you show up in different meeting contexts, leadership sessions, 1:1s, cross-functional rooms, specifying your role in each, what you're listening for, and how your follow-up builds credibility over time. A living document you'll refine as you use it.



A Personal Trust Gap Diagnosis

A specific assessment of where trust gaps exist in your key leadership relationships right now, which type of gap, with whom, and what it will take to close it. Not a general framework but a named, specific plan built around the actual people you're working with. Updated as relationships evolve.



A Symptom–System–Root Cause Toolkit

A structured diagnostic framework for the organizational problems you'll be handed in year one, how to tell the difference between what's presenting and what's actually causing it, and how to bring that analysis to your executive in a way that gets taken seriously.



A Time & Trust Management Framework

A working model for how you allocate your time and attention across the three roles of the CoS, protecting the executive, orchestrating the leadership team, and advocating for staff. Built so you're making intentional choices about where your effort goes, not just responding to whatever is loudest.

WHO THIS IS FOR

First-Year Chiefs of Staff Who Want to Get It Right, Not Just Get Through It

This engagement was designed for the specific difficulty of the first year. It doesn't address the CoS role generically, it addresses the particular challenges of the person who is new to it: building authority without formal power, navigating an executive relationship that's still forming, and learning which of the hundred things in front of you actually matter.

Rachael and Suzi bring two perspectives that almost never appear in the same room: direct operating experience inside the CoS role at the highest levels, and the diagnostic architecture that determines whether that role succeeds or fails. Together, they offer something no single practitioner can.

Newly hired, not yet in seat

You've accepted the offer. The ninety-day clock hasn't started. This is the best possible time to build the mental model, before the wrong instincts take hold.

Early in the role (under six months)

You're in it, and something is harder than you expected. Maybe you can name it. Maybe you just know the ground doesn't feel solid yet. Either way, this is the right time.

Mid-first-year (six to twelve months)

You've figured out how to function. Now you want to figure out how to lead. The role has room to grow, and so do you. What you do in months six through twelve often determines the next three years.

INVESTMENT

A Different Kind of Engagement. Priced Accordingly.

Most executive programs offer a practitioner who has studied the CoS role. This one offers two practitioners who have lived it, one from inside the White House, the Gates Foundation, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; one from the center of British government as Chief of Staff to a Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor.

That depth of operating experience, built into a program designed specifically for the first year, doesn't exist anywhere else. It is why this engagement produces concrete deliverables rather than general advice, and why those deliverables are built around your specific situation rather than adapted from a template.

Sessions are 50 minutes, scheduled at your cadence. Every session fee covers the session itself, preparation and follow-up on our end, and any supporting materials or deliverables the work produces. Fees are paid in two equal installments: half at signing, half after the third session (6-session) or sixth session (12-session).

ENGAGEMENT OPTIONS

6 SESSIONS · 3 MONTHS

\$6,000

1 intake + six 50-minute working sessions

12 SESSIONS · 6 MONTHS

\$11,000

1 intake + twelve 50-minute working sessions

- Written deliverables you own and keep
- Direct access to Rachael and Suzi between sessions
- Curriculum follows your specific situation and executive

Fees paid in two equal installments: half at signing, half at the midpoint of the engagement.