



Candidate Information Pack

Business Operations and People Lead

Helping COEL embed practical ways of working, strengthen people capability and support a values-led culture.



Why this role matters

COEL has made sound progress in improving how the business runs: clearer operating rhythms, better use of Microsoft 365, stronger information management, more consistent reporting, improved people development routines and stronger governance disciplines. The next challenge is not more change for the sake of change. It is to embed simple, repeatable ways of working that help people, projects and leaders perform consistently.

Cambridge head office | Full-time, permanent | Salary dependent on experience

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Executive Summary

This is a highly visible opportunity to help shape how COEL works, grows and develops its people. The Business Operations and People Lead will work closely with the Managing Director and leadership team to turn strategic intent into simple, repeatable ways of working that improve performance, accountability, communication, capability and confidence across the business.

The role has evolved into a broad business operations and organisational capability position. It will suit someone who enjoys working close to senior decision-making while also getting into the practical detail of how a business really operates. The successful candidate will support the Managing Director and leadership team, work confidently with site and office teams, help embed EOS and CPR, support PGR, coordinate light-touch HR, improve management information, assist the current culture lead with culture and engagement activity, and help keep governance, risk and compliance disciplines properly maintained.

The successful candidate will not be expected to impose change or create bureaucracy. COEL needs somebody who can lead adoption carefully, support people at the right tempo, coach and enable teams, build trust, simplify processes, and help the organisation develop the muscle memory required for better ways of working to stick.

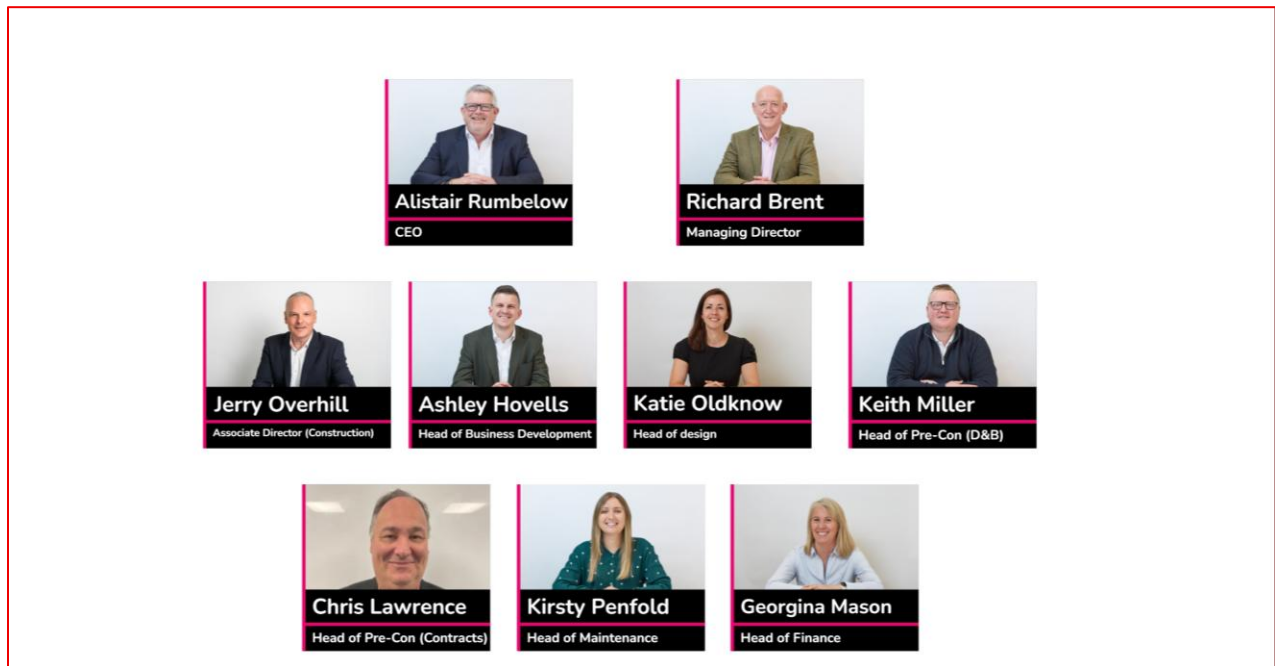
For the right person, this is a chance to build a role with real influence: close enough to senior leadership to understand strategy, practical enough to make a visible difference, and people-focused enough to shape how colleagues experience change, support and improvement.

About COEL

COEL is a well-established commercial design and build and fit-out and construction business based in Cambridge. We deliver inspiring spaces that challenge conventional thinking, elevate employee experience and transform workplaces into hubs of collaboration, innovation and productivity across the region.

The company combines strong delivery capability with professionalism, long-standing client relationships and high levels of repeat business. COEL is focused on being lean, agile and fit for the future, with systems, structures, governance and ways of working that support sustainable growth without unnecessary bureaucracy.

Strong operating discipline, people capability, governance, compliance and culture are central to how COEL protects value, manages risk, supports its people and delivers consistently for clients.



Company Culture, Vision and Values

COEL promotes a values-led, high-performance culture where people are encouraged to take ownership, act responsibly, work collaboratively and help the business improve. We are practical, supportive and hands-on. We value clear thinking, good judgement, accountability, mutual respect, and a willingness to get involved where help is needed.

This role will work closely with the Managing Director, leadership team, current culture lead, Culture Team and wider business to help reinforce the behaviours and routines that make COEL effective. It will suit somebody who can build trust across the organisation, from Board members and senior leaders to project managers, support teams and site-based colleagues.

- ✓ Collaborative and values-led in approach.
- ✓ Practical rather than bureaucratic.
- ✓ Comfortable balancing structure with flexibility.
- ✓ Able to support adoption at a pace people can absorb.
- ✓ Confident helping teams improve without making people feel policed.
- ✓ Interested in culture, capability and sustainable performance.



Role Profile

Why This Role Exists

COEL has invested significant time in improving how the business runs: clearer operating rhythms, better use of Microsoft 365, stronger information management, more consistent reporting, improved people development routines and stronger governance disciplines. The next stage is to make these improvements feel natural in day-to-day work, with simple pathways, clear expectations and consistent reinforcement.

This role exists to help COEL move from good intent and periodic training to consistent practice. It is about turning agreed ways of working into everyday habits: clearer information flows, reliable routines, useful reporting, practical follow-up and behaviours that help people perform well without constant intervention.

Core proposition

Help shape how COEL works, grows and develops its people by embedding practical operating disciplines, supporting capability and capacity development, assisting the current culture lead with engagement and values-led activity, and sustaining effective governance.

In this pack, EOS refers to COEL's operating rhythm and accountability framework; CPR refers to the company's process review and improvement work; and PGR refers to the people growth and reward approach used to support development, capability and progression.

Headline Information

Job title	Business Operations and People Lead
Role type	Full-time, permanent
Reporting to	Managing Director
Location	Cambridge head office, with regular site and team engagement as required
Salary	£42,000 to £48,000 dependent on experience. We seek to attract a high-calibre candidate with the capability to grow with the role.

Key Relationships

- ✓ Managing Director and Board.
- ✓ Senior leadership and operational leadership teams.
- ✓ Culture Team and those involved in employee engagement and communications.
- ✓ Project delivery, commercial, business support and site-based teams.
- ✓ Finance, external accountants and advisors where relevant to controls and reporting.

- ✓ HR, H&S, ISO, GDPR, BSA, statutory compliance and external advisors as required.

Purpose of the Role

The Business Operations and People Lead will support the Managing Director and leadership team by helping COEL embed its operating disciplines, strengthen organisational capability, coordinate people processes, support the current culture lead with culture and engagement, improve management information, and maintain strong governance, risk and compliance routines.

The role requires somebody who can work across strategy and detail. At times, the successful candidate will help shape structures, processes and reporting. At other times, they will need to get amongst it with project and site teams, understand what is not working, coach colleagues, coordinate practical fixes and help embed better ways of working.

How the Role Is Weighted

Area	Indicative weighting	Purpose
Business Operations & Improvement	35%	Embedding EOS, CPR, Microsoft 365 ways of working, information management and simple repeatable processes.
People, Capability & Culture Support	25%	Supporting PGR, HR coordination, onboarding, capacity and capability development, and assisting the current culture lead with culture team activity and engagement.
Governance, Risk & Compliance	20%	Maintaining proportionate governance, risk, compliance, registers, dashboards, evidence and assurance cadence.
Leadership & Board Support	10%	Supporting the Managing Director, Board rhythm, action tracking, decision records and key cross-business priorities.
Events, Communication & Engagement	10%	Supporting company events, training forums, culture initiatives, internal communication and engagement activity.

Key Areas of Responsibility

1. Business Operations & Improvement

This is the largest element of the role. The successful candidate will help COEL embed EOS, CPR, Microsoft 365 ways of working, information management, workflow management and simple repeatable processes that make the business easier to run, easier to understand and easier to control.

- ✓ Support the practical implementation and embedding of EOS and CPR across the business.
- ✓ Help create clear pathways, routines, templates and guidance so agreed ways of working become easier to follow.
- ✓ Review and improve Teams, SharePoint, folder structures, information flows and single-source-of-truth disciplines.
- ✓ Develop and maintain clear information management disciplines so documents, decisions, actions and evidence are easy to find, version-controlled and consistently stored.
- ✓ Help design and improve workflows across Teams, SharePoint, Planner and other core tools so handovers, approvals, follow-up actions and recurring routines are visible, owned and progressed.
- ✓ Help leaders and teams understand, adopt and sustain processes at a pace the organisation can absorb.
- ✓ Lead and support training, coaching and adoption activity linked to improved ways of working.
- ✓ Identify friction points and work with colleagues to simplify, clarify and improve day-to-day operating processes.
- ✓ Support better use of Planner, Teams, SharePoint and core Microsoft 365 tools where they help improve rhythm, clarity and accountability.

2. People, Capability & Culture Support

COEL does not currently require a standalone Head of People, but it does need capable, well-controlled, people-focused support. This role will help run HR processes and support capability and capacity development as part of COEL's broader organisational development agenda.

- ✓ Support implementation and administration of PGR, including development conversations, capability tracking and follow-through.
- ✓ Coordinate recruitment activity, onboarding, offboarding, role documentation and core people administration.
- ✓ Help maintain accurate people records, policy documentation and routine HR process controls.
- ✓ Support capability and capacity development by helping identify development needs, training priorities and resource gaps.
- ✓ Assist the current culture lead and Culture Team with initiatives that reinforce COEL's values, communication, engagement and team connection.
- ✓ Support managers with practical tools, templates and routines that improve people leadership without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.
- ✓ Help ensure people processes feel human, values-led and proportionate while still being properly controlled.

3. Governance, Risk & Compliance

Governance and compliance remain important, but they should be proportionate, visible and embedded in how COEL operates. The role will help maintain the disciplines, evidence and reporting required for effective governance and assurance.

- ✓ Maintain the governance, risk and compliance register with clear ownership, review cycles, evidence and escalation routes.
- ✓ Support risk dashboarding, compliance reporting and assurance activity for the Managing Director, Board and relevant committees.
- ✓ Coordinate Board and committee calendars, agendas, papers, minutes, decision records and action logs.
- ✓ Support ISO, H&S, GDPR, BSA, statutory compliance, Companies House and other compliance evidence where relevant.
- ✓ Undertake practical checks, reviews and follow-up activity to confirm that agreed controls and documentation are working in practice.
- ✓ Support project teams with simple compliance and information management disciplines at mobilisation, delivery and handover stages.
- ✓ Escalate gaps, overdue actions and material risks in a clear, constructive and evidence-based way.

4. Leadership, Board and Business Support

This is not a traditional Executive Assistant role, but the successful candidate will provide targeted leadership and Board support where it enables operating discipline, governance, communication and delivery.

- ✓ Support the Managing Director with action tracking, priorities, business rhythm and cross-functional initiatives.
- ✓ Help ensure Board and leadership actions are visible, owned and closed out.
- ✓ Prepare concise summaries, dashboards, action logs and briefing material where required.
- ✓ Coordinate leadership-led business initiatives and help translate decisions into practical implementation plans.
- ✓ Provide occasional executive support where it directly enables governance, delivery, events, site visits or wider business priorities.

5. Events, Communication & Engagement

Events are an important part of how COEL communicates, strengthens culture and builds capability. This role will support the current culture lead and event owners with the practical coordination, communication and follow-through needed to make engagement activity purposeful and well embedded.

- ✓ Support company training sessions, workshops and forums linked to EOS, CPR, PGR and capability development.
- ✓ Coordinate practical arrangements for key company events, leadership sessions and engagement activities.
- ✓ Support internal communication around initiatives, training, culture and ways of working.
- ✓ Work with the current culture lead, Culture Team and event owners to make sure events are well planned, purposeful and aligned to COEL's values.
- ✓ Help convert event outcomes into actions, follow-up and embedded practice.

What Success Looks Like

Success in this role will be measured less by the number of documents produced and more by whether COEL becomes easier to run, easier to understand and more consistent in how it operates.

1. EOS and CPR are embedded and working

- Simple processes are understood and used.
- Teams and SharePoint operate as reliable single sources of truth.
- Information management improves and becomes easier for teams to follow.
- Training translates into day-to-day practice and organisational muscle memory.

2. PGR and capability development are embedded

- PGR routines are understood, supported and followed through.
- Managers have practical tools and support for capability conversations.
- Onboarding, development and routine people processes are well controlled.
- Capability and capacity development becomes a visible business discipline.

3. Better management information supports better decisions

- Reporting is clearer, more consistent and more actionable.
- Leadership has improved visibility of priorities, risks, actions and progress.
- Information is easier to access and interpret.

4. GRC management is fully embedded

- Risk registers, dashboards and compliance evidence are current and actively managed.
- Governance is proportionate, visible and useful.
- Compliance supports good business practice rather than feeling separate from it.

5. Board actions never slip

- Board actions are clear, owned, tracked and closed out.
- Decision records and follow-up disciplines are reliable.
- The leadership rhythm feels controlled and predictable.

Support and Onboarding

This is a new role, so there will not be a traditional handover from an existing postholder. COEL recognises this and will provide structured support, clear context and realistic early priorities so the successful candidate can build confidence, relationships and momentum without being expected to solve everything immediately.

During the first 90 days, the priority will be to understand the business, build trusted relationships, clarify the most important operating rhythms, identify where support is most needed, and agree a practical short-term plan with the Managing Director and leadership team.

- ✓ Structured onboarding with the Managing Director and key members of the leadership team.
- ✓ Clear early priorities rather than an expectation to fix everything at once.
- ✓ Access to existing documentation, templates, frameworks and business context.
- ✓ Regular check-ins, feedback and prioritisation support during the first months in role.
- ✓ A collaborative environment where the successful candidate is encouraged to ask questions, test ideas and shape the role sensibly.



Person Specification

Essential Experience

- ✓ Experience helping organisations implement, embed or improve practical ways of working, processes, systems or operating rhythms.
- ✓ Strong organisational capability, including the ability to design simple structures, routines, tools and reporting that help people work more effectively.
- ✓ Experience supporting senior leaders, leadership teams, boards, committees or formal decision-making forums.
- ✓ Experience coordinating people processes, HR administration, onboarding, development activity or people-related reporting.
- ✓ Experience maintaining registers, action logs, dashboards, evidence packs, governance records or structured reporting.
- ✓ Strong written communication skills, including concise summaries, minutes, action logs and guidance documents.
- ✓ Confidence using Microsoft 365 tools, especially Teams, SharePoint, Planner, Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

Personal Attributes

- ✓ Collaborative, values-led and able to build trust across office, leadership and site-based teams.
- ✓ Business-minded, practical and comfortable linking detail to wider organisational priorities.
- ✓ Able to lead adoption carefully, reading the room and judging the right tempo for change.
- ✓ Organised, reliable and able to create clarity without creating bureaucracy.
- ✓ Comfortable getting amongst operational teams, understanding what is really happening and helping people improve.
- ✓ Confident enough to challenge constructively and escalate appropriately when standards, actions or risks are not being managed.
- ✓ Interested in culture, capability, people development and continuous improvement.
- ✓ Calm, discreet, resilient and comfortable dealing with ambiguity in a growing business.

Desirable Experience

- ✓ Experience in construction, fit-out, property, professional services, engineering, consultancy or another project-based environment.
- ✓ Exposure to EOS, operating systems, process improvement, organisational development or business transformation activity.
- ✓ Experience supporting culture, engagement, training events or internal communication activity in collaboration with an existing culture or engagement lead.
- ✓ Exposure to ISO, H&S, GDPR, BSA, statutory compliance, risk management or contract governance disciplines.
- ✓ Experience with SharePoint information architecture, Teams structures, document control or Microsoft 365 adoption.
- ✓ Experience working with site-based or operational teams as well as senior leaders.

Candidate Fit

This role is likely to suit:	This role is unlikely to suit:
➤ People who enjoy making organisations work better. ➤ Senior Executive Assistants or Executive Business Partners ready for broader operational responsibility. ➤ People & Operations professionals who enjoy capability-building and business improvement. ➤ Operations coordinators or managers who are values-led and people-focused. ➤ HR or people professionals who want a broader business operations role.	➤ Candidates seeking a pure HR, compliance, governance or administration role. ➤ Candidates who prefer to work through policy rather than relationships and practical adoption. ➤ Candidates who enjoy designing processes but do not enjoy helping people use them. ➤ Candidates who need a highly defined role with little ambiguity or evolution. ➤ Candidates uncomfortable working across office, leadership and site teams.

What This Role Is Not

- ✓ It is not a traditional Executive Assistant role, although targeted leadership support is part of the remit.
- ✓ It is not a dedicated Head of People or standalone HR Manager position, although it will help run light-touch HR and support PGR, capability and capacity development.
- ✓ It is not a dedicated Compliance Manager, Governance Manager or internal audit role, although governance, risk and compliance disciplines are important.
- ✓ It is not a change enforcement role. COEL needs careful adoption, support and capability-building, not imposed change for its own sake.
- ✓ It is not about absorbing unowned work. The focus is on helping the business develop clear, repeatable and sustainable ways of working.

Recruitment Process and Assessment Focus

Applications should be made via the advertised route through the SafeHR portal. Candidates should submit a CV and a covering letter. The recruitment process is structured in two stages: a first-stage interview on Microsoft Teams, followed by a second-stage in-person interview at COEL.

The first-stage Teams interview will focus on experience, motivation, communication style and initial suitability for the role.

The second-stage in-person interview will include a business discussion with the Senior Leadership team and a short presentation, a written assessment, and an informal opportunity to meet members of the One COEL team.

Interview discussion topics are likely to include practical scenarios, previous examples of embedding better ways of working, stakeholder engagement, culture fit and how the candidate would approach supporting operational teams while maintaining clear standards.

COEL wants the process to be thorough but proportionate. The recruitment process will be designed to help both COEL and candidates assess mutual fit, cultural alignment, capability and the practical realities of the role.

The three most important assessment areas

- ✓ Ability to lead adoption and implementation in a collaborative, tempo-aware way.
- ✓ Organisational capability, including the ability to design systems, structures and reporting that support EOS and CPR.
- ✓ Cultural and values alignment: COEL needs to get the candidate and the candidate needs to get COEL.

COEL is committed to fair and inclusive recruitment. We welcome applications from candidates who meet the essential requirements and can show the potential, attitude and design judgement needed to develop in the role.