

Succession Planning: Three Models from Literature

Six Steps to Succession Planning (Caudron, 1999)

- **Forecast business and leadership needs:** Conduct annual reviews of the current business environment (internal and external). Adjust the agency's organizational structure to support your findings of business trends. Then evaluate what leadership and executive skills will be needed to support these business goals.
- **Generate a list of competencies:** Generate a list of competencies needed for identified leadership positions. (e.g. American Express Financial Services has developed competencies based in three areas: "leadership competencies such as the ability to lead change; functional competencies that include technical knowledge about such things as recruitment and marketing; and personal competencies such as resilience and achievement drive (pg 74).")
- **Assess internal talent and identify gaps:** Start matching internal talent with identified competencies. Assess current talent as well as developmental needs. Discuss career goals with employees. Verify if they are interested in future leadership positions.
- **Provide developmental opportunities:** Provide ongoing development such as mentoring, coaching, skills training, job-based activities, and/or action-learning activities.
- **Hold people accountable for their own development:** "Encourage (employees) to keep themselves developed so that when opportunities arise they can make the choice whether or not to go for it (pg 74)." Establish individual development plans for each employee so they continue to develop competencies. Update on an annual basis.
- **Make succession planning an integral part of business planning:** Line managers and not Human Resources must have a key role in developing internal talent. Development must be part of the business planning process.
- ***Don't forget retention!*** *The author adds that companies must offer "incentives that mean something" (pg75) in order to retain the leadership talent they have developed. Otherwise, developing talent that eventually leaves will only exasperate a leadership crisis.*

Executive Succession (Brandt, 2001)

- **Forget about hiring your own successor:** You are too close to the job and business and you don't want to pick a carbon copy of yourself. The company needs new thinking and new opportunities. Let the board or peer managers do the hiring (pg 17).
- **Manage your transition in record time:** Your successor will want to learn from you, but they will also want to "reshape the business in his or her own image, not yours" (pg 17). Let the transition period be short and well planned. Give a thorough briefing, also let department heads brief your successor. Provide any specialized training that may be needed. Make all resources and contacts (files, reports) available. Spend extra time introducing your successor to key external players (customers, stakeholders, community leaders, etc.) (pg 17).
- **Get the hell out of the way:** If you linger it will be harder on you, as well as on your successor. Do not sabotage your successor by expressing anxieties to employees, customers, and/or stakeholders. "Leaders who can leave with only compliments – or silence – of the performance of their successors we call gracious" (pg 17).

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A Public-Sector Succession Approach: Case study (Schall, 1997)

- **Launching the “Finishing Up” phase:** Executives acknowledge their future plans and anticipated time frames for leaving their position. Begin to identify key areas of legacy and succession needed to continue the work and innovations currently underway. Seek succession as a strategy.
- **Designing a treasure map:** Leave clues for your successors regarding the efforts and innovations you/the agency have accomplished.
- **Keeping successful innovations alive:** Prepare and groom people from within. Identify talent, assess their strengths and weaknesses, their skills, and their intentions whether to stay with the agency or not. Identify development needs and offer opportunities to cultivate skills. Hardwire staff in the longstanding ways of the agency, which have proven resilient to change. There is likely a reason why the standards and/or processes have remained.
- **Find a successor who will continue your efforts:** Brainstorm and make a list of possible candidates. Be prepared in case you are asked, while ready to offer your list if no one does ask.
- **Getting our candidate appointed:** Network with committee members and those who may be on the interview or recommendation panel.
- **Managing the feelings:** Conflicting feelings of being ready to leave vs. reluctance is natural.
- *Schall concludes, “We must begin creating the expectation that the public sector can, and should, focus on the longer term. As I have suggested in this article, senior officials, whether elected or appointed, must not think strategically during their tenure but also be oriented beyond their tenure.” (pg 10).*

Carrying Out Succession Planning (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1999)

- **Top managers should appoint someone to spearhead and coordinate the succession planning program:** Leadership and Management Director, or HR director are good choices. Person must be “tactful and discrete” (pg129), so the program will not lose credibility.
- **Work to clarify the purpose, policy, and procedures to guide succession planning in the organization:** Coordinator should meet with top managers to gain insight into these matters and develop the program accordingly (pg 129).
- **Work in consultation with others to draft a proposed succession planning policy, procedures, and forms to be used:** Suggested forms include: personal history, succession planning chart, performance appraisal, future potential appraisal, individual development forms (pg 130).
- **Review procedures regularly to keep the pace with organizational and environmental change:** First initiation of the program should be unveiled by the CEO. Authors suggest a kickoff meeting or retreat, followed by briefings to explain the program. CEO needs to encourage participation (pg 130).
- **Leadership or Management Director of the agency should check to make sure progress is being made on individual development plans:** Phone and/or visit managers to review their succession plans and offer advice (pg 130).
- **Establish means to measure the program effectiveness:** “Keep track of positions that were actually filled from within based on succession planning results” (pg132-133).

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References

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- Caudron, S. (1999). The looming leadership crisis. Workforce, 78, 72-75.
- Rothwell, W. J. & Kazanas, H. C. (1999). Building in-house leadership and management development programs: Their creation, management, and continuous improvement. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
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