



Unit 2

Elements of a Succession Plan

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Demonstrate expertise with the key elements of a succession plan.
- ✓ Create and discuss aspects of a succession plan.

Unit 2

Elements of a succession plan

Defining Roles, Responsibilities, and Functions

Individualized Engagement Plans

A succession plan can be a partly creative and partly scientific process. The roles of people involved will evolve depending on the strengths of individuals that are present, and those strengths will change as they develop, and as new people enter the organization. The key aspect of succession planning is to have the right people in the right job at the right time, and so it makes sense to apply that approach to the process.

Flexibility will allow the plan to evolve and grow as business needs are identified and change. Succession planning is a process that involves people at critical areas of the organization, so keep in mind that you need to look at those critical roles and the people that are positions two levels beneath them on an organizational chart.

We have discussed the importance of finding and attracting the right people, and part of that is related to the evolution of individualized engagement plans (IEP). Engagement refers to the level of commitment that people have to your organization. Some succession plans refer to these individual plans as development plans or training plans. We like the phrase “engagement plan” because it addresses all aspects of what keeps your people committed to the organization. After all, in succession planning, in order to have the right people in the right positions doing what they can and do well, we have to be involved in their development, but we also need to know what their passions are and what makes them tick.

Engagement plans are a key component in the succession planning process. Each person that you identify ANYWHERE in a succession plan as being either a critical link or a potential leader must have an IEP. The IEP is developed in consultation between the leaders and their staff. Critical elements of an IEP include developmental needs as well as a career plan.

Each critical employee identified in a Succession Plan Chart must be described within an individual profile, which you can create specific for your own organization. It should have the elements that are on the sample page, as well as anything else that makes sense for your organization. Note that the IEP and Career Plan are parts of this profile.

Succession Plan Profile

I. Identification

Name:

Current Position:

Dated Started in This Position:

Time Spent in Current Industry (not just this position):

Biography (250 words or less):

Ask the employee to write this, with your help if needed. Include their educational background; work style; and current lifestyle considerations such as ongoing courses, family or lifestyle status, community, or recreational involvement.

II. Current Status

List areas of competency (strengths that apply to the organization and leadership roles as well as other assets)

III. Individual Engagement Plan

Development needs for _____ role

Insert name of the role as it is currently, such as VP of Operations. Include any aspects that influence the engagement of this particular employee, including a detailed list of all development required to get them ready for their next steps. Examples could include any or all of the following:

- Associations to join (human resources, leadership, industry specific, etc.) as well as meetings, seminars, or workshops to attend
- Courses and/or mentorship in human relations, IT, operations, coaching, leadership, finance, business, performance planning
- Obtaining licensing or certification in any areas
- Having paperwork such as passports or vaccinations up to date and documented
- Image consulting; dress, deportment, and etiquette; manners for executives

IV. Risk Assessment

Summarize any points of concern that were raised in the risk assessment table that you completed

V. Career Management Plan

This is generated primarily by the employee, and should include benchmarks for one, three, and five years. If the employee has not given a lot of thought to their career plans, it would be a benefit to them for the organization to arrange for some career counseling or coaching. Career development services are no longer used just for job searching or changing employers; they are being used more often by organizations who want to provide those services to their existing staff.

VI. Action Plan and Follow-Up Dates

Action	Follow-Up Date

Working the Plan

Now you will get some practice using the process for completing a succession plan! We will not be completing an entire plan in this course, but this next section is designed to give you a sense of the information that must be gathered during this process.

Assignment #1: Complete a Risk Assessment.

Write down pertinent questions that the interviewer can ask that will elicit the strongest and most meaningful answers.

Assignment #2: Complete a first draft of an IEP.

This IEP is a development plan for _____ (name) to grow into the role of _____ (the position one or two steps ahead of where you currently are, such as VP of Operations).

Include any aspects that influence the engagement of this particular employee, including a detailed list of all development required to get them ready for their next steps.

Examples could include any or all of the following:

- Associations to join (human resources, leadership, industry specific, etc.) as well as meetings, seminars, or workshops to attend
- Courses and/or mentorship in human relations, IT, operations, coaching, leadership, finance, business, performance planning
- Obtaining licensing or certification in any areas
- Having paperwork such as passports or vaccinations up to date and documented
- Image consulting; dress, deportment, and etiquette; manners for executives

Assignment #3: Create a biography of up to 250 words.

This biography should capture their educational background; work style; current lifestyle considerations such as ongoing courses, family or lifestyle status, community, or recreational involvement. The information needs to be a summary, introduction, and sales tool in order to introduce this employee to a leadership team and potentially explain why they have the background needed to be considered for leadership positions within the organization. To give you an idea of size, this paragraph is approximately 75 words.

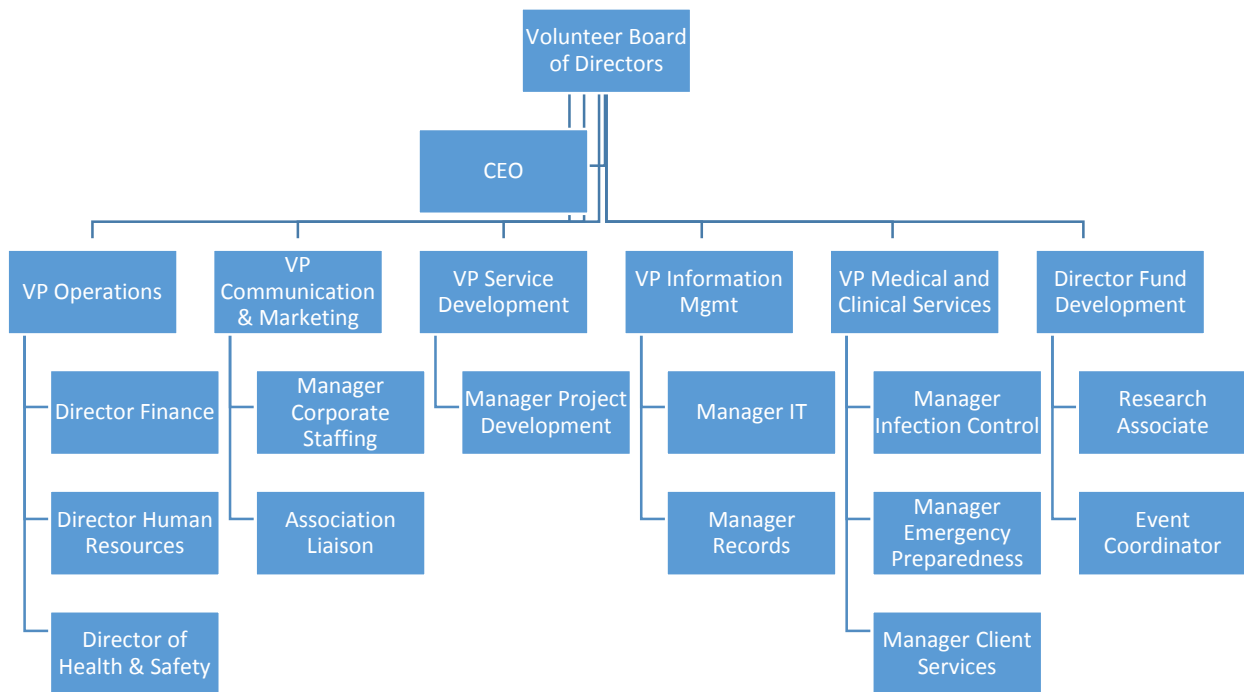
Gathering Information

There are layers of complexity involved in succession planning. It is very important to know:

- What information you need
- Where to gather the information
- What methods to use

In the previous session you were able to interview each other for information that was needed. There were some gaps, however, and so this section will focus on getting what you need when you need it.

How many critical positions are in this chart?



Test your Knowledge

Are there other critical employees that are missing from that chart?

How we can look within our own organizations and determine what the critical positions are?

Jot down the names and positions of critical people in your organization who have not been obvious until just now.

Forecasting Needs

Key Ingredients of a Successful Plan

Succession planning is an important part of a business that is able to grow and thrive in a competitive world. Why?

- We need a work-ready pool of people.
- Our organization must understand that a succession plan impacts long-term sustainability.

If we expect to have the right people in the right jobs at the right time and for the right reasons, we need to have the following key ingredients.

We must be a part of a learning organization.

Succession planning is about developing leaders. In order to do that, we have to belong to an organization where education is valued and where it is supported from the top, all the way down through each layer.

Succession planning does not exist in a vacuum.

As we mentioned earlier, succession planning is a process. The process has to incorporate the other areas of the organization in order to support the business. If the plan does not support the organization, it will be discarded.

Develop reliable data gathering.

Succession planning has been regarded as many things, including being an HR add-on. Succession planning must be demonstrated scientifically, which is impossible if we see it as a strictly creative process (although there is creativity required). Data gathering means that the organization is looking at benchmarks and actual results to measure and assess progress.

Have senior level support.

The CEO or President must endorse and support the succession planning process. The CEO must be involved and be an active participant. This is not just because she/he is one of those critical employees; when the CEO is highly engaged, the program becomes coherent and embraced.

Continually assess your results.

If you do not assess the quality of performance within the organization, you will not learn the level of success – or failure – that the plan holds. We know that succession planning is a long-term endeavor, and so we must ensure that the right people are in the right jobs without losing our focus on performance. If we place people in positions on a hunch that they had the potential, but those people did not actually have the skill to succeed, the leadership pipeline fails.

You do not have to do it all at once.

One major threat to succession planning is that implementation over a short period of time can overwhelm systems and people. Succession planning is a process; change can seem threatening. When you begin to contemplate a succession plan, you could realistically be creating implementation plans across multiple departments, regions, or countries, and it could involve a huge number of people. Step-by-step implementation will allow you to experience success in one area and demonstrate to other areas how effective the process is, while allowing the important work to take place. Phased implementation also allows time to make adjustments to the program before it is widely distributed.

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching can be an important aspect of succession planning, especially when we consider that we are preparing people for leadership roles. While training is usually focused and scheduled, coaching can be provided when an opportunity presents itself. Coaching, especially in reference to

performance, is not effective at “fixing” a problem like those that are associated with poor performance. It can, however, very effectively be used to prepare future leaders. Coaching and mentoring are different in that mentoring means actually teaching someone a particular skill. If someone is completely new to a subject, mentoring is appropriate. To try to coach someone who has never used a wrench on how to change the oil in their car would not make any sense. That person needs a mentor or teacher. However, for the mechanic who is a valued employee within a shop environment, and who has excellent leadership qualities and the potential to be a critical employee, some coaching can accelerate his evolution into a leadership role.

Good coaches actually take the time and make the effort to learn how to coach. Anyone can call themselves a coach, but some of the key aspects of coaching need to be learned in order to be effectively applied. Coaches lead; they do not teach. A coach approaches something in a way to help someone discover, explore, and ask their own questions (rather than just answer a coach’s questions).

Coaching is available with specialties in certain areas that can really help with succession planning. Executive coaches can help someone who lacks certain skills to develop the skills that will make them successful. For example, when someone is moved into a role before they are completely prepared, they may benefit from job content coaching. In other circumstances, process or image coaching focuses on the impact that the leader projects. Can they carry a conversation, project a confident and professional image during a business lunch or meeting, deliver bad news to staff, or conduct a meeting?

Test your Knowledge

Have you worked with a coach?

What results did you seek when you started?

Did you successfully reach your goals?

Write down five areas in your professional or private life where you could benefit from working with a coach.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Clutterbuck, David, and Marshall Goldsmith. The Talent Wave: Why Succession Planning Fails and What to Do About It. Kogan Page, 2012.*
- ✓ *Conley, Terence, Phil Harkins, and Mark Sobol. Linkage Inc.'s Best Practices in Succession Planning. Pfeiffer, 2007.*