

HOW TO CONDUCT PROPER SUCCESSION PLANNING

1. To start the succession planning process, acting proactively is important. To be well prepared when a hard-to-replace team member leaves the company, it is important to have a plan for a smooth replacement. Sometimes you know well in advance when an exit is taking place, such as when someone is about to take a planned retirement. However, there can sometimes be a surprising and unforeseen transfer of employees. To be well prepared, it is necessary to look at all the key roles in your company. The following questions can be helpful:

- How does the respective position affect our company or our department in everyday life?
- How would the loss of this person in the respective position affect our business?

2. For successful succession planning find out possible successors. After understanding the impact of certain employees leaving, find team members who may be able to take on that position. Ask yourself the following questions:

- If we can fill this position with employees from our company, who could it be?
- Do these candidates require training? If yes, what, and how?

Look for people who have the skills necessary to succeed in a higher position, regardless of their current title. Sometimes key employees are not in the upper leadership bus in support positions. Don't assume you know your employees' career goals. Make sure you look at all employees. Even if a person would be ideal for a position for you, it is possible that this person has completely different ideas about the future. Talk to employees about future career ideas and only then make a succession decision. Let them also know about your idea that they potentially step into this new position. But let them know that there is no guarantee and there can always be a change in the situation. The circumstances in the company or the circumstances of successor candidates may change for example.

3. Invest in professional development of succession decisions: If you have already selected possible candidates for a position, this will enable you to acquire additional knowledge and experience. Job rotation or mentoring programmes and help prepare an employee for eventual succession. Leaders have strong communication skills and interpersonal skills such as empathy and diplomacy. These competencies can be practised before a possible change of position. In the event of early detection of potential successors, you can give employees time to acquire additional skills and experience. The most important thing is that you let them know and feel that their contributions are essential to the success of your company.



4. **Test your succession plan:** Once you have selected potential successors to take on an advanced role, do a test run of your succession planning. For example, you could give an employee responsibility to cover the role you think they could succeed whilst the current person in the role is on vacation. This will help you understand where that person will need additional training and development and the potential successor, will also get a flavour for the role and whether it suits them. Ambitious employees will continue to be motivated to work hard if they can see that they are being considered for a future promotion. This approach inevitably leads to better job retention if employees can see a clear career path within the company.
5. **Think of your succession planning in your hiring strategy:** Once you have identified employees as successors for key positions in your company, also think about the talent gaps that would arise if that person changed positions. This strategy can help you in your recruiting effort to find out what talent your company is lacking. Therefore, succession planning starts at the very beginning when new employees are hired. At that time, you can already start observing and coaching to find out if they are potential leadership candidates and support them with further development to fulfil that potential.

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