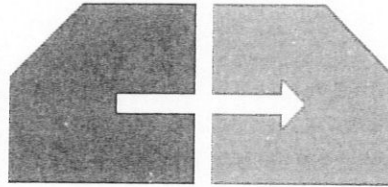


Barriers to Successful Succession Planning and Implementation



Below are additional common barriers to, and recommendations for, successful implementation of a succession plan in a nonprofit organization.

1. *Lack of time to dedicate to a planning process.* Recommendation: Schedule time to develop and approve a succession plan. The executive and/or executive committee should schedule two meetings specifically to draft a succession plan. Then the complete board should schedule one to two meetings to discuss and approve the succession plan.
2. *The board understands neither the implications of not having a succession plan nor the potential of going out of business without a competent leader.* Recommendation: The board president and executive committee (or ideally the complete board) should read and discuss their answers to the case study in *Why Succession Planning?* The outcome of that discussion will most likely be to schedule time to develop and approve an emergency succession plan.
3. *The executive may be apprehensive about starting a process in which they could be easily replaced.* Recommendation: Ensure that the executive receives ongoing performance feedback as well as defined development objectives (refer to *Strategic Leader Development step number two*). This increases their sense of feeling valued and secure. Include them in the discussion about *Why Succession Planning?*, to help them see the critical importance of developing at minimum an emergency succession plan.
4. *Concern that identifying internal successors may alienate staff not selected who could become unhappy and leave.* Recommendation: Similar to the executive, make sure staff receive ongoing performance feedback and opportunities for development so they feel valued. Ensure that the required leadership specifications are clear (refer to *Strategic Leader Development step one*). If possible, link employee development plans to important requirements.
5. *Weak-to-nonexistent development efforts.* Recommendation: Involve staff and board members in the implementation of the succession development plans. Ensure that the plans are linked to the achievement of strategic and operational objectives. This helps talent easily identify their contribution while focusing on development. For additional items to consider refer, to *Departure Defined Succession step number two* and *Strategic Leader Development steps four and six*.
6. *Focusing on short-term talent rather than long-term. Placements fill current needs rather than positions that can positively impact the longer-term needs of the organization.* Recommendation: Identify current and future leadership positions and desired/required leadership competencies. Then identify any potential internal candidates who may be able to fill future gaps. Use the gap analysis information for development plans and hiring criteria. Refer to *Strategic Leader Development steps one, three, four and five* for additional information.

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Barriers to Successful Succession Planning *and Implementation Continued*

7. *The succession plan is not customized to meet the organization's cultural norms.* It is not integrated into the rest of the organization's human resource and business processes (e.g., hiring, development, strategic planning, placement, etc.) Recommendation: Add the succession plan action steps into processes. Include the missing leadership competencies and updated job requirements; review promotional decisions as they relate to the succession plan; and update the performance management and budget processes with feedback and development plans. Ensure the board and staff development plans are integrated into the strategic-planning process.

8. *The succession plan is too rigid to meet changing needs.* Recommendation: Keep the plan as simple as possible for maximum flexibility. Verify that the plan is updated at each strategic planning session and, at minimum, review the succession plan every two years so it remains current. Refer to *Strategic Leader Development step one* for further suggestions.

9. *There is no follow-through on the plan, no one is accountable for implementation.* Recommendation: The board or executive committee should have a standing quarterly agenda item to review progress against succession plan action steps. The executive should be held accountable for implementation of action steps because this impacts the long-term sustainability of the organization.