

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION - 101

Succession Planning; what's that?

In keeping with the theme of employee development, let's turn to some best practices regarding Succession Planning. If you are asking "*What is Succession Planning?*" you are not alone. Most organizations do not do this. And because they do not invest in this important activity, they are often caught flat-footed when someone unexpectedly leaves the organization or earns a promotion.

Succession Planning is a strategic tool that is a contingency plan for your business. All executives should be able to sleep at night knowing that nobody is irreplaceable. Additionally, the best way to kill morale is to tell someone they cannot take a promotion they earned because you don't have someone to fill their seat.

At *Excelerated Leadership Partners*, we have found there are five best practices for effective Succession Planning:

1. Write the plan down. Many executives say that they have the succession plan "in their head." That isn't good enough. It doesn't need to be 10 pages—even one page will do. Or use a blank organization chart and put names in each block.
2. Don't keep it a secret; be transparent about the process and the plan. While we think that we may hurt people's feelings if their names are left out of the succession plan, that is not a good enough reason and maybe it will motivate them to work on their development. On the flip side, just because someone is on the succession plan, be sure to let them know this is not a guarantee of a promotion in any time frame.
3. Re-evaluate it at least semi-annually. People leave, retire, get sick or have a developmental opportunity in every year. Keeping the plan current, simple and fresh is key.
4. Develop targeted training, developmental opportunities and leadership interventions based on the succession plan. For those on the succession plan, but not ready for their predicted position now, preparation is necessary.
5. Use the 2% Rule of Thumb. Keep the succession plan focused on only the key, critical positions. Anything more could be a waste of time and resources. We have found that the 2% Rule of Thumb is a good yardstick. In a 1,000-person organization, there are probably around 20 key positions that should have a succession plan.

Click here to view a simple **Succession Planning Model**. If you would like to engage in a 30-minute (no fee) session to learn more about how to leverage this tool for your organization, please contact *Excelerated Leadership Partners*: robin@elpadvantage.com today. We will help you leverage this tool to build your bench and develop your employees.

Is your talent ready and being developed to align with your organization's growth plan? What are you waiting for?