

DON'T GET CAUGHT SHORT!

Succession planning is often identified and developed, however not well implemented. When key people depart from an organisation, more often than not the corporate history walks with them and the knowledge gap can have a negative impact within the organisation.

Key people may be leaders within the business or an individual whose knowledge and performance plays a pivotal role in the overall ability to meet organisational expectations. **Do you know who they are? Have you planned a way forward if these people were to leave?** If not, it's important that you do - prior planning prevents pitiful performance.

According to papers published by the Queensland University of Technology, succession planning involves a planned and systematic effort geared towards responding to leadership requirements throughout the organisation now and in the future. Several steps are involved:

- Identifying key critical roles within the organisation and developing a clear understanding of the capabilities required for high performance effectiveness in those roles.
- Undertaking a risk assessment by forecasting potential shortages and surpluses of potential candidates for those roles. This step may include analysis of recruitment and retention patterns, projected skills requirements and the need for specific jobs; it could also include an analysis of market factors such as where skills could be sourced externally, as well as assessing where internal development resources should be focused.
- Identifying people who could potentially fill and perform highly in such roles. (NB: internally, those people may already be apparent and waiting for an opportunity to apply for a more challenging role, or the organisation may need to take steps to identify them; they may also need to refer to external sources to determine potential availability of staff).
- Developing the required capabilities in those people already within the organisation through a program of learning experiences planned collaboratively by the organisation working with the individual. This development may be accelerated if necessary to ensure a ready supply of staff for future role requirements.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE SUCCESSION PLANNING

1. **Succession planning culture** - *Leaders within the business need to be involved and committed.*
2. **Aligning succession planning with workforce planning** - *What are your predicted staffing levels for the next 12 months, 24 months, etc?*
3. **Clear and realistic time frame** - *Managing the expectations of those being developed for future leadership roles is critical.*
4. **Selection of potential candidates and performance review** - *Ensure you are selecting people based on performance standards, not likeability.*
5. **Ethical and fair process** - *If you have the above points covered you are well on your way for an ethical and fair process. Award development opportunities based on merit and don't make promises you can't keep!*

Building a supply of capable staff adds to organisational certainty and sustainability by providing a mechanism for building a pool of potential talent. By providing highly skilled employees an indicator of possible future advancement and both personal and career growth opportunities you will certainly enhance the retention of talent.

Some organisations find that the existing internal talent does not provide them with succession candidates and therefore need to build opportunities within future recruits. By identifying key roles and implementing succession planning you will ensure you don't get caught short!

Forward planning with new recruits and finding the right *fit* and *motivations* makes all the difference in identifying future leaders of your business.

For further information on succession planning or to discuss future selection strategies please phone Pam Dew, Bridge Consulting National Manager and Recruitment Specialist, on 03 9864 6040.