Succession Planning: It’s Easier Than You Think

Virginia AWWA Webinar
Meet your Presenter

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Starfish Consulting
Which of the following scenarios shows a need for a succession plan?

1. The Director of Operations & Maintenance, who has worked for the utility for 30 years, will be retiring next year.

2. Technical expert, who has the entire water distribution system in his head, meets the love of his life online and will be moving across the country in 2 weeks.

3. Several new hires in the Engineering department have resigned after 1 year of employment due to the lack of upward mobility.

4. You are receiving complaints that your newly promoted shift supervisor, who has been your technical superstar, lacks key management and leadership skills.
Agenda

- What is Succession Planning?
- Components of a Succession Plan
- Succession Plan Assessment
- Q&A’s
What is a succession plan?

- A strategy to retain critical knowledge and skills
- Ensure smooth transitions as key employees leave
- Mitigate the loss of institutional knowledge
- Develop current employees to take on higher levels of responsibility
Succession Planning Components

- **DEMOGRAPHICS**
  - Retirement eligibility
  - Turnover rate
  - Promotion from within

- **CRITICAL POSITIONS**
  - Executive
  - Technical expert
  - Mission critical positions

- **RETENTION STRATEGIES**
  - Career paths
  - Pay for performance
  - Certification training
  - Individual development plan

- **CRITICAL TASKS**
  - Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  - Knowledge capture
  - Cross training
  - Job shadowing

- **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**
  - Training
  - Mentoring
  - Coaching
  - Future leaders
Demographics

- Employees eligible to retire
  - Age
  - Years of service
  - Retirement eligibility
- Promotions from within
- Turnover rate
  - Percentage of employees leaving within a certain period of time
  - Voluntarily vs Involuntarily
  - Exit interviews
Critical Positions

- Executives
- Mission critical positions
- Technical experts
Critical Tasks

- Standard Operating Procedures
- Job Shadowing
- Knowledge capture
- Cross training
Writing Standard Operating Procedures

- Start with Mindmapping
- Develop a template
- Use action verbs
- Keep it simple
- Create a template
- Do it yourself (DIY) videos
- Use Charts, graphs, and photos
- Ensure easy access
- Maintain and update regularly
Job Shadowing

- Observe the work of another
- Broaden knowledge of other work groups & processes
- Learn more about the organization
TAKE A CO-WORKER TO WORK DAY PROGRAM

#H2OPeople Committee presents Take A Co-Worker to Work. This unique activity allows an up-close look at the role of your co-worker and its connection to the WSSC mission.

**Purpose:** to increase employees’ knowledge and appreciation of WSSC operations and their respective roles.

**Goal**
The goal of this program is to establish connections between co-workers and they work that they do; and to increase understanding of the impact that roles and responsibilities have on other functions, as it relates to the mission of WSSC.
Critical Tasks: Knowledge Capture

1. Identified specific area(s)
2. Facilitated a discussion
3. Document
   - Process mapping
4. Store and maintain
   - Binders
   - Quick reference cards
   - Intranet
   - Sharepoint or Google docs
Critical Tasks: Cross Training

Cross training is the action or practice of training or being trained in more than one role or skill.

- Identify critical tasks
- Coordinate on-the-job training
- Rotate responsibilities
- Manage resistance
Leadership Development

**Mentoring**
- Mentor helps a less experienced person advance their career and develop leadership acumen.
- Offers guidance and advice.
- Share their experiences on how they overcame similar challenges.

**Coaching**
- Coach helps another achieve goals through observation, inquiry and feedback.
- Serves as a thinking partner.
- Asks questions to help the client find his/her own answers.
- Co-creates actions.
- Accountability
Industry Specific Leadership Training
The Public Utilities & Waterworks Management Institute

**Basic**
- Foundations of Leadership
- Performance Management
- Collaboration and Teams
- Managing Conflict
- Leading Change

**Advanced**
- Leadership Review
- John Maxwell’s 5 Levels of Leadership
- Critical Thinking
- Decision Making
- Coaching

**Phase III**
- Followership
- Ethics
- Knowledge Management
- Succession Planning
- Dialogue Skills
- Accountability

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Developing Future Leaders

**Informal**
- Encourage all employees to take leadership courses to prepare for future job opportunities.

**Formal**
- Employees apply to be part of a structured program
- Attend training program as a cohort
- Work on organizational projects
- There is no guarantee that they will be promoted
iLead is an internal leadership, education and development program for participants to prepare themselves to compete for leadership positions at GUC. The program includes an application and multi-step screening process, including an assessment. Applicants must show potential for or demonstrated leadership abilities, community interest and involvement, and the desire to assume expanded leadership responsibility.
Retention Strategies

- Professional development
  - Onsite or offsite training
  - Certification training
- Pay for performance
- Individual development plans
- Advancement opportunities
  - Career paths/ladders
Career Path/Ladder

- Ability to move up within the same job series
- No need to wait for a vacancy
- Employees take ownership of their careers
- May need to meet requirements:
  - Written tests
  - Practical demonstrations
  - Years of experience
  - Time in position
  - Annual evaluation rating
Career Path/Ladder

**UOSA**
- Electrical Technicians
- Industrial Control Technicians
- Mechanical Technicians
- Delivery Operators

**Anne Arundel County**
- Water & Wastewater Technicians
- Meter and Field Service Technicians
- Electrical Technicians
- Instrumentation Technicians
- Mechanical Technicians
- Meter Technicians

**PWCSA**
- Inspectors
- Meter and Field Service Technicians
- Utility Mechanics
- Customer Service Reps
- Administrative Assistants
- HR Generalists
- Buyers

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Using Project Management skills for Succession Planning

- Approach as a project
- Break it down
- Prioritize
- Develop actions
- Set deadlines
- Involve others
- Communicate

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”

Alan Lakein
Where should I start?

Low hanging fruit
# Succession Plan Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to identify and prioritize the succession planning components that are most important to your organization. **Instructions:**

1. Rate the level of importance for (scale of 1 to 5) each succession planning component
2. For components with high ratings, identify actions and timeframes. 3) Take action.

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<tr>
<th>Succession Planning Components</th>
<th>Level of Importance (1 is low and 5 is high)</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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*Figure: Succession Planning Assessment*
What Questions do you have?
Do you have a succession planning story? Please contact me.

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References and Suggested Readings


- Clark, David. August 2015. *Comprehensive Succession Planning: Preparing the Next Generation for Success.* Journal AWWA


- Dahlke, Arnie. 2012. *Business Succession Planning for Dummies*