

## Succession Planning

### WHAT IS SUCCESSION PLANNING?

Succession planning can be defined as the process of identifying and developing the future leaders and key individuals who will move your organisation forward.

### INTRODUCTION

All organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, large and small, need to be able to find the right people to fill their key positions.

This process has typically been done in a highly mechanised, secretive and structured way by large organisations. This system of selection worked to an extent in stable organisations where the past could inform the future, but in today's fast moving and ever changing environment, it is important that the process is given even more status.

If anything, it is more important than ever to be able to attract, motivate and keep the best performers.

### BENEFITS OF SUCCESSION PLANNING

#### Staff Retention

The concept of a job for life is fast becoming a thing of the past. The new psychological contract between an employer and employee assumes that the employee will work for the employer so long as there is a perceived benefit in terms of personal and/or financial growth.

Providing a route to the top via an open succession plan strengthens the psychological contract and will help your organisation to retain your top people for longer.

#### Motivation

Knowing what you need to achieve and having a clear direction helps to motivate and inspire talented, capable people who are likely to meet or exceed expectations.

#### Performance Management

Clearly focused targets and goals, linked to a succession plan, provide effective measurement of progress and achievement.

#### Diversity

If the succession plan is based on a set of competencies and achievements, then these can become objectives supporting the breaking of any perceived glass ceilings.

#### Recruitment

Organisations that offer an open competition for senior positions, with progression based on merit, are more likely to attract people who are capable, motivated and ambitious.

### USING THE NATIONAL STANDARDS TO SUPPORT SUCCESSION PLANNING

#### THE SUCCESSION PLANNING PROCESS

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Management and Leadership include a number of units that can help and guide you through the succession planning process. This process includes the following:

- Identify the future direction the organisation needs to take, including the development of a vision, mission and long term aims (see units B2, B3 and B4).
- Identify the knowledge, skills and behaviours you will need to have in the organisation to ensure progress.
- Review your existing employees to determine whether they have, or could develop, the skills base your organisation will need in the future.
- Developing person specifications and Job Descriptions for the roles you are recruiting for (See unit D4).
- Provide a structured programme of development to ensure that the appropriate beliefs, values, skills and behaviours can be instilled in the future leaders (See unit D7– provide learning opportunities).
- Monitor, Review and Assess progress made towards achieving the overall aims of the organisation (see the best practice guide on performance management).

#### WHAT TO CONSIDER

Succession Planning is often used to select the next leader of the organisation and as such can be an extremely complex process. Two important issues to consider are:

##### Lateral Progression

It may not be possible to give people the opportunity to develop purely through upward moves. This may be due to a lack of roles, movement or growth in the organisation. Instead, experience can often be developed through a series of internal moves, providing individuals with experience of all areas of the business - this is typically how graduate recruitment schemes work.

##### Roles V Goals

You may have decided on the future roles people will have in the organisation, however the speed of change may make roles identified now redundant in the future. Consider how people's capabilities can be developed to focus on purpose, mission, goals, change and innovation.

The units contained within the set of standards for 'facilitating change' (Section C of the NOS) provide information on the outcomes, behaviours and knowledge required to move an organisation and its people forward.