

## **Putting the “Success” in Succession Planning: Why it Matters and How to do it**

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### **Do You Have a Plan in Place for Your Successor?**

For those who want to retire, move up the corporate ladder, or change roles or careers, finding the “perfect” candidate or colleague can take time. We never know what’s coming down the pipe—the position you’ve been hoping will open has been offered to you, but there is no one to fill yours. Now you have responsibility for both. Sound familiar? Prepping a colleague or mentee to be your successor, even if you don’t think you’ll need a replacement in the near future, allows for a potentially seamless career transition while creating an invaluable safety net.

### **Taking the Next Steps**

A manager once told me we should always have a deliberate plan in place for a seamless transition of assignments or roles; not to make ourselves easily replaced, but so we are able to take the next steps in our career without being held back by our current assignments and role. Take the time to be a mentor. We often think, “it will get done faster if I just do it myself.” While that may be true, what are we teaching our potential successors? If we take a little extra time to teach and show someone our wisdom along the way, we put our potential successor in a much better position to be equipped with the tools to become the successor. As I continue in my own career, and more opportunities are presented, I am occasionally left thinking “who will do the work and assignments I’m currently doing?”

I find myself continually seeking out colleagues, or rising stars as we call them, to teach them things I wished someone had taught me, or even mentioned to me, before handing a project, assignment, or task over to me. I try to think about everything, from the little details a rising star might be afraid to even ask because they think they “should” know—how does the accounting process work? How do I open a project? Or even: Is it okay that I don’t have every answer?—to the big questions, like what is my role going to look like in five years? What skills should I learn to excel? Assuring these up-and-coming professionals that it’s okay to ask questions allows them to better explore their potential next steps and grow in their careers.

### **Help Me, Help You**

Do you have a colleague in mind that would be the perfect fit? Does this person even want to be your successor? Setting job and career expectations for potential successors helps to identify those that are high performers and future leaders. Have the conversation with your employees and discuss their career goals, keeping in mind that not everyone may want to be in a leadership role. Succession planning can be critical to an organization’s success. Investing in talented resources who want to improve their careers and might be a good fit “someday,” can help ease any transition. Understand how to maximize talent whether they are from the [“Generation X”](#) or the [“Generation Z,”](#) or any of the generations in-between. Successful leaders have a clear understanding that not all people work, operate, or learn the same, and that many of them have different values and goals when it comes to work. For example: many people are interested in having leadership that understands the [value of EHS at work](#), [empowering women](#), or even the [benefits of strong health and wellness programs](#). Others might be hoping to [grow as thought-leaders](#) or [work around the world](#) (instead of just locally). No matter what

someone's hopes, dreams, and values are, getting to the bottom of their motivations will help you help them.

## Conclusion

Maintaining business continuity while embracing change not only helps the firm but benefits you in your career and helps others in their own career development. Offer regular feedback and support to potential successors and allow them room to grow and change as they envision their new role. Remember, while your choice in successor may seem like the perfect fit, don't overlook other promising employees. Look for people who best display the skills necessary to thrive in higher positions, regardless of their current title. You might be surprised at who comes forward and the fresh ideas they bring to the table.

[Learn more about tackling the talent shortage and engaging your employees.](#)



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