

Review

Succession Planning Best Practices for Organizations: A Systematic Literature Review Approach

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Abstract: Developing potential candidates for organizational sustainability and business continuity is a priority in any organization. Every organization is facing or will face challenges for the immediate future successor with the right people. Top management can create surroundings that allow leadership development with the help of internal succession planning. Succession planning is an enterprise approach that has gained a lot of interest in all organizations because of excessive demand for holding knowledge and the shortage of skilled workforce. The study was done by using the standard systematic literature review method. The current study focuses on providing a comprehensive review of best succession planning practices followed by all organizations. The major purpose is to describe the standard best practices of succession planning in any organization. This study will provide enough evidence to use succession planning as an instrument in the organisation's recruitment process, employee retention strategies, and future top management development within the organization.

Keywords: Succession planning; best practices; replacement planning.



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1. Introduction

The practice of succession planning in private organizations is more than in public organizations. Similarly, non-profit organizations lack the formal succession planning practices effectively—the importance of succession planning within academic and business organizations (Grossman 2014). Several researchers have conducted studies about succession planning in the last decades. However, Bano et al. (2022), a French innovator, was the first scholar who identified the need for succession planning. The leading organizations have adopted formal succession planning (Mehrabani & Mohamad 2011). The most relevant study in succession planning was accomplished by (Trow 1961).

Today, the organizational system is challenged by the lack of consistent workforce planning, which has affected the strategic succession planning for top management as well as a middle-management employee. The high turnover workforce is a big concern in many countries in organizations. Succession planning is unexpectedly turning into a key strategic device for human resources management to develop a plan for the inevitable succession of key employees and managers. Succession planning is intended to help organizations manage and retain their talent pipeline and focus on competence development (Arokiasamy 2021). Most organizations do not focus on identifying a successor in advance. Some organizations devote

their effort to developing a strong pool of candidates. When the need arises, the strongest candidate becomes a successor. The present study focuses on providing a comprehensive review of best succession planning practices implemented by all organizations. The major purpose of this article is to illustrate best practices of succession planning in organizations.

2. Literature Review

Most of the literature has been focused on the private sector compared to the public sector and non-profit organizations. According to the study of Bano et al. (2022), initially, a literature review on succession planning was done by Kesner & Seborá (1994), which was published later by Mazzucato & Perez (2015) and Bano et al. (2022). Kesner & Seborá's (1994) study showed most of the focus was on the external and internal successors. This study concluded that this period was only the beginning of a comprehensive study of succession planning. Kesner & Seborá's (1994) study also found that only three studies were done for non-profit organizations' transition process. The study of Egan et al. (1995) also suggested that more studies need to be done for non-profit organizations. The study results of Mateso (2010) identified that health institutes also do not take seriously about succession planning. In addition to this, Ofobruku & Nwakoby's (2015) study in the construction sector found that formal succession planning does not exist in some organizations that can cope with the increasing ageing population and retiring founders.

Similarly, few studies have been conducted on higher education succession planning processes that need immediate attention (Bano et al., 2022). Although the corporate industry is doing relatively well in succession planning processes (Mateso 2010), succession planning challenges are still notable in all kinds of organizations. Some studies mentioned that few organizations do not have written succession planning even when their CEOs are nearing departure (Durst & Wilhelm 2012). Although the corporate industry is doing relatively better in succession planning processes (Mateso 2010), succession planning challenges are still notable in all kinds of organizations. Peters-Hawkins et al. (2018) mentioned that educational literature suggests that succession planning agendas may be in direct conflict with professional development planning for organizational leaders in some districts. In the health sector, many institutes prefer to hire experienced nurses than new graduates to fill vacant positions (Jones et al., 2017). Research on succession planning shows that beginning to prepare for leadership transition can minimize potential negative impacts (Perrenoud & Sullivan 2017).

2.1. Succession Planning and Replacement Planning

Ideally, Succession planning is a systematic approach that helps the identification of job vacancies which are vacant due to a turnover workforce or a retirement. The traditional succession planning approach has taken a replacement planning that focuses only on executive-level vacant positions. With the traditional approach, one or two successors might be identified and selected based on the feedback from their immediate supervisor and placed on the fast track into upper-level positions. Succession planning is very common for CEO positions but is undoubtedly also applicable to all other employment levels. It is concluded that succession planning is not only limited to top management.

Okwakpam (2019) defined Succession planning as a process in which organizations can make sure that staff are being hired and constantly improve their skills to fill the competent key roles in the organization. In a study by Barnett & Davis (2008), the succession planning process was defined companies recognize and establish internal individuals to fill the key job positions within the organization. Dessler (2013) identified the succession planning process in three important steps: identifying and analyzing key jobs, individual assessment, and selecting the right person for the right position. Smither et al. (2016) explained that those organizations face problems in major areas such as turnover and do not have formal succession planning. Ultimately these organizations lack the essential skills for key positions. The famous author of succession planning and management is Smither et al. (2016), who have focused definitions on all levels of organizational hierarchy. He stated succession planning is "a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement".

Sambrook (2005) identified succession planning as the attempt to plan for the right number, quality of managers and key-skilled employees to cover retirement, death, serious illness or promotion, and any new positions created in future organization plans. Even today's succession planning definition includes the organizations attempting to prepare for all management positions' transitions (Eugene Fibuch & Van Way III, 2012). Succession planning is how one or more successors are identified for key posts (Olatunji et al., 2017).

On the other hand, researchers such as Eugene Fibuch & Van Way III, (2012) and Bano et al. (2022) divided the succession planning process into three main components. The first component is the selection of candidates based on previous experience and the formation of pool. The second component is the role of successor and third component is change management. Another study of Owolabi & Adeosun (2021) defined succession planning management as the process of evaluating the right talent in the workplace with the objective to seek answers for the three main questions relating to need for potential successor to cater organizational prolong needs, need for successor's efficiency and need for the successor's right skills and competency for future necessities of the organization.

Some organizations are confusing with the term of succession planning and change it with replacement planning. The definition of replacement planning is considered a process of identifying short-term or long-term backups so that organizations have people who can assume responsibility for critical positions during emergencies (Rothwell 2011). The short-term replacements focus on finding employees for a shorter period such as sick or on vacation. While long term replacement planning identifies employees' backups for longer period such as sudden loss of an employee. Replacement planning is essentially disaster planning in a form of risk management (Rothwell 2010). Most the organizations focus the hiring process on replacement filling. Replacement planning usually identifies one individual from within the organization till they find the suitable candidate to fill the position.

The difference between succession planning and replacement is very clear. As a result, replacement planning is not a substitute for succession planning. Although, Succession planning has developed gradually into a process that can be used to identify qualified employees for current vacant positions as well as for the future. Moreover, succession planning aims to groom the talent for the future and replacement planning is more willing to fill vacancies. Finally, the active development of successors is more likely to be found in succession planning than in replacement planning (Wiesman et al., 2016). A replacement plan ensures the continuity of business operations and focuses on filling the positions within a shorter time, whereas succession planning develops a talent pool.

2.2. The Need for Succession Planning

Employee retirement planning and timing have important implications for all institutions. Unplanned early or late retirement can directly affect the human resources department. Replacing an experienced employee with an inexperienced employee can be difficult. The most common retirement age for public employees is between 60 to 65. On-time retirement refers to the conventional age of retirement, at or around age 65 (Boveda & Metz, 2016). There are several types of retirements: baby boomers' retirement, delayed retirement, earlier retirement, and expected retirement. Apart from retirements, positions can be vacant due to emergencies such as sudden death, resignations and terminations.

2.2.1. Vacant positions due to unexpected events

Organizations need to be prepared for unexpected events such as death, illness, termination, resignations and promotions. Succession planning is a systematic approach which is ready for unexpected events.

2.2.2. Vacant positions due to baby boomers Retirements

The large number of baby boomers is creating a big risk for many organizations. These risks include loss of organizational knowledge, skills and experience. The number of potential retirees is growing due to baby boomers. When baby boomers start thinking about leaving the organization, there will be an urgent need to fill the position. Similarly, when baby boomers are heading into their retirement years, most organizations do not have a signed succession plan. Succession planning only ensures these replacements are prepared to be promoted in a shorter time (Ibarra, 2005).

2.2.3. Delayed Retirement

Some employees decide to postpone retirement due to financial obligations, Career satisfaction and institutional flexibility. These factors are important to discuss during the succession planning process.

2.2.4. Expected retirement

The number of potential retirements is also increasing due to the expected retirement age. The role of the human resources department is to keep track of all expected retirements for the near future.

2.2.5. Internal Vs External Successor

The selection of internally or externally successor is another major concern. Some organizations find it more rewarding to promote internal successor, while other organizations prefer to recruit externals. Organizations face problems when the technical and specialized positions become vacant. Hiring an internal employee for critical positions is an advantage for institutions that encourage public service employees to work harder for a promotion. Internal hiring will make the process simple and fast for unforeseen circumstances such as sudden contract termination, death or disability of senior management staff.

On the other hand, hiring an external candidate can slow the process and lead to conflict among the existing senior staff. It is also costly and according to Bano (2017), 65% of external hiring fail within the first two years. Moreover, external recruitment consumes a lot of time and is costly (example; hidden expenses). Since some organizations (example; higher education institutions) has specialized and technical vacant positions. This kind of planning may allow public institutions to identify talent within the organization. Some organizations find it more rewarding to promote a successor from within, but some organizations prefer externally. Some experts believe that all successors from within is dangerous, since this practice tends to limit internal management style.

2.2.6. Labor shortage

Workforce shortage with retiring employees can create substantial pressure for some sectors in many countries. The lack of effective and skilled leaders has been noted as one of the biggest business risks of the twenty-first century (Bano et al 2022). However, technical skills alone are not enough to warrant leadership promotion (Lyles, 2019). In the early 1980 recession caused a disruption in the workforce, with upper management layoffs and elimination talent development practices (Cappelli & Keller, 2014).

2.3. Succession planning studies

Several researchers have been conducted different studies in the past decades, however succession planning has been adopted formerly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Few empirical studies of research have been done in between 1959 to 1960. The most relevant study in succession planning and management in the 1970s (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). The most relevant only study during 1970 to 1979 was about manpower planning (Coleman, 1970).

Succession planning gained great attention for formal succession planning which involves management development and CEO Succession (Kesner & Sebora, 1994; Zaich, 1986). A survey done was to examine management succession planning development (Sharma & Agarwal, 2016). Previous researchers in 1980s focused on succession frequency associates with CEO succession (Kim, 2010). The need and advantage of succession planning, leadership pipeline concept was defined by (Charan et al., 2010). The study of Mehrabani & Mohamad (2011) identified the necessity of succession planning. The research in this period expanded to different sectors such as higher institutes, government agencies, health sector, and non-profit organizations.

Seven-pointed star model was developed to achieve a systematic succession planning and management (Rothwell, 2011). Assessment of the role of succession planning in corporations and its effect on women's promotions (Stroud, 2005). The study of Succession planning in healthcare organizations examines how the healthcare organizations identify the potential leaders, to address succession plan, retain employees and prepare for workforce diversity (Shipman, 2007). The study of Mandi (2008) introduced some indicators for succession planning, including the ability to identify new leaders and sustain core competencies.

Some researchers focused on some others succession planning best practices. The study of Deshwal (2015) emphasises the transparency of succession plan based on individual roles rather than jobs. Many organizations discuss succession planning only when they need to replace some personnel. The study of (Deshwal, 2015) suggested best practice of external hiring for a need of new blood in the organization. Replacing employees and not developing them has become a big and common mistake by organizations in developing and developed nations (Olatunji et al., 2017). Managers need to consider an individual backup plans for short to long-term absences as well as permanent departs (Laratta et al., 2018). The current Study of Payne et al., (2018) shows that conducting annual talent reviews are important for assessing and ensuring a deep pool of internal talent (Bano et al., 2022). It can be accomplished by finding out the key leaders, competencies development, knowledge capture and monitoring, and metrics evaluation. It would result in effective succession plan as well as retain operational stability.

2.4. Succession Planning Best Practices

Many researchers have been identified best practices applicable in the field of succession planning (e.g., Folkers, 2008; Rothwell, 2010), succession planning practices involves having a support system with senior management and involving the line managers in recognizing potential candidate and integrating the succession management plans with the business strategies (Stadler, 2011). Aswathappa (2013) emphasized succession planning practices must be implemented after recognizing the individual needs. This paper focused on the best practices identified by famous researchers William Rothwell, Robert M. Fulmer and Chief Executive Magazine April 2004.

Table 1. Summary of the key best practices

Best Practices of Robert M Fulmer	Best Practices of Wil- liam Rothwell	Best practices of Chief Executive Magazine
Deploying Succession Management Process Link between succession planning and business strategy. Role of human resources for developing tools and processes of systems Role of technology for the facilitation of process	Roadmap Model Involvement of CEO and senior management Implementation of effective performance management system	Identify Identify criteria for candidates
Identifying the Talent Pool Focus on future leaders succession management competencies.	Ethical standards descriptions such as values, norms.	Diagnose Individual's candidate's strength and weaknesses
Engaging Future Leaders individual development plans for all employees Coaching and Mentoring Traditional education programmes such as special assignments.	Shared resources Leadership development for shared competencies.	Prescribe Right development for organization Monitor Assurance of succession planning process in the organization.

Source: Rothwell (2010)

2.4.1. Best Practices According to Fulmer

The following best practices for succession planning are recommended by Fulmer (2002). The link between succession planning and business strategy. Organizations that have best succession planning practices have links between operation continuity and succession plan. This link gives succession planning the opportunity to affect the organization's long-term goals and objectives (Fulmer, 2002; Rothwell, 2010).

Role of Human resources - The contribution of human resources department in the succession planning process is important, but not during the development phase. The only responsibility comes to human resources department during the implementation phase. The role of human resources is very critical during the process of workforce planning. This process involves identifying and analysing the need of human resources to meet the organization's needs (Pynes, 2004).

Role of Technology - The role of technology is very basic element in the succession planning process. Ideally, technology facilitates the process rather than becoming the focus of the process. It helps the process make it shorter, simple or even more flexible (Fulmer, 2002)." Many organizations are in a competitive race to enter e-commerce High-tech (example: video conferencing or audio teleconferencing) and online (example ; intranet or extranet)approached had a dramatic impact on succession planning practices "(Rothwell, 2010). Some organizations are in a competitive race to use technology to deliver programmes. Combining internal and external resources to deliver the programme's content could also be useful (Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Some organizations use organisation's succession management website to assess employees' current potential level, skills and experience. They use it as a reporting tool as well. Time is changing faster and classroom-based learning is getting replaced with web-based courses. High performance organizations are making range of management development courses available online (Deshwal, 2015).

Identifying Talent Pools - Best practice organizations use cyclical, continuous, identification process to focus on future leaders. Organizations also use a core set of leadership and succession management competencies. Many organizations cannot find a successor in advance. In this situation organizations devote their efforts to develop strong pool of candidates, from which successor can be selected when need arises. The strongest candidate at that time becomes the successor (Fulmer, 2002; Rothwell, 2010).

Individual development Plans - The growth-oriented organizations take actions on the importance of specific and individual development plans for all employees. Individual development plans identify which developmental activities are needed and the best practice firms typically have a mechanism in place to make it simple for the employee to conduct the developmental activities (Rothwell, 2010). Typically, human resources department monitor employee's development activities (Fulmer, 2002). Leadership development programmes should focus on the skills and abilities of a leader rather than setting out a series of general steps to follow. Such steps are not always helpful because they fail to transfer to the complex realities of the workplace (Baker et al., 1997).

Fundamental development activities - Best practice partners rely on the fundamental development activities of coaching, training and development most frequently and utilize all development activities to a much greater extent than sponsor organizations (Fulmer, 2002)

Traditional education programs - In addition to traditional excessive education programmes, best practice partners increasingly use specific assignments, action learning and web-based development activities (Fulmer, 2002). The selection of special assignment chosen is supposed to present a challenge to the participant and improve their analytical ability (Deshwal, 2015).

2.4.2. Best Practices According to William Rothwell

Rothwell (2010) has identified the following succession planning practices.

Roadmap - Succession planning must go beyond simple identification of internal development of leaders. The strategic roadmap is necessary to develop future leadership. Succession management programmes can help beyond identification of leadership development. Devoting funds to internal leadership development is the central way to maintain organizational sustainability.

Top leadership involvement - The role of CEO is very strategic (Ridwan, 2017). The involvement of CEO guarantees the succession planning process is on right track and implemented well. Hence the role of CEO is essential during succession planning process. Organizations need to know the type of talent requires for vacant positions. It is essential to construct a lifestyle with the involvement of top management and personnel that helps and reinforces shared accountability, comments mechanisms and the general significance of leadership improvement (Leskiw & Singh, 2007).

Develop and impellent an effective performance management system - Employee's assessment is depending on the organizational need and culture. Some institutions have effective assessment tool for measuring all employee's performance. one famous assessment method is 360-degree evaluation which evaluates employees from supervisors, peers and subordinates. This evaluation method is very helpful for evaluation top positions leaders. With the help of this evaluation method internal developed candidate may get effective results from the direct supervisor but might poorly results from peer and subordinates.

Competencies for strategic objectives will be needed - Organizations identify the need of competencies to achieve strategic objectives for selection of successor.

Narrow development gaps by individual development plans - The success of most organization is depending on two main things. Firstly, the young talent candidates developing them in future positions. Secondly, replacements for retiring employees' transition plan timely for the continuation of leadership. Designing well-developed programmes such as trainings and education can help new employees mentoring. It is very important for all organizations and employees to know the employee's development programmes and selection of successor seriously.

Assess employees with competencies and develop ethical standards - A strong organizational culture provides values, beliefs and standards for all employees which affect effective succession planning. These values provide regular guidelines on everyday business continuity.

Shared resources for all employees - Best practices in the succession planning include developing entire system for all employees with the help of formal training and action learning activities. building a viewpoint that talented employees are sharing different resources instead by benefiting some specific managers. This development device can allow man or woman employees and managers to develop together by sharing resources.

Use leadership development efforts to build shared competencies needed for the future - Developing professorial competencies is a key to future organizational success. Succession planning is the deliberate and systematic effort made by management of organizations to recruit, enhance and retain men and women with a range of management talents successful of enforcing contemporary and future organizational dreams (Liebman, 2016; Rothwell, 2010).

2.4.3. Best Practices According to Chief Executive Magazine

The following four key best practices according to Chief Executive Magazine, April 2004 are as follows:

Identify - Identification of candidate for leadership roles is key issues in the succession planning process. It involves objective criteria and consistency to identify candidate. It is important to identify future leaders based on higher potential rather than higher performance (Bottomley et al., 2016). High potential leaders can stay longer in the organization.

Diagnose - Once identify the right candidate, the next step is to asses individual's strength and weaknesses according to need of organization. The most important step in succession planning is to create a culture which encourages individual strengths and provide opportunities to improve weaknesses. (Hanson 2013) indicated that formal knowledge requires for succession planning process. The process involves, talent development, grooming potential leaders, talent reviews and monitor results.

Prescribe - Coaching from senior management allows high potential employees to learn about key issues in the organization about the future direction of organization. Current leaders can drive successful development skills and competencies. Leaders want the integral expertise to effectively lead complicated environments and agencies (Hess & Bacigalupo, 2013).

Monitor - Organizations who exercise succession planning and management development have to understand to set up a monitoring gadget for imperative personnel improvement (Eskierka, 2011). More advanced dimension purposes such as monitoring employee engagement and employee performance need to be implemented.

3. Materials and Methods

This review paper is based on an extensive systematic literature review search of published articles that primarily address succession planning and best practices in different organizations. Peer-reviewed articles published from the 1950s to 2019 are included, focusing on the study of succession planning practices in the different sectors such as health, education, family business, and construction sectors. The systematic literature review results indicate that most organizations are aware of the implementation of succession planning practices; few such studies exist, and it gives strong evidence for the importance of succession planning in education, health, and family business.

4. Results and Discussion

Although succession planning is a very complicated and lengthy process, however, it is the imperative systematic method for organizational boom and viability. An effective succession plan assures smoother operations for unexpected and expected departs. Actions must be taken for earlier retirements. Transitions in the leadership often may cause inconsistency. Sometimes succession plans fail in some organization because organization do not involve employees during the succession plan process. Employees in the business enterprise may additionally or may also now not be aware of the succession planning process. Succession planning is more fantastic when it is obvious for all employees. Transparency in succession planning procedure must be made sure for a smooth transition. Therefore, the human resources department is responsible for communicating organizations succession to support employee engagement. Personnel needs to be aware of the succession planning process. Organizations no longer design successors in secret.

The most common succession planning practices identified by famous researchers are individual development plans, technology advancement, involvement of future leaders, and talent pool which can be used in any organization. Leadership development programs is appeared in large organizations; however, small organizations need to develop their leaders. Some researchers suggested implementing more succession planning practices, including transparency of the succession planning process, communication expectations, diversity management, and annual talent review for the future successor. The findings of this study will help all organizations to implement the best succession planning practices, which can allow their employees to grow professionally. Organizations will be able to integrate the primary objectives with the succession planning practices by identifying the high potential employees and retaining them. Succession

planning in the form of individual career development plans and internally groomed candidates will allow employees to feel that the organization cares about them for their career progression. The absence of a comprehensive model for succession planning in any organization is unfortunate. The key findings of this study are to publish a succession planning best practices model which all types of organizations can follow.

5. Conclusions

Succession planning is only effective when top management supports all employees' individual development programmes. Technology advancement has provided significant ways to enhance organizational recruitments. Succession planning programmes require enough financial support for training and development opportunities. Unfortunately, some organizations are often under strict budget conditions. Budget cuts can add the element of complexity. The study highly recommends that future researchers focus on more succession planning practices such as technology advancement, budget allocation for succession planning programmes, communication and transparency for the succession planning process. Technological advancements will impact the way succession planning is implemented for future opportunities. Financial support from top management will also affect positively for effective implementation of succession programmes. Moreover, this study discussed how the organizations would implement succession planning practices in retaining top leadership talent as well as middle management talent.

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