

# Succession Planning Guidebook

Practical advice on  
preparing for future  
talent needs today

# About Electricity Human Resources Canada

Electricity Human Resources Canada (EHRC) is Canada's most trusted source for objective human resource and market information, with the tools to guide business planning and development for the Canadian electricity industry. We provide a platform for current industry needs, identify ways to make Canadian businesses "best in class," and forecast industry trends and issues. Our work enables the industry to map workforce supply to demand and to foster growth and innovation in employers and employees. This improves the quality of service industry provides and improves the confidence Canadians have in the industry.

EHRC's specific objectives are to:

- Conduct and disseminate valuable research about human resources in Canada's electricity industry.
- Help the industry create and sustain a skilled and diverse labour force.
- Promote awareness of career and employment opportunities in the industry.
- Develop partnerships that better enable the industry to meet its human resources needs.

Further information on EHRC is available at [electricityhr.ca](http://electricityhr.ca).

*Ce rapport est également disponible en français sous le titre: Guide de planification de la relève.*  
This report is also available in French.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



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# Foreword

**With older workers retiring and new technologies changing skill and competency requirements, Canada's electricity industry needs to take action today so critical positions are not left vacant tomorrow. The steps taken now to identify and develop key talent will pay off in significant ways down the road.**

We at the Electricity Human Resources Canada (EHRC) have developed this new Succession Planning Guidebook to help with that, whether you're just getting started with succession planning or looking to make improvements to your existing plan.

To develop this guidebook, we've drawn on our most recent labour market intelligence (LMI) data as well as our unique national view of what's happening throughout the electricity industry, including assessments of several organizations' current succession planning programs. This work was led and supported by a steering committee of experienced HR practitioners from across the sector. The result is a framework for effective succession planning and management, including how to define critical positions and competencies, identify and develop "successor" employees, manage talent pipelines, and communicate your succession strategy throughout your organization.

The guidebook covers key points of theory and process and also provides practical tools and worksheets for collecting and analyzing the information you'll need to develop a succession plan.

At EHRC, our goal is to strengthen the ability of the Canadian electricity industry to meet the current and future needs of its workforce. This guidebook is one way we're working to achieve that goal — and we welcome any feedback or questions you might have on it to ensure it meets your succession planning needs.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Branigan".

**Michelle Branigan**

CEO, Electricity Human Resources Canada



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelagh Ell".

**Shelagh Ell**

Chair of the Steering Committee  
Director, Talent Acquisition, Talent Management and Pension & Benefits  
ATCO

# Contents

## Chapter 1: Succession planning definitions and considerations

- 1.1 Definitions
- 1.2 The business case for succession planning
- 1.3 Information needed for effective succession planning
- 1.4 Barriers to success
- 1.5 Succession planning best practices

### **Worksheet 1: Succession planning performance review**

## Chapter 2: Succession planning framework and model

- 2.1 Succession planning process model and framework
- 2.2 Implementation, annual lifecycle and review lifecycles

### **Worksheet 2.1: Succession planning framework and model review**

### **Worksheet 2.2: Critical position identification**

### **Worksheet 2.3: Succession candidate nomination**

## Chapter 3: Successor development planning

- 3.1 Successor development challenges
- 3.2 Development tools and strategies

### **Worksheet 3.1: Development tools for succession candidates**

### **Worksheet 3.2: Succession candidate development plan**

## Chapter 4: Talent pipeline management

- 4.1 Overview of talent pipeline management
- 4.2 Implementation roadmap for talent pipeline management

### **Worksheet 4: TPM readiness assessment**

## Chapter 5: Communications strategy

- 5.1 Why communication matters
- 5.2 How people react to new information

### **Worksheet 5: Communication planning worksheet**

## References

## Acknowledgements

# Introduction

**Succession planning is the process of identifying and developing talent for promotion to ensure key positions in an organization are not left vacant.**

The process itself is not especially complex, but it usually takes place in a complex setting with many variables and often depends on information drawn from a wide range of related processes. This guidebook can help you make sense of it all and develop a robust succession program for your organization.

While this guidebook may be used by anyone involved in the succession planning process, it will be particularly useful for:

- New or recently promoted line managers who are responsible for their own departmental succession plans or are contributing to the corporate succession management plan
- HR practitioners responsible for providing consultation and facilitation support to the line managers

Each chapter of the guidebook includes basic definitions, theoretical considerations and practical process information. You'll also find practical tools and worksheets to help you collect and analyze the information you'll need to develop your plan.

These tools are working documents to help generate the information that will feed into your company's enterprise resource planning (ERP) or human resources information system (HRIS). They do not replace the functionality of those systems, but rather support it. For example, the worksheets can help you objectively identify critical or high-risk positions that need to be entered into company systems.

If your company does use ERP or HRIS, the worksheets can help you create an all-new succession plan, providing documented evidence for all decisions.



# Chapter 1

## Succession planning definitions and considerations

### **Chapter 1 has two parts.**

In Sections 1.1 to 1.4, you'll find definitions, theoretical considerations and practical process information to help you understand the working concepts behind succession planning.

Section 1.5 summarizes the conditions that will drive the success of a company's succession program and provides a tool to assess your organization's overall performance with succession planning. You can use this information to determine if your company is ready to implement a new program, or to identify and correct gaps in the way your company is using succession planning.

# 1.1 Definitions

## Succession management

Succession management is the systematic and planned process an organization uses to identify and develop the critical skills and competencies it requires. These include:

- Functional competencies – the technical skills needed for specific positions or roles
- Management competencies – the skills required for business areas such as project management, leadership, finance and human resources
- Foundational competencies – the skills and knowledge shared among the majority of roles and occupations

This definition is broad because it has to consider all the processes and activities required to ensure a company has the right people in the right places at the right time. Building this corporate capability and “bench strength” may involve a number of different talent management and development activities, ranging from further training and professional development support to very selective efforts to encourage employee advancement. The aim is to create a sufficient pool of proficient candidates in current roles who will be available to promote into more senior roles when required.

Training is a key element in succession management. Today’s workers have high expectations of continuous learning and development. Companies that recognize and respond to this fact will be able to attract and retain better candidates who will grow with the organization.

## Succession planning

Succession planning is the focused process for keeping talent in the pipeline by identifying and

developing people to be appointed to selected critical positions when required.

While succession management focuses on building bench strength and the broader corporate capability, succession planning has a narrower scope, concentrating on the depth and breadth of competencies for specific roles.

Its purpose is to highlight critical occupations and roles within the organization, assess future resourcing risks, and identify specific candidates to be promoted to key positions when they become vacant. Succession planning usually follows a review cycle of up to 36 months that aims to spot talent that will be ready for promotion within that period.

When reviewing succession planning practices across the electricity industry, we found that most were still focused on senior management roles. However, the top-performing organizations use succession planning to ensure there are fully skilled and competent employees available for all critical roles, which could include technical and professional roles as well as management. The importance of including extended roles in the planning process was also confirmed by a 2008 study, *Succession planning best practices and tools for the Canadian electricity and renewable sector*.

## Critical positions

Critical positions are those that, if left vacant, would have a negative impact on your organization’s ability to conduct normal business. These may be managerial, technical or supportive.

Correctly identifying and defining critical roles and their responsibilities is extremely important to the overall efficiency and perceived value of succession

planning initiatives. These roles and responsibilities must be thoroughly understood by HR practitioners before work begins on any succession planning activities.

There are many definitions of and misconceptions about critical positions, likely because identifying them has become more complex than it once was due to the way work is now managed and organizations are structured. Traditionally, most organizations were structured around fixed positions with relatively stagnant job descriptions and competency requirements. These formed the basis of many talent management practices that are still in use today.

The way critical positions were defined started to shift in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Economic downturns and cost savings forced many senior executives to reduce employee numbers and manage the business with the people they had available. Responsibilities and tasks were reallocated to remaining employees, often based on the skills, knowledge and abilities of each team member. With this approach, the lines between positions became blurred and job descriptions frequently changed with the arrivals and departures of specific employees. This resulted in drastic challenges for traditional talent management practices, which assumed job content and competency requirements would remain static for a given job title.

## How today's companies define critical positions

Most organizations now function on a continuum between predictable job stability and unpredictable, constant change. Larger organizations with standard operational processes, including many electricity producers and distribution companies, maintain a balance between the two extremes in how they manage job titles and job requirements. Under these conditions, identifying critical positions has become a fine art of anticipating the

competency gaps that may be left when an employee vacates a position, understanding the current competency levels in a team and recognizing any operational challenges the organization may need to deal with.

Taking into account the flexibility of modern job design, today's companies are defining critical positions in a number of ways. These include:

- Positions that, if left vacant, will:
  - pose a risk to operational safety
  - make it difficult for an organization to do business as usual
  - present significant risk of revenue loss
  - affect organizational reliability and effectiveness
- Positions that require incumbents to develop competencies unique to the industry that cannot be developed outside the company
- Positions for which incumbents and candidates are not readily available in the labour market at industry-accepted salaries

## The emergence of competency-based planning

Start-ups, mergers/acquisitions, fast-growing technology companies and organizations undergoing significant transformations often have flexible organizational structures and job titles that change rapidly. While this situation makes it challenging to use traditional succession planning methodologies, these companies often know well who their successors will be. To manage their succession planning, they seem to identify the core competencies that keep them in business rather than identifying critical positions.

The benefit of this approach is that succession planning information is based on the critical work required regardless of which role delivers it, which is especially useful when a company's organizational structure and position titles are highly volatile.



However, using this competency-based approach effectively requires rigorously mapping competencies onto critical work processes within the organization. It also requires the ability to assess, track and report on each employee's competencies in as close to real-time as possible. The EHRC's competency framework is an example of a robust competency library that can be used for such mapping and benchmarking.

Whether the succession planning process identifies critical roles or critical competencies, it aims to ensure that people with the right competencies are available to meet the business needs. The key is to pinpoint which competencies are truly critical. If these competencies are not accurately identified, unexpected vacancies can negatively affect the organization's results. Conversely, if nearly all positions or competencies are listed as critical, the corporate succession plan becomes too complex and diluted to be effective.

At the corporate level, the HR department plays a vital facilitation role in validating critical role or competency information through internal and

external benchmarking, ensuring the criteria for criticality are met.

## Successors

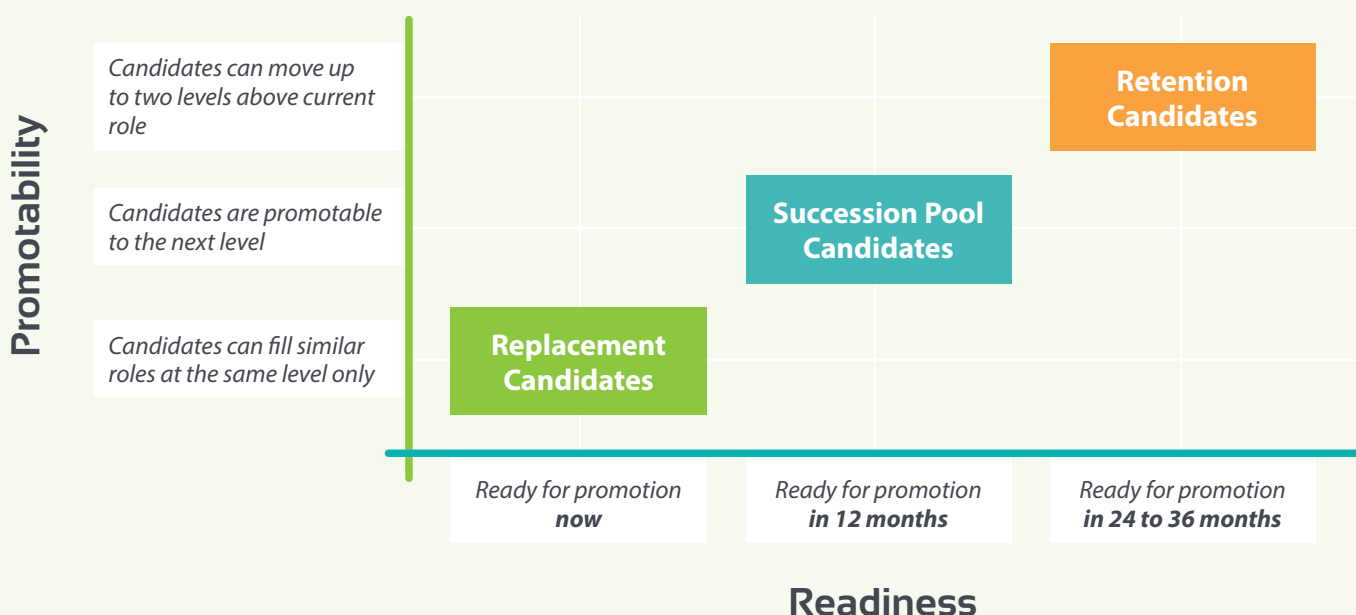
Successors are employees who consistently deliver high performance in a variety of settings and circumstances, and who have shown the capability and competencies to fill critical vacancies. They also visibly support and reflect the company's culture and values.

Industries use many different frameworks to define and identify successors. The methods adopted by a company usually become part of its corporate language — and most companies will resist efforts to change them. Figure 1 shows the broader categories in which successors can be classified, regardless of differences in corporate language.

Successors may be grouped into three general categories:

- **Replacement candidates**
- **Succession pool candidates**
- **Retention candidates**

FIGURE 1



## Replacement candidates

Replacement candidates are people who can step into critical positions on brief notice — for example, if a successor has not yet been identified or if the successor is not available or ready to take on the position. Typically, they are people who:

- Have significant experience in the critical position (or similar positions)
- Have mastered the required competencies of the critical position and would be able to deliver strong, consistent performance
- Are comfortable with the current level of complexity of their work but might struggle with higher levels of complexity or a larger span of control
- Are truly knowledgeable about this type of work but might want to stay at the technical level (if the critical position is managerial) or pursue a different career in the long term

The purpose of filling an unexpectedly vacant critical position with a replacement candidate is to ensure no value is being lost to the organization due to a lack of competencies in that role. Replacement candidates usually do not stay in the role for very long, with their main objectives being to manage operational risks and transfer knowledge to candidates who will be ready for promotion into that role in the medium to long term. Replacement candidates can include employees who are not promotable to the next level as well as those who are listed as primary successors but for other positions.

## Succession pool candidates

Succession pool candidates are those who have been earmarked as being ready for promotion to the next level within the next 12 to 18 months. They will be involved in specific preparations to step into critical positions as vacancies occur and are expected to stay in that position for several years. Successors are fast learners who have:

- Strong performance records showing that their contributions have a positive impact on the business
- Mastered a significant share of the competencies required in the critical position through formal and/or self-directed learning and development
- The ability to function at the next level of complexity in the work they are doing (as noted by a high level of peer endorsement)
- Leadership skills, including the ability to achieve results by influencing the attitudes and behaviours of others

## Retention candidates

Retention candidates, also known as high-potential candidates or high-flyers, are those who have shown the ability to deliver excellent performance across multiple roles — meaning it is important for the organization to make sure they are retained so they can get exposure to and eventually be promoted to more senior positions. They show a high probability of moving up in the company and contributing in a larger capacity, but may not be ready for promotion now.

In addition to being listed as retention candidates for senior leadership positions, high-potential employees may also be considered as replacement candidates for selected roles or as succession pool candidates. Although identifying this type of candidate can be challenging, they typically have:

- An excellent track record of performance in all their previous positions, along with the skills to deliver results that improve business outcomes
- The ability to learn and develop new competencies faster than the average employee
- An interest in engaging and contributing beyond their immediate scope of responsibilities — plus a demonstrated ability to do so
- Knowledge of the unit or departmental culture

# 1.2 The business case for succession planning

There are several reasons why your business should implement succession planning for critical positions. For example, organizations that experience high turnover or significant growth may look to decrease the time it takes for new employees to get proficient in their roles. High-tech companies may need to maintain a continuous level of technical integrity or regulatory compliance. Those with relatively stable, formalized operational processes may find it difficult to capture and transfer the tacit/implicit knowledge that can take years to acquire. And in many cases, people retiring or leaving a company achieve a level of unconscious competency and do not realize they need to share information with less-experienced employees. (These realities make it just as important to implement a knowledge management program to complement your succession planning program.)

As most competency gaps become visible only when a business encounters unexpected problems, the returns that come with facilitating and implementing a deliberate approach to succession planning are usually not visible in the short term. But a strong business case does exist for investing in a quality succession plan. This section highlights some of the top benefits related to the most prominent issues on the talent acquisition agenda for companies in the electricity sector.

## Alignment of current and future competency requirements

Succession planning requires a thorough analysis of the work needed to maintain the business. That includes identifying critical competencies required for the future of the business, then confirming or

creating new roles based on those requirements. Yet research by Gartner (2020) has shown that most succession management plans are focused primarily on current leadership roles, failing to anticipate future critical roles. EHRC's 2017 labour market intelligence study, *Workforce In Motion*, reported similar findings: while more than two-thirds (69%) of Canadian electricity employers had succession plans in place for management, less than half had succession plans for other occupational groups (including engineers/engineering technologists [48%], trades [43%], information and communications technologists [32%], and renewable occupations [26%]).

This nearsightedness presents a clear risk to companies in the electricity sector, with several studies illustrating that industry trends such as automation, digitization, artificial intelligence and remote process control will bring about new jobs that were not even conceivable just a few years ago — and change the skills and competencies that are needed (Molavi, 2019).

These future competency requirements will affect not only frontline technical specialist positions, but middle and senior management positions as well. For example, managing digitization and automation strategies is already becoming one of the most critical process management skills required by companies in the energy utilities and resources industries. This was confirmed by EHRC's 2020 labour market intelligence report, *Work transformed*, which predicted that as innovative new technologies transform how the sector generates, distributes and manages the use of electricity, demand for workers across and within occupational groups will change. This will affect both the size and the composition of the electricity sector labour force

***The companies that spend the time now to analyze and define future roles and related competencies will be in a better position to drive business when those roles are fully needed.***



going forward. The companies that spend the time now to analyze and define future roles and related competencies will be in a better position to drive business when those roles are fully needed.

## **Improved ability to adapt to demographic changes in talent pools**

Many organizations still struggle to show visible diversity in key roles. By implementing a succession planning process, together with focused training and development, both HR practitioners and line managers will be better able to set and achieve diversity improvement targets.

But the benefit of greater diversity is not only in employing higher numbers of under-represented groups — it's about bringing more kinds of voices and perspectives to the table, which improves creativity and change-management capability within an organization. Nearly every study on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) management describes how diversity in age, gender, ethnic background and personality opens doors to solving old problems in new ways. This is more important than ever in the era of the remote/hybrid workplace, where competencies that were not regarded as critical in

the past (such as remote team management) are now carrying many companies through particularly challenging times — and have been made stronger by a diversity of ideas and experiences.

We at EHRC can support you along your DEI journey through our DEI consulting services. You may also want to sign our Leadership Accord on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which not only helps organizations develop effective strategies and enact change, but also allows them to demonstrate their commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive work environment.

## **Retained institutional knowledge and highly specialized skills**

In 2017, retirement rates in the electricity industry were 2% (EHRC, 2017). This situation poses a significant risk to the retention of institutional knowledge: most organizations do not capture the vast amount of tacit/implicit knowledge older employees possess, meaning they are unable to transfer that knowledge to the next generation of employees. Yet few organizations have plans to address this risk. In a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, less than 40% of companies

were analyzing the impact of retiring workers on their organization over the next 10 years.

Knowledge management focuses on identifying, harvesting, archiving, retrieving and sharing organizational knowledge. With succession planning in action, that sharing can happen between an experienced worker and a potential successor through learning networks and coaching. This gives the successor the opportunity to quickly gain useful skills and knowledge. In this way, succession planning substantially decreases the time to proficiency once a successor is promoted.

EHRC's Workforce in motion study found that 35% of companies transferred knowledge to successors through coaching and mentoring, 14% by updating manuals and documentation to reflect most current operational processes, and 3% by offering cross-training.

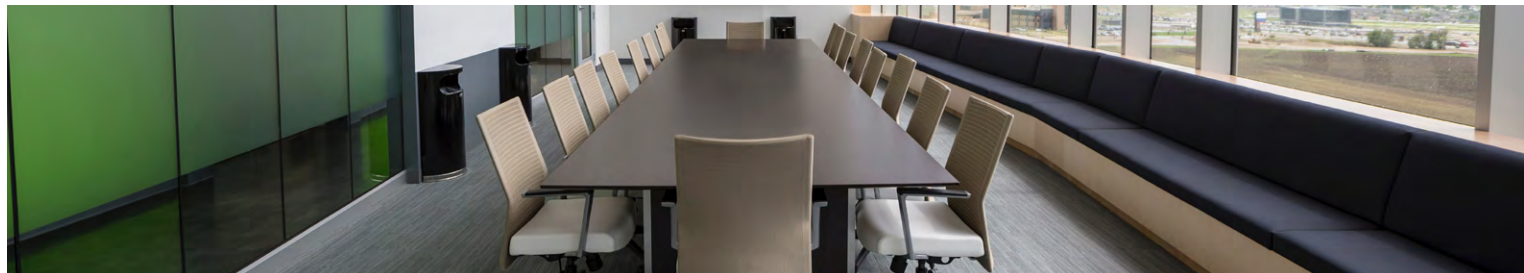
## Transparency and inclusion to better prepare successors

Transparency and openness offer businesses many benefits, including more consumer brand loyalty, higher profits and a better employee experience. Transparency in succession is just as important. Candidates who are aware of their potential next role may take greater ownership of their development efforts and will be better prepared when the time comes to take on that role. Consider your corporate culture and employee needs to determine how best to implement transparency around your succession plans.

## Efficient filling of critical vacancies

Succession planning using defined competency requirements allows you to determine the best way to fill positions (internally vs. externally) before those positions become vacant. This gives you more time to ensure potential successors are ready when you need them — and can even help you fill positions faster without expensive search and selection processes. It also reduces the risk of filling critical positions with candidates who aren't a good fit or who don't have the competencies required for the new role.

***EHRC's 2017 labour market intelligence study, Workforce In Motion, reported: more than two-thirds (69%) of Canadian electricity employers had succession plans in place for management, less than half had succession plans for other occupational groups (including engineers/engineering technologists [48%], trades [43%], information and communications technologists [32%], and renewable occupations [26%]).***



# 1.3 Information needed for effective succession planning

Succession planning does not take place in a vacuum. It depends on input and information from a variety of sources, which should be in place before the planning starts.

If line managers and HR practitioners don't have access to the information they need, they'll have to generate the information themselves, leaving them with less time for the actual planning.

To be effective, succession planners need information on the organization's business strategy and planning, its corporate processes and infrastructure, and the candidates.

## Business strategy and planning information includes:

- Documented long-range business strategy and plans
- Annual business goals and targets
- Anticipated business changes in technology, production numbers and capacity that could affect job titles and numbers (growth or reduction)
- Anticipated organizational changes
- Organizational performance and risk areas
- Known changes in governance and legislation

## Corporate process and infrastructure information includes:

- Labour force demographics, including retirement, resignation and termination rates
- Corporate policy and mandate on succession planning
- Corporate resource planning tools and requirements
- Corporate demographic data and trends
- Corporate training and development programs and infrastructure
- Forecasted vacancies
- Competency profiles and role requirements

## Candidate information includes:

- Training and qualification records
- Performance history
- Career interests and aspirations
- Competency and development targets



# 1.4 Barriers to success

There are many potential reasons why succession planning may not deliver the expected results.

## Some common barriers to success include:

- **A lack of interest in or awareness of existing successor information**
- **A lack of processes or tools**
- **Overemphasis on short-term issues means the organizations lacks the data or insights to develop an effective longer-term talent plan**

Another often-overlooked barrier is related to human dynamics. Senior-level managers often

find it difficult to hand over years of hard-earned knowledge and “get out of the way” of the process. If they feel they are losing the recognition and respect they’ve earned for their many contributions, they may resist or resent succession planning and development initiatives. To get incumbents on board with developing their successors, make sure their participation is designed and planned in a way that recognizes and respects their experience and insights about their role.



# 1.5 Succession planning best practices

Before you can create a new succession plan or improve the one you already have, you need to map your current practices against established best practices to determine the next steps you'll need to take.

## Process ownership

Although your HR department may officially be the “owner” of the succession planning process, hiring managers also play a significant role in driving program success. They are generally the ones responsible for planning organizational structures, forecasting staffing needs, designing roles, allocating work and appointing people to fill vacancies — all of which contribute to effective succession planning.

Often when a program fails to deliver the hoped-for results, HR is asked to improve the process or provide better tools. But in many cases, the real issue is that the hiring managers have not familiarized themselves with how to complete and use the succession planning information available to them. When hiring managers understand their roles in stewarding the process and requesting, validating and using the right information, they are better able to identify critical positions and appoint successors.

## Value assessment

To assess the value of succession planning, many organizations measure how long it takes to fill critical positions when they become vacant — but this is only one piece of the puzzle. The true value of succession planning lies in its ability to enable an organization to monetize every step and outcome of the process, and there are a great number of metrics you can use to measure that. If you follow a continuous plan-do-act process improvement model and your metrics show that your processes and practices satisfy the needs of a wide range of stakeholders in your organization, your process should deliver the benefits you're looking for.

*Often when a program fails to deliver the hoped-for results... the real issue is that the hiring managers have not familiarized themselves with how to complete and use [the information] available to them*

## Corporate infrastructure and decision-making

Corporate infrastructure refers to the systems that allow users to access, store and share business planning information, performance targets, and performance-related metrics and information. As many of these systems become automated, it becomes easier and faster for users (including line managers and HR practitioners) to generate, access and analyze employee data and business information. This helps them make high-quality succession planning and other business decisions with less effort.

## Process excellence and follow-through

The effectiveness of succession planning depends not only on the process itself, but also on how well users follow it. As the process owner, the HR department should ensure all users:

- Understand the overall process and its steps
- Understand their respective roles in the process
- Are able to execute their parts of the process
- Follow the process diligently



# Worksheet 1

## Succession Planning Performance Review

### Purpose:

Use this questionnaire to assess your organization or department's performance in the following areas of succession planning:

- Process ownership
- Value assessment
- Corporate infrastructure and decision-making
- Process excellence and follow-through

### Instructions:

You can complete this questionnaire by asking people for their individual input or by holding a group discussion. For the HR department, we recommend a facilitated group session including the relevant functional heads and process leaders. Collecting information from a multidisciplinary group can provide valuable, balanced feedback on corporate performance.

The following guidelines can help you get the most from a group assessment:

- Invite representatives of all HR functions, including direct client-facing HR practitioners, to participate. Make sure they understand the objectives of the session.
- Explain the four key areas with the group to make sure everyone understands the content of the questionnaire.
- Score and discuss the results, and facilitate a discussion to clarify uncertainties.

### Rating Scale:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 0 | <b>Disagree:</b> The practices described are not followed in the company.                |
| 1 | <b>Somewhat agree:</b> The practices described are infrequently followed in the company. |
| 2 | <b>Agree:</b> The practices described are usually followed in the company.               |
| 3 | <b>Strongly agree:</b> The practices described are embedded in the company culture.      |

# Succession Planning Performance Review Questionnaire

| Statement   | Rating |
|---|--------|
| <b>Section 1: Process ownership</b>   |        |
| Members of the executive team often discuss the importance of planning for future talent in corporate communications.           |        |
| The executive team provides annual corporate objectives and metrics about employment strategies, including succession planning. |        |
| Leaders are held accountable for succession planning through their annual performance goals.                                    |        |
| Senior leadership team members are part of the succession plan clearinghouse or committee.                                      |        |
| Leaders are known to use the succession plan when critical positions need to be filled.   |        |
| Senior leadership team members have endorsed the identified list of future skills and competency requirements.                  |        |
| Senior leadership team members are known to coach and mentor successors.  |        |
| <b>Score</b>  |        |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Section 2: Value assessment</b>  |  |
| The succession planning system provides strategic insights that drive many talent management strategies within the company.   |  |
| The drive to identify future skills requirements for critical positions has sparked other initiatives in the company, such as future skills development programs and competency profiling for critical positions. |  |
| The succession planning process is visibly helping improve diversity within the company.  |  |
| Succession planning can be linked to reduced time and effort in filling critical positions.   |  |
| Managers who use the succession planning process believe it helps them manage and develop talent more effectively.  |  |
| Managers believe the succession planning process helps them more effectively identify, capture and transfer critical knowledge to successors and up-and-coming talent.  |  |
| A shared understanding of competency needs help managers identify candidates for cross-functional transfers to fill critical positions in the company.  |  |
| <b>Score</b>  |  |

| Statement | Rating |
|-----------|--------|
|-----------|--------|

### Section 3: Corporate infrastructure and decision-making

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Users have easy access to information on annual business goals, changes and risks.   |  |
| Users have easy access to information on long-range business strategy and plans.   |  |
| Users have easy access to demographics of employee and turnover forecasts, broken down into categories of retirements, resignations and terminations.                              |  |
| Users have easy access to tools and worksheets to help them carry out succession planning tasks, such as critical position identification tools, competency assessment tools, etc. |  |
| Employees, line managers and HR practitioners have easy access to competency profiles.   |  |
| Users have easy access to competency assessments and performance ratings.  |  |
| Managers have easy access to integrated information on a department's critical positions, vacancies, succession candidates, competency assessments and training records.           |  |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| Score |  |
|-------|--|

### Section 4: Process excellence and follow-through

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Succession plans are high quality, reliable and valued by vacancy managers.  |  |
| All users deliver high-quality plans because they are competent and knowledgeable about the details required to develop succession plans (in other words, users are trained in the process). |  |
| Line managers drive succession management in their areas of responsibility.  |  |
| Users and HR practitioners update plans annually and/or within 12 months of a major organizational change.   |  |
| Stakeholders use the plans as dynamic planning tools, and successors are added and removed according to changes in business needs and requirements.  |  |
| Corporate metrics reflect the overall corporate performance on the succession planning process.  |  |
| Multidisciplinary teams are currently working on initiatives to improve the efficiency of the company's succession planning process.   |  |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| Score |  |
|-------|--|

# Scoring Scale:

**0 - 36**

**Your organization may not be ready to implement a high-value succession planning process.**

If you are using succession planning, you may not be getting the best value from it, so you may need to rethink how to continue.

A low score may also indicate that you are using succession planning for only a very small target group.

**37 - 63**

**If you are planning to implement a succession planning process, consider adding an organizational readiness improvement stage to address the low-scoring areas or implementing a pilot project for a small target group.**

If you are using succession planning already, you may be getting some value from it, but there is opportunity for huge process improvements.

A mid-range score may also indicate that you are using succession planning for only a small target group.

**64 - 84**

**Your company values succession planning and is supporting the process well. Your practices are likely aligned with industry best practices.**

If you are using succession planning for only a selected target group, you may be ready to expand it to more levels and target groups.



## Chapter 2

# Succession planning framework and model

### **This chapter covers the following topics:**

- The typical succession planning cycle and how it aligns with broader annual business planning and people management activities. Understanding this cycle will help you plan and complete the steps of the succession planning process to align with your corporate schedule.
- Best practices and other information on using succession management tools to identify critical positions and nominate successors.
- Templates and tools for completing succession planning activities. If your organization has its own tools and templates, you can use them to capture and report succession planning information. If not, we have developed tools that can help with collecting, processing and preparing succession planning information, which can then be entered into your unique corporate software systems if required.

# 2.1 Succession planning process model and framework

There are as many practices and philosophies of succession planning as there are companies, which makes it difficult to describe a one-size-fits-all methodology. However, there are certain sequences of activities that should be completed annually.

Timing these activities to make specific information available at specific stages of the business cycle can ensure you get the most value from the process. Figure 2 shows an example of how these elements can be sequenced to support effective succession planning.

FIGURE 2



Individual HR practitioners and leaders do not generally have any influence on the corporate sequence or schedule of business track activities. However, individual managers can work with HR to implement and schedule these activities within their departments as often as necessary to comply with the corporate process. Business track and employee track activities take place based on overall business needs, which may vary greatly among organizations.

## Integrated planning processes

In an ideal world, the planning process consists of:

1. Analysis, interpretation and integration of business plan information to create new insights and information to make better decisions
2. Identification of risks in staffing positions to highlight critical positions
3. Identification and nomination of successors

In practice, however, there are many potential derailments that can make it difficult to follow a well-planned, predictable process. The company may sell off assets. Critical successors may resign. You may need to rework your plan at any stage, depending on business track events and needs. Sometimes you may even need to review your entire plan with limited time for preparatory work or without all required information.

## Business track

The business planning cycle, which is usually part of normal annual business activities, is a key element of the succession planning framework. Establishing this cycle is generally the responsibility of the executive team with input from all functional areas. Having business planning information available from the beginning means you won't need to generate it from scratch when you start succession planning. Instead, you can move

directly to analyzing and determining the impact of the business plan on departmental staffing requirements. For organizations that cascade their succession planning processes down to all critical positions, ready access to business planning information becomes even more important because of the increased level of complexity.

### The business track is a cyclical process that usually follows these steps:

1. **External environment analysis**, including thorough mapping of market requirements, revenue targets and operations plan to support the revenue targets. This step also includes forecasting of business resourcing requirements (operating costs, labour trends and workforce demographics), which address skills availability, salary costs and future skills forecasts.
2. **Internal analysis**, including a comparison of in-company information against external benchmarks to identify strengths and weaknesses. This information is used to identify gaps from the industry trends including in workforce demographics, turnover rates, future skills requirements and competency requirements.
3. **Business strategy and goal setting**, based on the external and internal analyses. The business strategy may include conclusions about the short-, medium- and long-term talent requirements to deliver the business objectives.
4. **Business plan risk and requirement identification**. This phase should include identification of critical positions that pose specific risk to the organization if not filled. Positions should be validated against HR and labour market information criteria to determine which ones are critical. Note that the goal should be to manage the full spectrum of critical positions. Focusing exclusively on senior management and leadership positions makes the exercise less complex, but it may not address your company's real talent needs.

Succession planning typically fits into the annual planning cycle after the business plan is updated and performance assessment information becomes available. Although Figure 2 shows filling vacancies and moving people to different positions in only two places on the business track, these activities should in fact be happening continuously as vacancies, promotions and opportunities occur.

## Senior management team clearinghouses

One of the most effective industry practices for managing critical vacancies is the use of a senior management team clearinghouse. This is a committee of senior leaders that meets regularly (monthly or bimonthly) to discuss and decide on how to fill senior or technical leadership positions.

The senior HR leader usually chairs the clearinghouse meetings. In some organizations, clearinghouse membership may change depending on the positions being considered. Clearinghouse members should always reflect one or two levels above the level of promotions they are dealing with. Senior leadership role vacancies are usually managed by the executive team.

The promotion of all senior level employees is typically dealt with at the same clearinghouse to ensure identified succession plan candidates are exposed to development opportunities. This practice is especially valuable when the succession pool includes candidates from multiple departments, as it ensures managers are aware of alternative candidates.

When a vacancy arises, the appropriate manager should register it through HR, which will add it to the agenda of the next clearinghouse meeting. This helps ensure all succession candidates' information can be available at clearinghouse meetings.

The clearinghouse has the option of proposing two or three candidates to the staffing manager

for consideration before they will approve external hiring. Staffing managers and other leaders can also propose candidates besides those already in the succession plan pool to the clearinghouse. The clearinghouse will then review proposed candidates against pool candidates to ensure the best talent moves into the vacant position and DEI considerations have been applied.

Clearinghouses can also oversee succession candidate development plans. Project staffing, special assignments, development moves and mentorship are often included on clearinghouse agendas to ensure stewardship of succession candidates. Clearinghouses are also often responsible for approving external recruitment for critical positions to ensure the corporate succession plan is being executed.

## Employee track

The employee cycle for succession planning should be generated through the normal cycle of performance reviews, potential assessment, development planning and development moves, not through a separate process. It is also important to ensure information from basic employee track activities is provided in such a way that it supports the succession planning process.

## Facilitation and collaboration process

Facilitation and collaboration should be part of the normal interactions between HR practitioners and line managers. The succession planning framework should clearly define the duties of HR practitioners and line managers to avoid role confusion. In general, business leaders (including managers) own the business plan, the staffing responsibility and the execution of the succession plan. HR departments are responsible for the succession planning process, provision of employee data and information, and facilitation and support of line management.



## 2.2 Implementation, annual lifecycle and review lifecycles

As mentioned previously, business cycle activities and succession planning process are interdependent. It is important to sequence activities to ensure all required information is available and current.

### When to identify critical positions

The critical positions list is dynamic and should be updated as required throughout the year. This means critical position discussions may happen at any time, but they are much more valuable after business strategy and annual plan information is available. The succession planning cycle is shorter than typical mid- and long-range succession management initiatives, and may be as short as 20–36 months. To be effective, it must be kept current based on the most up-to-date business information and practices.

### Successor nominations

Within the employee track, successor nomination usually follows the annual performance cycle, as candidate status depends on performance. This would suggest that the most logical time to identify successor potential would be after the completion of performance ratings and employee feedback discussions.

However, business track events, including the identification of critical positions, do not always line up with the employee track in a nicely coordinated way. Therefore, the best time for successor nominations is after the completion of the annual business plan. Early identification of top performers with the potential to move laterally or to the next level will be more valuable after critical positions and related competencies have been identified.



# Worksheet 2.1

## Succession planning framework and model review

### Purpose:

To determine if your organization has a corporate succession planning model and framework available, and if they are being used effectively to explain responsibilities and ensure alignment in how the process works. Based on your results, you may need to update the model or users might need more training on how to use it.

### Instructions:

Schedule a session with all users to review the corporate succession planning model. Use the worksheet to guide your evaluation of the corporate model and framework.

### Questions:

- 1. Availability of a model:** Is there a graphic representation of your company's succession planning model/framework with descriptions of all relevant tasks that you can readily reference in your conversations with others to make sure everyone's understanding is aligned? Yes  No
- 2. Planning:** Does the model/framework help you and other stakeholders understand when tasks need to be done in relation to the corporate calendar — so you can ensure you have the information you need to complete the annual succession planning tasks on time? Yes  No
- 3. Focus:** Does the model/framework describe the normal performance management and corporate planning activities that help users collect, analyze and interpret information without duplicating it? Yes  No
- 4. Task differentiation:** Does the model/framework clarify the respective responsibilities of the process owner (HR) and the content owner/user (line manager) to reduce role confusion or resolve it if it occurs? Yes  No
- 5. Criteria and standards:** Does the model/framework provide guidance for getting consensus on the criteria for critical positions and competencies, as well as the identification and classification of succession candidates? Yes  No

If you have no model/framework or if you answered "Yes" to three or fewer questions, we strongly recommend that HR, as process owner, develop a reference model and share it with leaders and practitioners. Contact EHRC at [info@electricityhr.ca](mailto:info@electricityhr.ca) if you need help creating a reference model.

# Worksheet 2.2

## Critical position identification

### Purpose:

To identify the key roles you should target in your succession program. This worksheet can also be a resource to help you verify with senior executives and other relevant personnel that these are the right critical positions.

### Instructions:

- 1. Have a discussion with leaders about the criteria for critical positions to ensure they understand and support them.** (Although the criteria listed in Part 1 of this worksheet represent industry best practices, your organization might have its own templates or specific criteria, so you may need to adjust the criteria based on your needs.)
- 2. List the most important roles to your company's operations.** Ask line managers to identify the positions they're concerned about not being able to fill and include those positions, along with executive leadership and senior management roles. Consider roles whose profiles reference unique competencies to decide if those roles are also critical positions.
- 3. Consult with stakeholders** (including talent acquisition staff, line managers and recruitment agencies) **to complete a critical position assessment** (Part 1 of this worksheet) **for each identified role.** Then meet with department managers to share the information and get validation of the ratings. Make sure you have corporate demographic information available to review competency depth charts and forecasted turnover numbers and assumptions.
- 4. Use the information you collect to rate and compile your list of prioritized critical positions and applicable criteria** (Part 2 of this worksheet), then have your ratings validated by the succession planning clearinghouse.
- 5. Use the table in Part 3 to create a profile of the competency requirements for each critical position.**

# Part 1: Position assessment

Repeat this step for every identified role.

## Rating scale:

|          |                       |          |                            |          |                   |          |                            |
|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| <b>0</b> | <b>Not applicable</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>Somewhat applicable</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>Applicable</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>Strongly applicable</b> |
|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|

| Position | Short description of the critical position, including location, department and work unit | Criteria   | Rating |
|----------|--|--|--------|
|          |  | Safety impact/process risk   |        |
|          |  | Core function or process impact in terms of revenue and/or value chain |        |
|          |  | Unique company competencies  |        |
|          |  | Difficult or expensive to recruit                                      |        |
|          |  | Skills pool in company is small  |        |
|          |  | <b>Total Score</b>   |        |

## Score Key:

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>0 - 5</b>   | <b>Low risk:</b> This position is not critical unless the business strategy requires an unexpected demand. |
| <b>6 - 10</b>  | <b>Medium risk:</b> There are some concerns that require attention to expand the talent pool.              |
| <b>11 - 15</b> | <b>High risk:</b> This is a critical position that needs attention.  |

# Part 2: Critical positions priority list

This list can be a quick reference showing critical position information and priorities.

Be sure to include information that supports each position's rating, especially for those classified as low risk. Identify and record the conditions that could change the criticality of the role, and review these positions annually or after significant business changes such as reorganizations, mergers or acquisitions.

## High-risk critical positions

| Position | Short description of the critical position, including location, department and work unit | Rating | Priority |
|----------|--|--------|----------|
|          |  |        |          |
|          |  |        |          |
|          |  |        |          |

## Medium-risk positions

| Position | Short description of the critical position, including location, department and work unit | Rating | Priority |
|----------|--|--------|----------|
|          |  |        |          |
|          |  |        |          |
|          |  |        |          |

## Low-risk positions

| Position | Reasons for lower risk score and notes on when to reassess | Date | Reviewer |
|----------|--|------|----------|
|          |  |      |          |
|          |  |      |          |
|          |  |      |          |

# Part 3: Competency requirements for critical positions

This section will help you outline the competencies needed for each role, both now and in the future. This will become the criteria to assess candidates' proficiency levels.

Complete this section after you've identified your organization's high-risk and critical roles. You can often find this information in your company's human resources information system (HRIS) or competency library. You can also use EHRC's Electricity Competency Framework and 15 National Occupational Standards, which were developed with industry experts to provide a snapshot of the skills and knowledge required in the electricity sector. These are available at [electricityhr.ca/workplace-solutions/national-occupational-standards](http://electricityhr.ca/workplace-solutions/national-occupational-standards).

## Instructions:

HR practitioners can complete this form for each position and verify with line managers or, if competency profiles are not available, line managers may complete the form. Repeat for every identified role.

|                                       |                                  |                                |  |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Position</b>                       |                                  |                                |  |
| <b>Position identifier</b>            |                                  |                                |  |
| <b>Department/work unit</b>           |                                  | <b>Level:</b>                  |  |
| <b>Leader/manager</b>                 |                                  |                                |  |
| <b>Similar positions:</b>             | ➤                                |                                |  |
|                                       | ➤                                |                                |  |
| <b>Qualifications/certifications:</b> |                                  |                                |  |
| <b>Experience:</b>                    |                                  |                                |  |
| <b>Functional competencies</b>        | <b>Foundational competencies</b> | <b>Management competencies</b> | <b>Legislative/governance competencies</b> |
|                                       |                                  |                                |  |
|                                       |                                  |                                |  |
|                                       |                                  |                                |  |

# Worksheet 2.3

## Succession candidate nomination

### **Purpose:**

To capture information from HR practitioner and line manager work sessions. You can use it to identify candidates for succession into identified critical roles. This process will also help you categorize candidates according to their readiness to move to the next position and their potential to succeed in more senior roles — giving you a better idea of the “bench strength” available to fill positions within your organization.

### **Instructions:**

Schedule a work session with stakeholders who have the same critical positions in their business units or departmental leadership teams to form the successor nomination workgroup and/or succession advisory team.

Prepare all relevant candidate information to inform the discussion, including:

- Performance ratings
- Aspirations and development information
- Personal job history

Discuss the successor nomination sheet and the different categories of successors to ensure all stakeholders completing the worksheet have the same understanding of all concepts and processes. Ask leaders to identify candidates for nomination and indicate how long they think it will take for candidates to be ready.

Discuss each candidate against the criteria and determine their successor status if applicable. We recommend nominating candidates in all three successor categories for each critical role, rather than just the top succession candidates. And be sure to look at candidates in similar positions outside the functional area you’re planning for, as career progression and development often follow different and uncharted paths.

Once you’ve completed the succession candidate nomination worksheet (one per critical position), get final validation from the succession planning clearinghouse.

|   |   |               |
|---|---|---------------|
| <b>Critical position</b>                |   |               |
| <b>Position identifier</b>              |   |               |
| <b>Department/work unit</b>             |   | <b>Level:</b> |
| <b>Successor candidate nominations:</b> | ➤ |               |
|   | ➤ |               |

### Replacement candidates

- Ready for lateral moves now
- Have transferrable competencies or previous experience

| Name | Current role | Rationale |
|------|--------------|-----------|
|      |              |           |
|      |              |           |
|      |              |           |

### Successor pool candidates

- Will be promoted into the position
- Ready immediately or in up to 24 months

| Name | Current role | Rationale |
|------|--------------|-----------|
|      |              |           |
|      |              |           |
|      |              |           |

### Retention candidates

- Can function up to two levels above current position with development
- Ready in 24 to 36 months

| Name | Current role | Rationale |
|------|--------------|-----------|
|      |              |           |
|      |              |           |
|      |              |           |





# Chapter 3

## Successor development planning

The development process often does not get the attention it needs. In many cases it is driven by the individual or takes place in a very uncoordinated way, resulting in a much longer time to proficiency.

This chapter introduces the basic development platforms available, which can help successors create their own development plans. It also provides a tool to review development platforms and identify areas that may be under-used, as well as a worksheet successors and line managers can use to prepare a development plan and set objectives.

# 3.1 Successor development challenges

Successor development presents a host of problems and challenges that HR practitioners need to understand to plan development effectively. Two of the most significant challenges are assessing on-the-job learning and establishing development plans for executive leadership positions.

## Assessment of on-the-job learning

Succession pool candidates should take responsibility for their own development, enabled through corporate programs and opportunities. However, research shows that experienced employees (including succession candidates) learn according to the 70-20-10 model. It suggests that 70% of learning comes from on-the-job experience, 20% comes from developmental relationships and just 10% comes from formal training.

This makes it difficult to plan and predict learning outcomes, as work may not be available to provide learning through critical incidents. It is also difficult to define learning plans and objectives around work tasks and to measure this type of learning. In short, learning takes place, but it is difficult to define.

## Executive leadership development

Unlike most other development initiatives, executive leadership development is often influenced and driven by board input, and it usually happens over a longer time period. According to the 70-20-10 model of learning, it takes place mostly through work experience and social learning, with formal training (including broader sets of strategic competencies) done mainly through executive leadership programs.

As well, executive candidates' performance goals and development plans are often abstract and personal, and frequently not visible to most of the succession planning team. Often, only the CEO and their executive team, which includes only the most senior member of the HR department, have access to this information. Although not limiting, this lack of transparency makes it very difficult to identify and improve executive team successor development.



## 3.2. Development tools and strategies

We have identified eight strategies the electricity industry is using effectively to support successor development.

### Projects

Projects offer valuable learning opportunities that enable successors to gain knowledge and skills in planning, team leadership, schedule control and change management. Projects also benefit from clear stop and start dates that make it possible to rotate people to a project and forecast the amount of time they'll spend away from core responsibilities.

### Special assignments

Special assignments are learning strategies in which a person performs temporary duties on a full-time or part-time basis. Candidates may perform these duties within their current organization or outside the organizational structure, helping them learn how to work in a multidisciplinary context.

### Rotations

Job rotations broaden skills by exposing employees to different functional areas of the company, creating unfamiliar challenges that test employees' adaptability to new environments and different managers. In most instances, candidates return to their original positions, as rotations are intended to provide different insights that will help them function at a higher level in their usual jobs.

### Expert coaching

Coaching involves providing ongoing, specific feedback to improve short-term on-the-job performance. With a focus on being a positive and supportive influence on employees, coaching is

especially effective in improving well-defined behaviours and competencies.

### Mentorship

Mentorship is a relationship in which a skilled and competent employee guides a less experienced person through role modelling, motivation and decision-making activities to prepare them for higher-level positions. It is more holistic, focusing on overall development rather than specific coaching. While many mentorship relationships often last the lifespan of a career, others may be highly structured and shorter in duration, targeting a specific competency. An employee may also have multiple mentors throughout their career to support where they are at any given time.

### Learning networks

Learning networks exist in many forms, including personal and professional networks, and may apply to all levels of an organization. They may be formal and highly structured or informal. Workplace learning networks usually involve regular meetings of employees who want to improve their workplace performance. At these meetings, they share observations and facts about a workplace concern, collectively analyze and interpret information, suggest potential solutions, and decide on the best ways to correct the identified issue. Learning networks will often consult experts from outside the network to validate their conclusions and solutions. The power of network learning is that members can continue to test the effectiveness of solutions to learn from their own and each other's experiences.



## Formal training

Earning additional formal qualifications is a particularly relevant strategy for people interested in changing careers or advancing in regulated occupations.

## Executive development programs

Some organizations use this strategy to support people moving from operational and tactical levels to strategic-level competencies. Candidates can use these programs to build their business and leadership skills or to stay current with developing technologies and business strategies. The best programs use blended learning, where candidates study theory, participate in learning networks to learn from others and demonstrate successful implementation of the program elements in the workplace.

***Candidates can use Executive development programs to build their business and leadership skills or to stay current with developing technologies and business strategies.***

# Worksheet 3.1

## Development tools for succession candidates

### **Purpose:**

To understand which development tools are being used to help succession candidates achieve their learning goals. This will highlight under-used strategies and suggest ways to optimize succession development practices.

### **Instructions:**

Include only talent pool and retention candidates for this worksheet, as they are more likely to have development goals in addition to their annual employee development goals.

Classify the critical role as either senior executive, senior management, middle management or specialist roles.

Review each candidate's development goal plans as registered in the system to complete the worksheet. If this information is not available, have candidates complete the worksheet. Then, for each development goal:

- Identify which training and development tools or strategies will be used.
- Indicate the percentage of time/effort that will be invested in each tool or strategy.
- Record examples of each tool or strategy being used for development.

Review the information to determine if a blended learning approach is used in the development of the selected group of candidates. If not, expand the use of additional learning tools and strategies to improve successor development results.

Repeat the table for each development goal for each candidate.

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Candidate Name</b>  |   |   |
| <b>Role type</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior executive<br><input type="checkbox"/> Senior management | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle management<br><input type="checkbox"/> Specialist |
| <b>Development goal</b>  |   |   |
| <b>Development tool/<br/>strategy</b>                              | <b>Time/effort<br/>(%)</b>  | <b>Examples/evidence</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Projects                                  |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special assignments                       |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rotations                                 |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert coaching                           |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring                                 |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning networks                         |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Further qualifications and certifications |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Executive development programs            |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior manager development programs       |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle manager development programs       |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> External programs                         |   |   |

# Worksheet 3.2

## Succession candidate development plan

### **Purpose:**

To enable leaders and succession candidates to work together to identify and measure the critical work experiences, mentorship and coaching that will help candidates develop the competencies needed to excel in their next role.

### **Instructions:**

Although most employees use corporate learning management tools to establish their annual development plans and performance goals, this worksheet can provide a structure for conversations between line managers and succession candidates. As such, both leaders and candidates should complete this worksheet.

After completing the worksheet, leaders and candidates should discuss opportunities for contract development targets. The worksheet can inform the discussion and serve as a progress-tracking tool. Candidates are responsible for entering their own learning objectives into the enterprise resource planning system for formal review and status reporting during succession plan progress reviews.

**Note:** Although all development tools and strategies are included in this worksheet, candidates only need to list the goals for the competencies they are planning to develop.

| Employee name | Line manager | Mentor |
|---------------|--------------|--------|
|               |              |        |

**Next 12–18 months**  
*Add rows as necessary for each target competency*

| Target competencies | Development goals<br><i>Set goals for the following options</i>   | Target date | Progress |
|---------------------|---|-------------|----------|
|                     | <p><b>Projects:</b></p> <p><b>Special assignments:</b></p> <p><b>Rotations:</b></p> <p><b>Coaching by experts:</b></p> <p><b>Mentoring:</b></p> <p><b>Learning networks:</b></p> <p><b>Qualifications and certifications:</b></p> <p><b>Programs and courses:</b></p> |             |          |



## Next 18–36 months

*Add rows as necessary for each target competency*

| Target competencies | Development goals<br><i>Set goals for the following options</i>  | Target date | Progress |
|---------------------|--|-------------|----------|
|                     | <p><b>Projects:</b></p><br><p><b>Special assignments:</b></p><br><p><b>Rotations:</b></p><br><p><b>Coaching by experts:</b></p><br><p><b>Mentoring:</b></p><br><p><b>Learning networks:</b></p><br><p><b>Qualifications and certifications:</b></p><br><p><b>Programs and courses:</b></p> |             |          |



# Chapter 4

## Talent pipeline management

### **This chapter has two objectives:**

1. Help you develop an understanding of talent pipeline management
2. Provide a quick reference tool for facilitating initial exploratory conversations about talent pipeline management

*“Talent has never been more important to the success of a corporation. Talent is king. Talent, even more than strategy, is what creates value.”*

*– Charan, Barton & Carey, 2018*



**Although succession management initiatives usually focus on leadership and management positions, there is a growing consensus that organizations must also actively develop pipelines for talent at all levels, including critical technical and operational positions.**

Annual surveys from organizations such as the Canadian Federation for Independent Business, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and Canadian Chamber of Commerce have all identified “finding the right people” or “finding people with the right skills” as key impediments to business growth. Yet Canada has large numbers of unemployed or underemployed people — and with almost 60% of Canadians aged 25–64 having graduated from a post-secondary institution, many have significant skills they can offer to companies.

In that context, it may be that the problem is not so much a gap in available skills, but rather a disconnect in the way those skills are described by each link of the “talent supply chain”: the “consumers” of the skills (employers), the “owners” of the skills (job seekers) and the “creators” of the skills (public and private education/training providers).

***...it may be that the problem is not so much a gap in available skills, but rather a disconnect in the way those skills are described by each link of the “talent supply chain”***

Numerous attempts have been made to address this disconnect. For example, employers with sufficiently large hiring requirements have contracted directly with education/training providers to

generate the skills needed in new hires. Others have completely internalized talent development, hiring individuals with certain attributes “off the street” and putting them through an intensive development program to ensure they acquire the exact skills needed. While this approach may be feasible when the skills requirements are relatively low or uncomplex, the time required to develop an employee who needs high-level technical skills could take years, raising the “unit cost” of talent creation to unacceptable levels.

Instead, most employers recruit operational and technical talent based on academic credentials or industry certifications, then fit them into relevant positions. Success rates with this approach vary, with many employers finding they need to hire and replace multiple candidates before finding the “keepers” — again raising the overall cost of hiring.

Fully understanding the skills associated with generic academic and industry credentials is the key to creating better alignment throughout the entire talent supply chain. To help build that understanding, the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation developed an approach called **talent pipeline management (TPM)**, which applies the principles of supply chain management to human capital to generate the talent streams employers need to be successful.



## 4.1 Overview of talent pipeline management

TPM seeks to ensure a continuous supply of the talent necessary for organizational success, creating the “feedstock” for internal talent development and succession planning/management programs. It achieves this through:

1. Collective action and collaboration between employers in the same industry to identify common skills requirements and then articulate those requirements in meaningful ways to influence programs of education/training providers
2. Application of proven supply chain management principles to create robust talent supply chains
3. Application of proven continuous improvement processes to optimize the return on investment of the talent supply chains being created

The key to success for TPM is that it is authentically employer-led. The approach is built on a foundation of serving the needs of employers, based on the principle that employers are best able to understand the skills needed for success and best able to predict their requirements for specific skills over time. This differs from traditional, government-run

labour market information (LMI), which tends to be too general or uses lagging indicators to make predictions about future workforce needs.

The TPM approach uses information from a group of employers with similar skills requirements to better articulate their needs. Those needs can then be translated into talent supply chains that benefit not only the employers but also the education/training providers (via increased demand for programs and deeper integration with industry partners) and the individuals receiving the training (via better job opportunities and more portable credentials).

For employers in Canada’s electricity and renewable energy sector, those skills requirements and competencies have been detailed in EHRC’s Electricity Competency Framework and 15 National Occupational Standards (NOS) — developed and validated by industry experts.

It is important to note that TPM is not a short-term approach. As shown in Figure 3, it involves the systematic implementation of six distinct strategies that mirror the principles and processes of effective supply chain management.

FIGURE 3

## Comparing supply chain and talent pipeline management strategies

| Supply chain management   | Talent pipeline management  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1. Joint sourcing</b></p> <p>Improve market leverage as a group and achieve economies of scale in sourcing and purchasing of products and services.</p> | <p><b>1. Organize employer collaboratives</b></p> <p>Form new employer alliances to manage the talent pipeline around a shared need.</p>  |
| <p><b>2. Plan</b></p> <p>Forecast demand for products and services.</p>   | <p><b>2. Engage in demand planning</b></p> <p>Identify which positions and capabilities to focus on and how many workers are needed.</p>  |
| <p><b>3. Develop sourcing requirements</b></p> <p>Develop specifications for products and services that are included in procurement.</p>                      | <p><b>3. Communicate competency and credential requirements</b></p> <p>Specify what workers need to know, what they need to be able to do, as well as what evidence is needed to prove it.</p>                                    |
| <p><b>4. Develop sourcing networks</b></p> <p>Develop supply chain networks for supplying products and services based on sourcing requirements.</p>           | <p><b>4. Analyze talent flows</b></p> <p>Identify current sources of qualified talent and where there are underutilized or alternative providers.</p>   |
| <p><b>5. Manage and improve</b></p> <p>Manage and improve the creation, delivery and returns of procured products and services from sourcing networks.</p>    | <p><b>5 &amp; 6. Implement shared performance measurers and align incentives</b></p> <p>Measure the success and return on investment (ROI) of the talent supply chain and improve performance through rewards and incentives.</p> |

Any industry looking to execute these six strategies will likely require the services of a trusted coordinating or sponsoring body that can:

- Manage the overall process, including collaborations between employers
- Ensure the confidentiality of employers' proprietary information and data as they create

accurate, aggregated labour market data to influence talent supply chains

- Act as a bridge between employers, institutions and government to ensure the industry receives the human capital it needs

## 4.2 Implementation roadmap for talent pipeline management

The following roadmap can help you better understand what it will take to implement the six TPM strategies:

| Strategy  | Major activity                                       | Parties responsible/involved |                   |  | Typical time to complete |
|---|--|------------------------------|-------------------|--|--------------------------|
|   |  | Employer                     | Coordinating body | Education/training provider                    |                          |
| <b>#1</b><br>Organize employer collaboratives                   | Organize information sessions, invite participants   | –                            | ✓                 | –  | 0–3 months               |
|   | Attend information sessions                          | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓  |                          |
|   | Review requirements and generate internal support    | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓  |                          |
|   | Join collaborative                                   | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> |                          |
|   | Determine focus area for collaborative               | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> |                          |
| <b>#2</b><br>Engage in demand planning                          | Collect and review government and real-time LMI data | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> | 3–9 months               |
|   | Collect employer demand data                         | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> |                          |
|   | Determine critical roles for TPM                     | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> |                          |
| <b>#3</b><br>Communicate competency and credential requirements | Identify hiring requirements                         | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> | 3–9 months               |
|   | Articulate detailed competency requirements          | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> |                          |
| <b>#4</b><br>Analyze talent flows                               | Define talent pipelines                              | ✓                            | ✓                 | <i>Kept informed but not involved directly</i> |                          |

| Strategy                          | Major activity  | Parties responsible/involved |                   |                             | Typical time to complete |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
|                                   |   | Employer                     | Coordinating body | Education/training provider |                          |
| #4<br>Analyze talent flows (cont) | Conduct back-mapping with employer collaborative                | ✓                            | ✓                 | –                           | 3–9 months               |
|                                   | Conduct talent flow analysis                                    | ✓                            | ✓                 | –                           |                          |
| #5<br>Build talent supply chains  | Explore options for where to start in building talent pipelines | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           | 9–12 months              |
|                                   | Identify preferred providers                                    | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |
|                                   | Engage partners   | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |
|                                   | Co-design talent pipelines                                      | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |
| #6<br>Continuous improvement      | Identify improvement opportunities                              | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           | 12+ months (ongoing)     |
|                                   | Analyze root causes   | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |
|                                   | Develop solutions   | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |
|                                   | Test solutions  | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |
|                                   | Implement proven solutions                                      | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |
|                                   | Calculate return on investment                                  | ✓                            | ✓                 | ✓                           |                          |

# Worksheet 4

## TPM readiness assessment

### Purpose:

To determine if TPM is right for your organization.

### Instructions:

- Meet with senior HR leader/team and discuss the TPM concept with them.
- Review the questions below with the senior HR leader/team.
- Review the answers and discuss how best to respond to them.

### Questions:

1. Does our organization have difficulty hiring people with the right competencies? Yes  No
2. Does difficulty in hiring limit our growth as an organization? Yes  No
3. Does difficulty in hiring create problems in service delivery for our customers? Yes  No
4. Do shortages of critical technical skills create excessive overtime and “burnout” for our employees? Yes  No
5. Do we experience high turnover in new hires? Yes  No
6. Do we find ourselves having to compete with other employers for limited talent? Yes  No
7. Do we find that the individuals we hire are not necessarily a good fit with our requirements? Yes  No
8. Do we find ourselves “settling” for the people we can get, rather than the people with the right competencies? Yes  No

Total number of “Yes” responses



# Score key:

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Less than 3 “Yes” responses</b> | TPM is probably not necessary for your organization right now.                   |
| <b>3–6 “Yes” responses</b>         | Your organization has talent issues that could be addressed through TPM.         |
| <b>More than 6 “Yes” responses</b> | Your organization can definitely benefit from a collective approach through TPM. |

**If your organization could benefit from TPM, the next step is to determine how ready you are to proceed. To succeed in a TPM initiative, you should be able to answer YES to all of the following questions:**

1. Is there top-level management support for a TPM initiative?
2. Is there support to collaborate with other employers in our industry to address common concerns and possible solutions to improve the talent supply pipeline?
3. Are we willing to focus our initial efforts on addressing just one or two key positions that are considered “pain points” for the collaborative?
4. Can we commit to designating one or more individuals from our organization to “own” the TPM effort for at least the next 12 months? (This commitment is usually in addition to their regular work.)
5. Can we commit sufficient additional resources from HR and operations to generate the data necessary for the TPM initiative (e.g., positions requiring overtime, specific competencies, qualifications and credentials associated with those positions, etc.)?



# Chapter 5

## Communications strategy

### **This chapter is intended to:**

- Help you identify if your organization needs a communications strategy to support the implementation of its succession plan
- Provide a quick reference to help you develop an internal communications plan

***The essential tool for moving people from one state to another is communication. But simply providing information about your succession plan is not enough.***



## 5.1 Why communication matters

The success of any new corporate strategy ultimately depends on the employees who will be responsible for delivering on its goals. Yet people can react to large-scale organizational change in many different and unexpected ways.

For example, some people will not be aware of the proposed changes at all. Some will actively resist or deny the changes. Others may be supportive of them but will have their own ideas about how they should be implemented.

When implementing succession planning for the first time, HR practitioners need to understand how people throughout the organization's various levels and groups will respond to it — and then work to move the stakeholders that are critical to the plan's success from an ignorance/denial position to one of ownership and responsibility.

The essential tool for moving people from one state to another is communication. But simply providing information about your succession plan is not enough. To gain support for the plan, your communication activities have to be aligned with your target population's information needs. If they are not, you will likely not get the response you are hoping to achieve.

As an example, consider what would happen if you were to send a lengthy email on the value of succession management to senior executives who have already expressed their support for the program. There's no value in educating this group further — such an email might frustrate them instead. They would prefer to know how the program is progressing and what they need to do to support further implementation.

With that in mind, planned communication activities should include:

- An acknowledgement of the target audience's experience with the proposed strategy and any possible changes resulting from it
- A clear statement of the expected outcome
- The required action or next steps (and the resources available to help the target audience take that action)
- A recognition of the contributions made by the target audience so far

## 5.2 How people react to new information

When planning communication activities for a specific audience, it is essential to understand the different reactions your messaging may evoke.

When you confront people with new requests for the first time, they unconsciously process the information to land on one of four possible reactions:

- Pluralistic ignorance
- Passive resistance
- Early adoption and exploration of new ideas
- Ownership and commitment

### Pluralistic ignorance

Pluralistic ignorance is when executives, managers and employees publicly reject a new idea that they may privately support because they assume (often incorrectly) that everybody else will also reject it. People are afraid of doing something different because it could be the wrong thing to do — but that can lead corporations to continue to support failing strategies.

#### A typical communications strategy to combat pluralistic ignorance involves:

- Knowing the audience and identifying who may be inclined to pluralistic ignorance
- Acknowledging the possibility of pluralistic ignorance in peers
- Providing information on the succession planning process and its benefits
- Inviting people to ask questions or talk to people who support the succession planning strategy
- Identifying respected and influential early adopters/owners who are willing to communicate the plan to their peers

Making frequently asked questions and answers available on the corporate internal network can also be helpful in overcoming pluralistic ignorance.

### Passive resistance

Passive resistance is when people demonstrate resistance through an unwillingness to support and comply with the proposed changes — for example, by privately questioning the reason for the changes, missing deadlines or avoiding completing tasks in a timely way. In many cases, this is a subconscious reaction. It's not that people are deciding not to collaborate, but often they have not mentally and emotionally accepted the changes as being more valuable than the current practice.

#### Communication activities that help deal with resistance focus on:

- Providing information about the proposed changes
- Stating the expectations around compliance
- Inviting feedback on concerns and questions
- Asking managers to send out pre-written messages to their teams
- Asking managers/leaders to participate in delivering presentations to the organization

### Early adoption and exploration of new ideas

Early adopters are the people who use new processes or ideas before others in the organization.

Although highly valued, early adoption can also be very disruptive if it is not managed well. Because there is a lot of trial-and-error learning involved, early adopters may look as if they are not prepared or well organized when trying to implement new ideas. And while they may be excited about the opportunities, they may end up exploring application areas that have not had enough time to be mature. Project leaders may see early adopters as problematic because they may ask too many questions and have too many ideas, distracting from the overall strategy and plan.

### **Communication methods to manage this exploratory behaviour and turn it into actions that will support the succession planning process include:**

- Providing detailed implementation plans and schedules that stipulate immediate-, medium- and long-term objectives
- Inviting people to focus group sessions to improve the current plans
- Providing messaging that invites early adopters/owners to share their learnings, especially with those who are less willing to try new things
- “Emptying” this group of ideas by asking them to explain how they would use succession planning to improve staffing challenges in the future — including the resources they would need to implement their plans and possible timelines — to help them understand why short-term implementation plans should receive attention first

## **Ownership and commitment**

This is the target state: managers and employees have adopted the new practices in succession planning and are focused on getting the work done, while executives accept the role of stewarding the company’s succession planning work and understand how to manage critical competency requirements.

People in this group are willing to show their peers the value of succession planning. That includes offering to help others share knowledge and skills among their own teams to assist any business units that are still struggling to get the most value from the succession planning process. Managers are committed to delivering their plans on time by working with their teams to compile validated and useful information, and employees and potential successors accept succession planning as a helpful tool to share and manage their careers.

### **This group does not need to be sold on succession management anymore. Instead, they require information that provides:**

- Early warnings on the work they need to deliver
- The status (including progress and quality) of the succession planning work in their units
- Advice on how to use succession planning information to improve their work environment
- Confirmation and recognition for the role they play in driving succession planning in the company

# Worksheet 5

## Communication planning worksheet

### Purpose:

To help the facilitators and owners of the succession planning process:

- Identify the different stakeholder groups to be targeted for communication
- Define stakeholder reactions to the succession planning strategy and practices in the company
- Develop the correct messaging and content of the communication

### Instructions:

- Use the worksheet to map out the different elements of the required communication strategy.
- Identify the correct senders for the communication.
- Provide the concept communication plan and messaging to the responsible senders and ask for support in implementation.

### Worksheet:

1. Identify the target audiences for your communications on succession planning.

Who do you need to reach with your communications?

*Examples: Executive team, people who do not complete their succession plans on time.*

2. How will people react to succession planning? Can you identify behaviours that commonly occur throughout the entire group — or are there specific people in the group we need to address individually? Use the information provided in this guide and at the end of this worksheet to analyze your target audiences.

#### **Pluralistic ignorance behaviours in this group:**

*List the behaviours and estimate the percentage of the group that demonstrates them.*

**Passive resistance behaviours in this group:**

*List the behaviours and estimate the percentage of the group that demonstrates them.*

**Early adoption and exploration behaviours in this group:**

*List the behaviours and estimate the percentage of the group that demonstrates them.*

**Ownership and commitment behaviours in this group:**

*List the behaviours and estimate the percentage of the group that demonstrates them.*

3. Will one message be enough? Or does the complexity of behaviours in the group require different individualized messages and delivery tactics?

4. Use the quick reference guide in this worksheet to help develop your messaging.

5. Who will be the owners of the communication to ensure it will have the required impact with the target audiences?

## Quick reference guide to link required communications to specific targets:

| Target Group | Senior executive team        |  |   |   |  |
|--------------|------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
|              | Middle management            | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not engage in the succession planning strategy development</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide detail of the strategy and plan</li> <li>Confirm the value to the company</li> </ul>               | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question the value of the initiative</li> <li>Complain about the time &amp; effort</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize the benefits</li> <li>Ask for their support</li> </ul>               | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too many ideas</li> <li>Asks many questions</li> <li>Move ahead without preparation</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide step-by-step master plan</li> <li>Ask for and discuss their plans</li> </ul>      | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the succession plan to plan, develop and appoint talent</li> <li>Visibly support the initiative</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide progress reports</li> <li>Acknowledge support</li> </ul> |
|              | Employees                    | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not complete the steps in the planning</li> <li>Do not ask for support</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm the value to the company</li> <li>Confirm the manager's role in the process</li> </ul> | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complain about the time and effort required</li> <li>Question the value</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize their concerns</li> <li>Share the consequence of lack of ownership</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not use the process</li> <li>Do it as they see fit</li> <li>No communication</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide detail of the plan</li> <li>Request their plans for process review</li> </ul>         | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not know about succession management</li> <li>Cannot list any value</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide overview of succession planning</li> <li>Confirm how they can participate</li> </ul>  |
|              |                              | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not know about succession management</li> <li>Cannot list any value</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide overview of succession planning</li> <li>Confirm how they can participate</li> </ul>      | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feel excluded in the program</li> <li>Showing mistrust openly</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conform the benefits</li> <li>Suggest ways to participate</li> <li>Consider focus groups</li> </ul> | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows interest in the succession planning</li> <li>Have unrealistic expectations</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide detail of the plan</li> <li>Provide answers to frequently asked questions</li> </ul> | <p><b>Behaviours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the program</li> <li>Volunteer information on career aspirations</li> </ul> <p><b>Messaging:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a roadmap for career planning</li> </ul>   |
|              | <b>Pluralistic ignorance</b> | <b>Passive resistance</b>  | <b>Early adoption</b>   | <b>Ownership &amp; commitment</b>   |  |

### Reaction to the proposed plan



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