

How to Make Succession Planning Standard Operating Procedure

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Succession planning is often a “We’ll get to that later” task.

But what if your business development person decides to retire? What if your best superintendent is poached by a competitor? Will you be prepared, or will you panic? You need ready and capable leaders in your pipeline. It’s a matter of risk management.

To make it easy for you, here are three ways to make succession planning standard operating procedure:

1. Integrate into performance reviews
2. Marketing
3. Coaching and mentoring

Let’s start with standard operating procedure #1.

The overarching purpose of performance reviews is for the long-term sustainability of the organization. Unfortunately, most managers treat performance reviews like report cards: You got a B+ which earned you a 2% raise, and we’ll see you next year! Instead, look to the future; the future goals of the organization and how the individual fits into them. Teach your managers to ask questions during the performance review. Here are three excellent questions to ask:

1. What do you love about your job?

This question gets the employee to start thinking positively about the organization and their role. (I recently read that most people do not understand how they contribute to their



organization. Can you believe that? No wonder people leave their jobs. They feel no connection to the company.)

2. What would you like to learn to enhance your skills in your current job or to enhance your knowledge about the business in a broader sense?
3. What are your career goals for the next year? The next two years? Five years?

With questions two and three you’re priming people to think, what do I contribute to this organization? And where could I go with that? What more would I like to learn? How can I expand my career right here where I already am?

The second standard operating procedure to employ is marketing. This marketing comes from your current senior leaders “down” to the rest of the organization. Your current leaders must embrace succession planning as a non-

negotiable. Even more important, they need to be champions of succession planning. They must evangelize to everybody, all of the time, that developing their leadership skills, their knowledge about the organization, and their knowledge about the industry and your business environment is standard operating procedure. Developing skilled, knowledgeable, capable future leaders is a long-term process. But when you build it into everyday work responsibilities it's much easier because it's simply "how business is done here."

The third standard operating procedure is to require your up-and-coming leaders to both coach and mentor younger leaders. One of the biggest barriers to succession planning in all industries is that people keep all their knowledge in their heads. And the construction industry in particular, traditionally operates on a need-to-know basis. But when knowledge sharing is a standard operating procedure, the process of succession planning is much easier because knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned are always being passed down to younger generations.

In addition to current leaders passing down knowledge, a design we frequently use in three- or four-year leadership development curriculums is to [use peer coaching](#) in which learners in years two, three, and four must coach peers one year "behind" them. There is much research and evidence that proves that near-peer coaching is quite successful because the coach/peer can relate to the questions and challenges of peers just a year or so behind them since they have recently experienced similar situations.

By implementing these three methods you will subtly and painlessly make knowledge sharing, learning, and coaching others standard operating procedure, which feeds into having capable and ready future leaders, which in turn enables you to do effortless succession planning! 🖋️



About the Author

Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for Chief Learning Office magazine, Forbes, and MBA World and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as Inc. Radio and America's Workforce Radio.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is *Future-Proofing Your Organization*.

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