

A-2 Passing the Baton: Option or Obligation
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Succession Planning: The Institution's Perspective

What is Succession Planning?

- Succession planning is a strategic plan with a targeted goal, not a unique process.
- The goal of a succession plan is to provide an organization with the staff required to meet current and future operating needs.
- A succession plan outlines a methodology to fill staff vacancies at all levels of an organization.
- A succession plan provides a platform to identify, assess and train an organization's internal talent pool.
- Integrated with other strategic plans, a succession plan demonstrates a library's role within a larger parent organization.
- A succession plan educates upper management about the skill sets needed to staff a law library and lays the groundwork for management support for library staffing initiatives.
- If the hiring team called to fill a library vacancy includes members of the law school faculty, the law library's governing board, court administration, or the parent institution's human resources staff, the succession plan serves as an orientation and educational tool.

Why should I care about Succession Planning?

- Regardless of the size of the library staff, a succession plan enables the library staff to be proactive rather than reactive when personnel changes occur.
- A succession plan provides strategies to fill vacancies as they occur.
- A succession plan integrates with the library's other broad plans such as the strategic plan, budget documents, technology plan, and professional and collection development plans to ensure that the library meets its mission objectives.
- A succession plan identifies replacement needs as a way to shape the library's staff training and development program.
- A succession plan fosters the development of an internal talent pool.
- A succession plan identifies opportunities for staff and improves workplace morale.
- A succession plan enables the library to cope with voluntary and involuntary separations smoothly.

- A succession plan involves and educates upper management and secures support for library initiatives.
- A succession plan establishes priorities for existing resources and personnel.
- A succession plan makes it easier for library staff to adjust to corporate or parent organization changes and initiatives by presenting already identified alternatives in a new environment.
- A succession plan provides an emotional neutral framework to review job descriptions and the library's organizational chart.
- A succession plan provides opportunities to reassess position descriptions and to establish appropriate responsibilities and compensation levels.
- A succession plan plays a role in establishing staff performance metrics and provides one of the frameworks for a progressive discipline program.
- A succession plan prepares the library to address staff vacancies during a time when a hiring freeze is in place.

What are common elements of a Succession Plan?

- A commitment from the library staff that such a plan will benefit the library
- Support from upper management
- A project mission statement
- An assessment of present work requirements
- An appraisal of individual performance
- An assessment of future work requirements
- An assessment of future individual potential
- A training program to close staff developmental gaps
- A scan for existing documents and procedures to be integrated into the plan
- The creation of supporting documentation including staff assessment and selection tools
- A methodology to evaluate plan progress
- A plan timeline
- A plan budget
- Communication strategies designed to share information about the plan within the library and within the larger organization

What special challenges face libraries who wish to develop and implement a Succession Plan in our current economic climate?

- Competition for resources within the parent organization may make securing support from upper management difficult.
- Staff already pressured by reductions in funding support, closed branches, vacant positions left unfilled, and management's expectations for continued high levels of service might be resistant to engaging in such a comprehensive planning activity.

- Senior staff may accept offers of early retirement leaving expertise and corporate memory gaps that make planning efforts more challenging.
- Senior staff may delay retirement leaving few avenues for internal promotion.
- Hiring freezes may chill opportunities for staff advancement.
- Funding for training and professional development may be decreased or eliminated.

How can libraries overcome challenges to successful succession plan development and implementation?

- Secure support of management.
- Enlist external partners where appropriate.
- Include all levels of staff on the planning team.
- Provide training for the planning team.
- Identify peer institutions with existing plans to serve as process models.
- Break the planning process into manageable bites.
- Establish “rewards” for when milestones are met and grant them.
- Build communication points into the planning time-line.
- Recognize and acknowledge that meeting change with resistance is a natural response.
- Identify negative patterns of thinking and replace them with positive alternatives.
- Provide illustrations of the benefits that succession planning will bring on the individual level throughout the planning and implementation process.
- Invite comment from all levels of staff throughout the process.
- Conduct a scan of the library's existing practices to identify elements already in place that can be integrated into the succession plan.
- Consider staff core position competencies, existing and future skill sets needed, training requirements, and transition needs.
- Provide opportunities for ongoing staff education.
- Establish guidelines for periodic review of plan elements.
- Create templates for the library's organizational charts, job descriptions, pay scales, and other key documents and incorporate in plan appendixes.
- Institutionalize the steps in the hiring process from position announcement to orientation and training for the new hire or internal transfer.
- Create metrics to identify and measure individual staff and plan wide goals.
- Celebrate plan completion and adoption.
- Review and revise in concert with other library planning documents.

Additional Resources

- Joseph L. Bower, *Solve the Succession Crisis by Growing Inside-Outside Leaders*, Harvard Business Review, November 2007, 90-96.
- James M. Citron & Dayton Ogden, *Succeeding at Succession*, Harvard Business Review, November 2010, 29-31.
- Diana Gleason, *Where Will You Work? A Five Year Statistical Analysis of AALL Job Placement Listings*, 100 Law Library Journal 529-539 (2008).
- Linda Hill, *Becoming a Manager: How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership* (2003).
- Jean M. Holcomb, *Succession Planning Strategies for Law Libraries: Lesson from the Minor Leagues*, 98 Law Library Journal 433-438 (2006).
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- Ken Lloyd, *Be the Boss Your Employees Deserve* (2002).
- Gary McClain, *The Everything Managing People Book: Quick and Easy Ways to Build, Motivate, and Nurture a First Rate Team* (2002).
- Francis X. Norton, Jr., *Twelve Directors: A Quick Review of New Academic Library Directors*, AALL Spectrum, December 2010, 10-13.
- Douglas A. Ready & Jay A. Conger, *Make Your Company a Talent Factory: Stop Losing Out on Lucrative Business Opportunities Because You Don't have the Talent to Develop Them*, Harvard Business Review, June 2007, 68-77.
- William J. Rothwell, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within* (3rd edition, 2005).
- Paula Singer, Jeanne Goodrich & Linda Goldberg, *Your Library's Future: When Leaders Leave, Succession Planning Can Smooth the Transition*, Library Journal, October 15, 2004, 38-40.
- Paula Singer with Gail Griffith, *Succession Planning in the Library: Developing Leaders, Managing Change* (2010).
- Rebecca Luhn Wolfe, *Systematic Succession Planning: Building Leadership from Within* (1996).