

Succession Planning for an Organization

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Abstract

This paper presents a proposed conceptual model for creating and implementing an organizational succession plan based on the resource-based view of the firm (RBV) theory. The proposed model should provide organizational and human resources leaders, as well as organizational development (OD) practitioners with the ability to develop the organization's internal leadership pool as a driver of competitive advantage. This proposed conceptual model bridges a gap in literature related to talent management frameworks, as well as defining a succession plan for an organization and the subsequent link to organizational performance.

Keywords: HR metrics, succession planning, talent management, talent leadership, RBV

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The aim of this paper is to explore implementing an organizational succession planning process to ensure alignment with business strategy, as well as develop a conceptual model to improve business practice and for future research. The theoretical framework used to guide the process of analysis in this paper was the resource-based view of the firm (RBV). As applied to succession planning, RBV emphasizes the importance of people to the success of an organization through the lens and intersection of strategy, practice, and human resources development (Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001).

Succession planning is the process of developing leadership talent to meet current and future strategic needs of the organization (Rothwell, 2015). Armstrong and Taylor (2014) suggested succession planning is an element of talent management. Furthermore, talent management is the process of ensuring that the organization has the talented people it needs to attain its business goals (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). It involves the strategic management of the flow of talent through an organization by creating and maintaining a talent pipeline (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Conversely, workforce planning and forecasting are processes used to predict changes in demand and the supply of talent within an organization (Nel & Du Plessis, 2013). Workforce forecasts can be characterized as (a) estimated increases or decreases in company growth, output, and revenue, (b) estimated changes in talent needs that result from organizational growth, (c) projections of future vacancies, or (d) estimates of the internal and external availability of the talent needed to meet forecasts (Nel & Du Plessis, 2013). Talent management practices are central to effective strategic execution by attracting, recruiting, developing, and deploying the appropriate resources to execute the strategic effort (Stahl, Björkman, Farndale, Morris, Paauwe, Stiles, Trevor, & Wright, 2012). Therefore, HR and other business leaders should plan for succession planning as part of talent management processes to assure future-focused and sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Mustapa, Ghazali, and Mohamad (2014) asserted organizational capacity as the ability of an organization to employ capabilities, resources, knowledge, and processes to achieve established goals. Increasingly unpredictable environments require organizations to utilize inclusive talent acquisition strategies that focus on social capital to assure an adequate talent pipeline (Martin, Gollan, & Grigg, 2011). Beyond structural aspects, the basis of good succession planning is effectual governance based on an organization's core values, principles and the application of both in governing organizational actions and decisions (Green, 2011). Leaders must assure they embolden employees to develop skills for change as well as create an organizational structure to sustain an effective organizational culture (Onatolu, 2013). The central thesis of this paper is that to achieve competitive advantage, an organization's talent management and succession planning efforts, and related objectives should incorporate the its mission, vision, and business strategy in

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the succession planning process, as well as effectively create, operationalize, implement, and measure the effectiveness of the process.

II. LINKING STRATEGY, THEORY, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE WITH SUCCESSION PLANNING

HR practices aligned with strategy that produce, enhance, and sustain organizational capabilities and culture effect increased organizational performance (Buller & McEvoy, 2012; Chuang, Chen, & Chuang, 2013). As previously noted, talent management practices are central to effective strategic execution (Stahl et al., 2012). Consistency is critical for an organization. Talent management practices should fit together as interrelated parts such as high-potential training and development coupled with employee retention, compensation alignment, and career management (Stahl et al., 2012). Organizational culture must manifest the organization's core values and principles (Green, 2011). HR must assure an organization integrates core values and principles into talent management, specifically succession planning, leadership and employee development, performance management, and compensation and other reward programs (Stahl et al., 2012). RBV provides the theoretical lens through which strategically aligned organizational resources and systemic processes influence organizational performance and inform talent management and succession planning.

2.1 Resource-Based View of the Firm (RBV)

The resource-based view of the firm (RBV) focuses attention on an organization's internal resources and capabilities as drivers of competitive advantage, as well as highlights development of the organization's resources to boost the organization's performance in the marketplace (Wang, 2014). Barney (1991) contended that a firm might achieve sustained competitive advantage through focusing on development of resources that are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate or substitute. Barney's proposition was supported by Sadatsafavi and Walewski's (2013) assertion that organizational value-producing resource bundles, based on RBV of firms, contribute to competitive advantage.

2.2 Organizational Performance

Organizations seek to gain competitive advantage in the marketplace and achieve performance targets through effective strategy implementation by employees at all levels of the organization (Jarvis, 2018). Nasir, Abbas, and Zafar (2014) asserted that organizations must implement changes in strategy, structure, processes, and culture on a continual basis due to increasingly challenging environments. A key factor in an organization's ability to adapt to changes and unstable environments was its ability to learn from experience (Rose & Cray, 2013). Superior organizational performance may result from linking strategic goals, action plans to organizational capabilities, culture, group competencies, individual KSAs, motivation, and opportunity (Buller & McEvoy, 2012). Organizational talent management and strategic capacity are necessary to deliver unparalleled characteristics that are inimitable in the marketplace (Martin et al., 2011) thus leading to competitive advantage and improved organizational performance (Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade, & Drake, 2009). Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler, and Staffelbach (2011) suggested a positive relationship between vigorous emphasis on business strategy and organizational financial results and effective talent management practices. Therefore, succession planning elements included in an organization's talent management strategies must be monitored to insure the process remains relevant in frequently changing market conditions, as well as assure the succession planning aids in driving competitive advantage.

III. HR BRANDING AND SELECTING FOR THE FUTURE

As business environments become increasingly dynamic competition might increase for qualified resources necessary to gain competitive advantage. Organizational employer branding might be defined as the manifestation of employer images in the mind of prospective employees (Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010) as well as current employees and stakeholders (Sehgal & Malati, 2013). A robust employer brand should facilitate attracting the right new talent, improve retention, productivity, and employee relations of existing employees as well as maintain long-term organizational competitiveness and success (Sehgal & Malati, 2013). Talent management practices should fit together as interrelated parts such as high-potential training and development coupled with employee retention, compensation alignment, and career management (Stahl et al., 2012).

Internal and external brand images should be consistent to assure neither negatively influences the other (Wilden et al., 2010). Establishing an employer of choice brand not only facilitates attracting new employees but also may improve retention, productivity, and employee relations of existing employees as well as maintain long-term organizational competitiveness (Sehgal & Malati, 2013). Building an inclusive work environment might positively influence an organization's employer brand. Organizations should focus on inculcating policies and practices to embed a culture of

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inclusion that encompasses diversity (Scott, Heathcote, & Gruman, 2011). Succession planning policies and practices should support identification and development of a diverse employee base to assure continued development of all employees (Scott et al., 2011).

HR and business leaders at all levels of the organization are capable of driving efforts to create organizational capacity and create value. Strategic human resource management was well suited to support senior leaders in development of organizational resources to make strategic differences that were managed, augmented, leveraged, and preserved (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009). Researchers asserted publically signaled authentic organizational leadership and strategic human resources practices might create the impression of the organization as a reputable employer (Martin et al., 2011). An organization's employer branding is a key aspect of a robust recruitment strategy that encompasses internal and external talent acquisition.

Gaining competitive advantage in a highly competitive labor marketplace requires organizations to focus on talent acquisition that differentiates it from competitors. Increasingly unpredictable environments required organizations to utilize inclusive talent acquisition strategies that focused on social capital to assure an adequate talent pipeline (Martin et al., 2011). Organizational engagement with candidates during the sourcing portion of the recruiting process ensured the best candidates were identified and rapport and relationships with those candidates were built (Hampton, 2011). Organizations should use a hiring strategy that includes a validated and benchmarked selection assessment process to assist with assuring organizational fit, provide insight for talent development, and improved performance and retention (Graham-Leviss, 2012). Utilizing an appropriate hiring methodology might help control, and reduce, turnover and lead to higher organization performance (Graham-Leviss, 2012).

Ensuring candidates have the necessary information to make a rational hiring decision about an organization is critical for human resources management. Realistic job previews (RJP) might be defined as programmatic elements that provide applicants with objective and practical information about a job (Earnest, Allen, & Landis, 2011). Researchers asserted realistic job previews reduced turnover and were related to increased role clarity and helped ensure initial candidate expectations about the job and organization were met (Earnest et al., 2011). Realistic job reviews should be designed to signal organizational honesty that might reduce turnover effects (Earnest et al., 2011). Organizations should identify hiring methods for internal and external recruitment efforts.

Recruitment of internal resources is an important part of an organization's recruiting strategy as well as building the organization's employer brand. Internal recruiting might begin with organizational career development utilized to equip employees with necessary skills and experiences for employability (Nwuche & Awa, 2011). Existing employees may receive signals from the organization impacting attitudes about the suitability of the organization as an employer (Wilden et al., 2010). Signals about diversity and inclusion might be communicated via organizational recruitment websites, including employee portals, in company recruiting materials, and in competencies emphasized during the recruiting process (Scott et al., 2011).

External recruiting requires organizations to manage the process more ensure hires meet organizational needs. Outsourcing recruiting efforts might be justified when conducting confidential searches, recruiting hard-to-fill roles, handling temporary increase in recruiting volume, and when evaluating recruiting staff increases to assess workload and feasibility (Hampton, 2011). As previously noted, organizational engagement with candidates during the sourcing portion of the recruiting process ensured the best candidates were identified and rapport and relationships with those candidates were built (Hampton, 2011). Organizations should evaluate and implement an applicant tracking system (ATS) to aid in candidate life-cycle through onboarding activities and provide necessary record creation and report generation (Hampton, 2011). Lengnick-Hall et al. (2009) indicated evidence in extant literature that there is a relationship between HR systems and organizational performance, as well as the previously noted influence of diversity and legal considerations on employer branding and recruiting.

3.1 Future-Focused Talent Management Practices

Talent management and succession planning must be embedded in an organizational culture that is strategically aligned, supportive, inclusive, and future-focused. Culture must incorporate the core values and principles of an organization (Green, 2011). HR management must assure an organization integrates core values and principles into talent management, specifically succession planning, leadership and employee development, performance management, and compensation and other reward programs (Stahl et al., 2012). Management involvement is critical in developing future leaders by taking ownership and responsibility for leader development and succession planning (Stahl et al.,

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2012). Human resources management must assure senior leaders integrate organizational culture to assure employees develop skills and assist in creating a structure to sustain effective, and inclusive, culture (Onatolu, 2013) and address potential legal and ethical issues.

3.1.1 Potential Legal and Ethical Issues With Succession Planning

An organization's cultural and structural influences on succession planning might be affected by ethical and legal aspects. Succession planning policies and practices should support a diverse employee base to assure continued development of all employees (Scott et al., 2011). Armstrong, Flood, Guthrie, Liu, Maccurtain, andMkamwa(2010)asserted organizations that effectively managed diversity and equality using a logical management system demonstrated exceptional business performance. Organizations must balance global and local market cultural needs and requirements. Senior leaders and human resource management must assure localized global cultural practices (Eloot, Strube, & Wang, 2013) that address unique societal needs while reinforcing organizational culture and principles (Coget, 2011).

Organizations must remain cognizant when creating hiring and promotion criteria to ensure that those plans (including succession planning) do not have a discriminatory impact on protected classes (Winrow&Scheiber, 2010) or at-risk groups. Organizations should carefully research planned assessments and tests administered as part of selection and career development to assure they do not create disparate impact or treatment of protected classes (Winrow&Scheiber, 2010) regardless of country. Networking and mentoring might be key employee development and talent management practices to aid in work setting socialization, especially to help overcome gender inequality in the workplace (Dworkin, Ramaswami, & Schipani, 2013). Organizations should seek to employ neutral practices involving treatment of men and women to align with organizational values, requirements, and appropriate legal doctrines (Weiss, 2012). Next, needed skills and training for a sustainable future will be discussed.

3.1.2 Skills, Competencies, and Experiences Needed for a Sustainable Future

HR should develop competencies to assess the organization's organizational capacity to meet succession needs for a sustainable future. Superior organizational performance may result from linking strategic goals and action plans to organizational capabilities, culture, group competencies, individual KSAs, motivation, and opportunity (Buller & McEvoy, 2012). Organizations might employ human resource career management policies that include growing talent to develop relevant competencies and experiences to meet the organization's succession needs, buy talent with developed relevant competencies, and experiences to meet the organization's succession needs, or a combination of both policies (Nwuche& Awa, 2011).

Organizations should strategically manage career planning and improve employee participation and engagement by clearly communicating defined career path information, provide plans and development for employees, and provide employees the opportunity to suggest improvements in the process (Abdulkadir, Isiaka, & Adedoyin, 2012). Experience and skill development are important aspects of career pathing and talent development in organizations. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, and Fleishman (2000) suggested that skills and knowledge grow as a function of experience as leaders progress through their careers. A representative entry-level to executive retail operations career path was presented in Figure 1.

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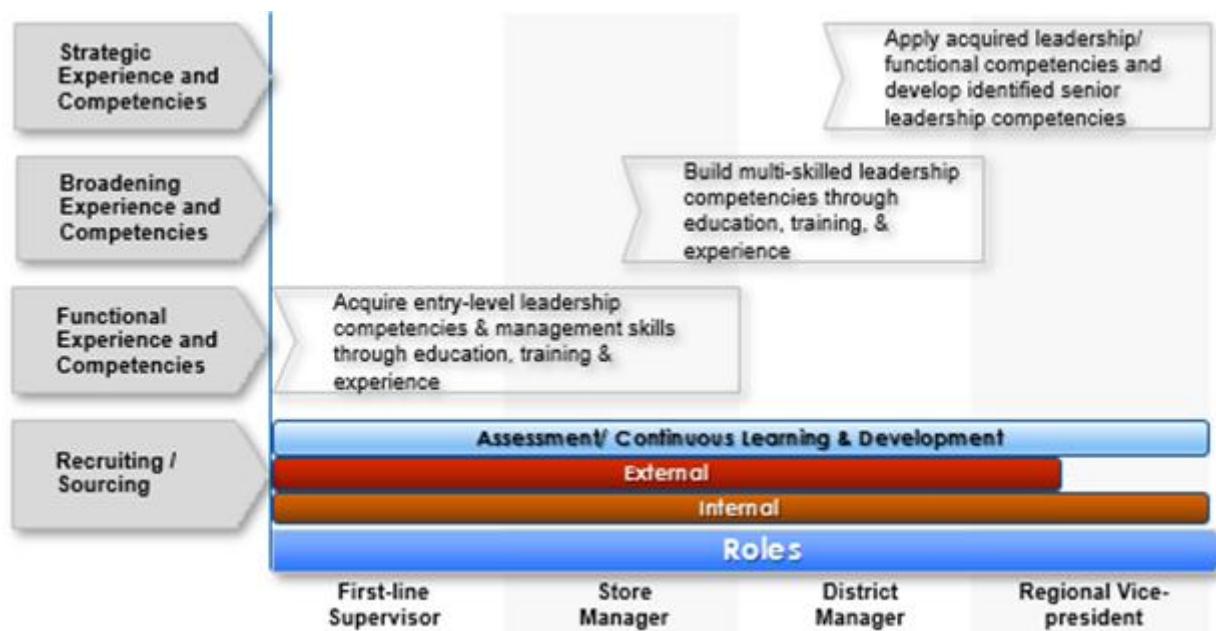


Figure 1. Flowchart for entry-level to executive retail industry operations career path.

The process outlined in Figure 1 identifies a proposed role progression for a typical retail organization, as well as career path elements for each role. These elements include (a) recruiting and sourcing, (b) functional experience and competencies, (b) broadening experience and competencies, (c) strategic experience and competencies. Recruiting and sourcing might include identification of succession planning candidates to equip employees with necessary skills and experiences (Nwuche & Awa, 2011). To reduce potential disruptions to the organization related to succession-induced change (Valentine, 2012), targeted external recruiting for the regional vice-president role is limited to a portion of the forecasted open roles. Organizations might use assessment centers and other systematic programs to assess relevant skills and competencies to identify and develop high-potential talent (Juhdi, Pa'wan, & Hansaram, 2015). Continuous learning and development programs should provide targeted learning activities that cross the knowledge base of the organization, as well as challenge the employee's knowledge, skills, and capabilities (Fibuch & Van Way III, 2012). Subsequent competency and experience elements (functional, broadening, and strategic) provide relevant grooming processes to allow high-potential employees to gain skills, knowledge, and experience needed for success and potentially behaviors to maintain the prevailing culture (Valentine, 2012).

3.1.3 Interviews and Job Descriptions

Critical aspects of selecting for the future include effective interviews based on a comprehensive job description. A prerequisite to an effective hiring strategy included defining the actual job as well as adequately screening and interviewing candidates (Graham-Leviss, 2012). The organization should ensure interviewers are prepared for the selection process to reduce factors that might negatively affect hiring decisions and preclude otherwise viable candidates (Barrick, Dustin, Giluk, Stewart, Shaffer, & Swider, 2012).

Job descriptions are important for providing clarity in the selection process. An explicit description of the job, the responsibilities required in the job as well as the requirements will help ensure the right candidates are attracted (Graham-Leviss, 2012). Graham-Leviss further asserted a clear job description also provides a focal point for ongoing employee development and performance management. A well-constructed job description provides a selection framework for required competencies, experiences, and other attributes for extraordinary performance (Graham-Leviss, 2012) which should support an organization's succession planning strategy.

3.2 Key Metric Communication

Utilizing a HR performance measurement and management system is necessary to identify how key talent management and succession planning metrics are communicated throughout the organization, as well as the frequency of the communication (Jarvis, 2018). Irs (2012) asserted proactive performance management systems focus on performance monitoring processes, as well as on enhancing communication and employees' involvement in

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performance management. Moreover, Thomas and Stephens (2015) indicated strategic communication focuses on alignment of information needs for intended audiences at multiple levels of the organization (Thomas & Stephens, 2015).

3.3 Diversity and Legal Considerations

An organization's cultural and structural influences on recruiting and succession planning might be affected by ethical and legal aspects. Researchers asserted the importance of aligning organizational values and diversity artifacts in the recruiting strategy and organizations with inclusive cultures would send stronger diversity-related signals to candidates enhancing greater diversity in the candidate pool (Scott et al., 2011). The employment selection process for most organizations was governed by antidiscrimination legislation in the United States, the United Kingdom, and throughout the world (Anderson, 2011). Ethical considerations of employer branding involve socially constructing authentic environments that encourage unique self-expression of local and multinational perspectives (Martin et al., 2011).

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Building on the previous discussion a conceptual framework of a succession planning process is proposed in Figure 2.

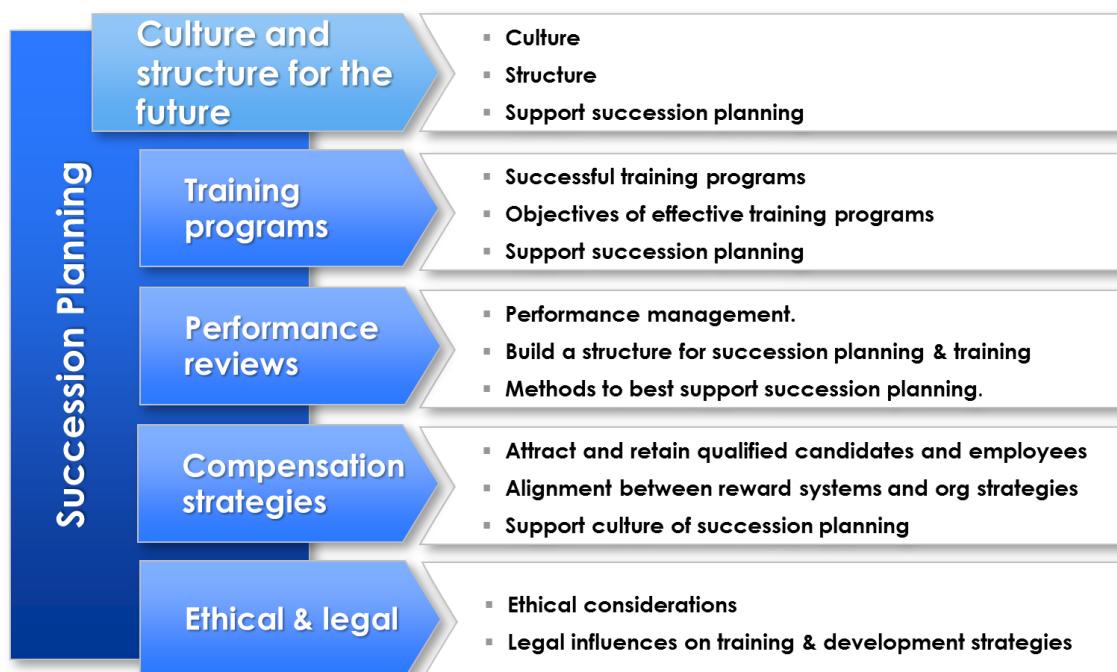


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of a succession planning process.

The succession planning elements depicted in Figure 2 include (a) culture and structure for the future, (b) training programs, (c) performance reviews, (d) compensation strategies, and (e) ethical and legal. The proposed succession planning process framework illustrates the interrelated elements of RBV that is cyclical in implementation. Culture and structure for the future might include providing a succession planning process that is systematic, transparent, open and perceived as fair and inclusive by the organization's workforce (Fibuch& Van Way III, 2012), as well as culture that incorporates the governing principles and core values of an organization (Green, 2011). Training and development strategies, plans, and programs should align with corporate culture and support organizational strategy to be successful. Eloot, Strube, and Wang (2013) suggested integrating organizational capability development, as well as training programs with actual organizational activities to assure effectiveness. Career planning and development programs, such as performance reviews, ensure organizations have a talent pool of employees with relevant skills and knowledge for future organizational needs (Nwuche& Awa, 2011). Furthermore, performance reviews might be used to gauge potential and should be augmented with strategies such as coaching, mentoring, networking, job assignments, or action learning (Groves, 2007) as well as talent assessment centers, 360 degree feedback, or psychological testing as means to identify high potential employees, and associated data, for succession planning (Juhdi et al., 2015). Organizations should employ

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suitable compensation strategies, including pay systems to attract and retain qualified candidates and identified talent, as well as encourage and reward employees to focus on producing quality services and products in an efficient manner (Mujtaba & Shuaib, 2010). Organizations should focus on inculcating policies and practices to embed a culture of inclusion that encompasses diversity (Scott et al., 2011) that might mitigate both legal and ethical issues.

V. CONCLUSION

The proposed succession planning framework draws upon extant literature, as well as addresses the dearth of talent management frameworks asserted by Ariss, Cascio, and Paauwe (2014). The primary limitation of the proposed framework is the specificity of an organizational succession planning process related to talent management. The proposed framework is offered as a research tool for exploring succession planning process elements of talent management. Furthermore, future research would benefit from exploring and examining HR leadership competencies and practices in organizational capability, culture, group competencies, and strategic relationships suggested by Buller and McEvoy (2012). The proposed succession planning framework provides a tool which organizational and HR managers can utilize to identify, develop, and retain talent needed to attain competitive advantage.

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