

Succession & Development

If you think they are the same thing, you would be wrong.

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Succession planning and individual development often are treated as if they are synonymous. While development certainly is an important succession tool, you can have succession without development – think of the last time an external hire was recruited for a key position at your organization. And you can have development without reference to the succession plan – not every manager attending a leadership development workshop is in the succession plan; nor should they be.

Still, why is it important to distinguish between the two? First, some definition: The succession process identifies and implements solutions that close the gap between future organization needs and current talent resources – usually, but not always, at senior levels. This requires an organization-wide perspective, a talent-review process, an effective infrastructure to support that process, and a variety of tools, including development.

While succession is an organizationally focused process, development is an individually focused process. The primary reason to highlight the difference between them is that when development is the conceptual framework for succession planning, non-development solutions can fall outside the succession planning process and run in parallel or in silos. For example, one client identified external recruitment as a strategy to meet a particular need at the senior level. Initially they avoided including that with succession because there was no development involved. This did not make it any less of a succession issue. The vacancy, by the way, was due to unplanned turnover. Potential successors were not ready. Retention also can be a succession issue – though not within a development framework.

Some of the unanticipated implications of using development as the conceptual framework for succession are that it:

- limits the ability to develop an organization talent strategy,
- militates against development of an infrastructure to support formulation of such a strategy, and
- reinforces siloed solutions from HR instead of an integrated approach.

Many of us may have seen individual managers who sense and try to address what they perceive as broader organization needs. But, lacking an organization platform, their impact usually is limited to the individuals whose development they are promoting.

In contrast to the above, an effective succession process has an organization platform – a talent review committee. The CEO chairs the group. Committee members usually are senior managers, though not necessarily all direct reports to the CEO.

Succession vs. Development: What are the distinctions between the two? Where do they overlap?

Succession		Development	
Purpose	To ensure continuity in management and sometimes in key technical positions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform the jobs effectively • To prepare people to future assignments 	
Focus	To ensure there are ready candidates to consider when a vacancy occurs	To help individuals develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their job	
Key ownership or accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO and board • Line management • HR supports with processes • Talent review committee to manage succession process 	Line management and HR	
Orientation – Time and Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time orientation – several years out • Context is organization direction and strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time orientation – present and near future needs • Context is individual development need 	
Questions to answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) will the organization need within its planning cycle? • What is the gap between future needs and current talent resources? • By when will these KSAs be needed? • Which levels or functions are most critical? • Do you have people currently who meet this need or can be developed? • If no, what will you do? • If yes, what will you do? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific KSAs are needed by individual employees within a function or department? • What is the gap between current performance and desired performance? • What is the best way to close the gap through development activities? 	

<p>Methods Used</p>	<p>Development and talent review. Development methods include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops/classroom • Development assignments • Action learning • Coaching • Self-directed learning. <p>Talent review committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews organization talent against future strategy • Identifies gaps and develops strategies to address them – gaps can include items like retention and knowledge retention • Reviews key leaders and those in the talent pool in terms of promotability, on-job performance, progress in a development assignment • Identifies next steps for talent pool members and key leaders (sometimes they are the same) • Evaluates succession plan effectiveness <p>Other succession or talent management methods include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention strategies • Organization restructuring • Job redesign • External recruitment. 	<p>Development methods include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops/classroom • Development assignments • Action learning • Coaching • Self-directed learning. <p>Review of progress is done by direct manager.</p>
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