

Surprise or strategic succession: What works better?

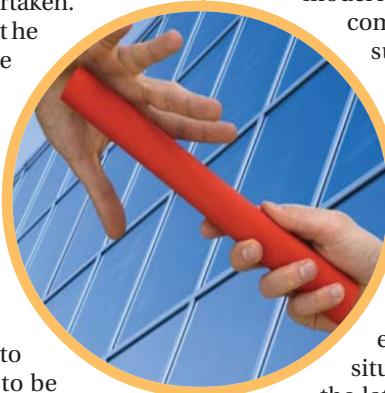
Research suggests it helps to tell an employee that he is part of a succession plan...what's your take on it?

■ BY SANNITA CHAKRABORTY SAHA

Communicate the right way

The purpose of including an employee in the succession plan for a position is to enable him to develop readiness for the position within an accelerated timeframe. It would work much better if the employee is aware of the purpose for which the development is being undertaken.

It definitely helps to tell an employee that he is part of a succession plan, so long as the communication is done in the right manner. This would also avoid the risk of developing an employee towards a position that he is not interested in! The communication should mention that the company sees the potential in him to develop towards the particular position and that the company will provide accelerated learning opportunities to enable him to develop readiness for the same. It has to be made clear that no promise is being made that the employee will be moved to the target position within a specified period of time. It should also be mentioned that there could be multiple people in the succession plan for the position and that the actual move to the position will depend on business requirement, vacancy and his relative readiness as compared to other possible candidates for the position. Stretch and discomfort are inherent in accelerated development. If an employee is aware of and committed to the purpose behind the development, he will be able in a better position to derive meaning from the stretch experience, learn faster and even enjoy the ride!



Need for a systematic approach

Succession plan is a critical aspect in sustainability of performance and capability of organization. The prime aspect in succession planning is the business model of the company, whether it is mature or immature. In case the model is immature, it will not have enough data on

competencies, capabilities and experiences to support placement of a robust succession plan. The second aspect is the selection parameter of identifying the successor and validating it with the database, as a wrong successor can cause deep turmoil. The third aspect could be the management of emotions and retention of people who couldn't be part of the succession plan. At the same time, their retention is vital for business. Timing is another factor as early selection of a successor can lead to a situation wherein better candidate emerges at the later stage. Thus, while succession planning

helps the employee to develop; at the same, the entire process is highly critical as it can bounce back to an adverse situation. The entire initiative requires systemic approach to develop the successor so as to expose him to variety of experiences, wherein lot of data and tools are needed along with strong facilitation and continuous monitoring. Leadership mentoring is another crucial intervention which helps in preparing the employee to assume higher responsibilities and in succession planning. Finally, succession planning could help the employee and organization provided it has been implemented through a robust system, solid database, proper timeline and high degree of commitment.

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