

Succession Planning &

Follow this road map to help ensure you're maintaining leadership bench strength.

More than 10,000 Baby Boomers are leaving the workforce daily, according to the *Washington Post*. And, AARP projects within five years, only one-fourth of the workforce will be Baby Boomers ages 70–74.

In preparation for this transition, Millennials, born roughly from 1978 to 1990, are moving into supervisory, management and in, some cases, executive positions. It's time for leaders to review their organizations' succession plans.

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Millennials

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That work will be done while organizations continue to face new and complex challenges with their workforces and succession planning. Those challenges include significant generational differences in expectations regarding work and how to replace those who are retiring. Those differences and organizational demands emphasize the need for thoughtful and systematic succession planning.

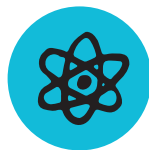
There are several variables to consider in developing a succession plan that factors in Millennials. While there are agreed-upon descriptors of the generations, individuals in those groups vary in such areas as intelligence, cognitive complexity, emotional intelligence, leadership skills and cultural fit. This article highlights these specific variables as they relate to success in management and leadership.



Managerial Hierarchy

To design a succession plan for the Millennials in your organization, it is critical to know what roles or positions are on the

“road map” for them. For example, moving from front-line technical or skill-based positions into the roles of supervisor, to manager, to executive is a path that requires defining these roles and their responsibilities, skills and authority. It’s important to assess Millennials for their potential to function in each role.



Cognitive Complexity

Elliott Jaques’ seminal work on cognitive complexity as a function of time span in planning and managing is relevant to this discussion. Jaques made the argument that each level in the managerial hierarchy of an organization has functions that require a certain time span — the higher in the organizational hierarchy, the longer the time span. This implies a level of cognitive complexity needed to do the job. If a subordinate does not have the cognitive complexity, then he/she will fail in that role. Earlier research found qualitative differences in cognitive complexity in early adulthood. These research findings are useful in assessing Millennials

for their current and long-range potential in the various levels of an organization’s hierarchy.



Emotional Intelligence

Most businesses do not test for emotional intelligence while working on succession planning, which could be a missed opportunity. There is research to support that employing individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence directly benefits the bottom line. Understandably, many organizations proceed cautiously when determining whether to assess emotional intelligence because of such factors as employment law, leadership buy-in and expense. The potential benefits of incorporating emotional intelligence into the hiring process include greater job satisfaction and employee retention as well as higher productivity.



Leadership Skills

At this point in career development, a Millennial is most likely to demonstrate informal leadership in the form of committee participation, self-initiated work projects and volunteer positions such as clubs or nonprofit boards. Key leadership skills and qualities to look for include: ability to create a vision; enthusiasm; group dynamic facilitation skills; integrity; emotional intelligence; and collaboration and communication skills.



Culture Fit

Cultural fit, an important yet probably overlooked element in succession planning, deals with shared assumptions regarding such actions as how to treat each other, how time is managed, how work gets done, how to communicate, how to dress, what

humor is tolerated, how money is managed and how resources are allocated. The core assumptions of your organization need to be identified in assessing cultural fit for succession planning. From there, candidates for succession can be evaluated on a cognitive level (beliefs are cognitive phenomena) through interviews and discussions along with observations of how their behaviors match core beliefs of the organization.



Analysis of Organization Needs and Long-Range Staffing Considerations

In developing a succession plan, it is critical to know what the actual hierarchy and structure of the organization is related to the time span of the work for each level rather than the ideal organizational plan that

sits on the shelf. This is a complex task that needs a project manager and support from the top. Once that task is completed, it's time to start identifying what each role, from the top down, requires. You will be determining who has the cognitive complexity, emotional intelligence and leadership skills to fill the role; then what experiences, coaching and mentoring they need to get ready to move up.



Development Plan for Each Candidate

The manager of the candidate should oversee the coaching aspect of the plan. This involves skills, experiences and feedback to help the candidate handle an increasing amount of the work available in his/her role. That manager's supervisor should do the mentoring

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as well as securing the resources to facilitate the candidate's development. This is the broader role of helping the candidate understand his/her potential and how that potential may be developed to achieve maximum career growth in the organization.



Intellectual Capital and Social Network Transfer

Coaching and mentoring need to

account for the industry — and organization — specific intellectual capital required for successful career development. The plan also needs to include introductions and relationship development opportunities for the candidate within the coach's and mentor's social networks inside and outside the organization. This process needs to be mapped out so opportunities can be systematically

created just like work experience opportunities. It is helpful to let people in those networks know the candidate is being developed for more complex roles so they realize they may be working with the candidate in the future.

Focusing On the Long View

An old story illustrates the importance of succession planning and training: *CFO: "What if we develop them and they leave?"*

CEO: "What if we don't and they stay?"

There are unique and long-range challenges in starting succession planning with Millennials. As with any plan in business, there will be starts and setbacks. Keeping the long view in mind, though, allows leadership to continually update the plan and review, renew and replenish the candidate pool throughout the life span of the organization. **WS**

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Resource Box

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