



3:1 Succession Planning Template

Introduction

Succession planning is an important factor for the success of any organisation – it drives career options for talent and more importantly it is a strong risk mitigant for business continuity in times of planned or unplanned attrition. We want to ensure that we always have a replacement plan for roles, but more importantly we want to build capability across a wider talent pool to give us options for roles, as well as wider options for talent. Typically however succession plans tend to focus on one for one replacements even where the same person might be the potential successor for a number of roles; they don't take account of longer term planning or, more likely, they are dusted down when a vacancy occurs and where there is little time or opportunity to think about alternative options, especially options based on building diversity. A good succession plan is also really important at very senior levels where positions are likely to be filled by appointment rather than an open competition and especially when we know from data compiled by the Central Statistics Office, that more than 75% of senior executive roles are filled from within the organisation – so a critical aspect of building diverse talent pipelines.

What is the 3:1 process?

The 3:1 process differs from standard succession planning in that it combines the two factors of:

- a) Identifying critical roles and
- b) looking at potential options for replacement across the organisation – now or in a reasonable timeframe.

This avoids the typical trap of 'what job next for Jim/Jane' and instead focuses on organisation risk and a more general talent pool approach. Focusing on seeing whether there is more than 'one and done' potential replacements for a role allows for identification of issues in terms of lack of gender options in the pipeline, silo driven skills, or multiple reliance on single individuals.

How does it work

The process follows several steps

1. Identify key roles that are required for key success factors, business continuity, regulatory requirements
2. Identify a pool of top talent defined as those having potential to progress. How diverse is this pool e.g. is at least 1/3 of each gender?
3. Conduct an objective assessment of matching the roles with potential top talent candidates who could step into the role immediately
4. Complete a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status assessment of
 - How diverse are the options e.g. is at least 1/3 of the opposite gender per role?
 - Are there key roles that do not have any diverse pipeline of successors?



- What action can and should be undertaken to correct this imbalance overtime?
 - How experienced are the options e.g. what development should we be focusing on now?
 - How silo driven are the options e.g. will they add to the diversity of thought at a senior forum, and how can we develop those skills now?
 - How abundant are the options e.g. do we even have 3 contenders and if not how would we address – do we like to ‘build’ our talent in which case what are we doing now to develop the pipeline or are we happy to ‘Buy’ in talent if we had to from the market. If the latter, do we know how abundant the skills are in the market and when was the last time we did a market scan, or hired professional support to carry out a market scan?
5. An overall view across all the roles then helps to identify organizational issues and priorities as well as role-based action plans
 6. Finally, the assessment is repeated but with a 12-24 month timeframe to see if the situation is improving – if the RAG status is the same in 12 months as it is now, then more serious and focused action would be required
 7. Check during the 12-24 month assessment that diverse candidates are advancing in preparedness at a similar pace to the overall pipeline

For more ideas on succession planning and resourcing at senior levels – check out the 30% Club Executive and Board Resourcing Code.



3:1 Senior Succession Gap Analysis template

Critical Roles	Role 1	Role 2	Role 3	Role 4	Role 5
If Vacant tomorrow would there be three candidates who could step into the role					
RAG Status How prepared are we for successors – skills, availability, diversity					
Action Required What short/long term action would we need to remedy any gaps					
Overall assessment	General comment on preparedness including for example over reliance on the same people as cover for multiple roles, or replacements only within silo functions				
Vacant 12 – 24 mths What would the position look like in the longer term if our current plan remains?					
RAG Status How does that change our preparedness?					
Action Required What further action should we be planning					
Overall assessment	General comment on preparedness including for example over reliance on the same people as cover for multiple roles, or replacements only within silo functions				



Example of immediate assessment

Critical Roles	Head of Finance	Head of Production	Head of Sales & Marketing	Head of IT	Head of Compliance
If Vacant tomorrow	Deputy Head of Finance (M) Head of Procurement (F) Management Accountant (M)	Head of Production Northern Ireland (M) Deputy Head of Prod (M) Senior Production Line Manager (M)	Sales Manager Dublin(M) Sales Manager Munster (M) Marketing Executive (F) in 12 months	None ready now – Deputy Head of IT (M) very new to role and on a steep learning curve	Head of Compliance Northern Ireland (M) Deputy Head of Production (M)
RAG Status	Green Good cover, M&F, ready now options	Amber Good technical cover but no diversity options	Amber Good technical cover – but only diverse candidate won't be ready for 12 months. Good market options also available	Red No cover, no diverse options, limited market availability	Red Limited cover, no diverse options, strong market demand for skills in current regulatory environment
Action Required	Continue focus on retention and pipeline development. Look at options to broaden skills of 3 contenders to position for other progression roles	Look at pipeline for options or complete a market scan for alternatives if available. Consider recruiting externally for next key vacancy	Development plans for all potential successors to improve organizational knowledge	Identified now as a key risk. Immediate action to focus on pipeline and professional view of market scan. Combination plan to build (develop) talent/buy in talent required	Immediate action to focus on pipeline and build up in-house expertise. Consider recruiting externally for next key vacancy
Overall assessment	Other than for IT, there is some range of potential cover for critical roles. However, strong gender bias across all roles could impact on our targets to achieve greater balance at the senior team. Also, all the potential successors have only operated within their own technical area so could limit diversity of thought. In addition to specific action points, we need to look at knowledge sessions/secondments/short assignments to increase cross functional knowledge or experience				