



Closing the Readiness Gap: Succession Planning in Times of Disruption



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Introduction

In the modern business landscape, organizations are realizing that *succession planning is no longer a static procedure* due to various factors such as changing demographics, intense competition for talent globally, and evolving business structures. It is crucial for leadership pipelines to be flexible and adjust promptly to these dynamics. The main challenge lies not only in pinpointing potential successors but also in nurturing leaders who can excel in uncertain situations, promote inclusivity, and enhance performance in unpredictable environments.

Challenges:

One of the major obstacles faced by organizations is the leadership readiness gap, where identified successors often lack the necessary exposure to diverse challenges and global perspectives. Traditional succession planning tends to emphasize tenure and technical skills, overlooking the essential modern leadership qualities like learning agility, digital proficiency, resilience, and change management abilities. Moreover, there is a risk of losing valuable talent to competitors when high-potential leaders feel disconnected due to unclear development paths or stalled promotions.



The Leadership Development Imperative:

Many companies tend to prioritize short-term replacements over cultivating sustainable leadership pipelines that align with future business strategies. To address these challenges effectively, succession planning should be closely integrated with continuous leadership development and coaching initiatives. This involves implementing leadership programs that replicate or simulate future challenges, providing coaching and mentoring for adaptive leadership, utilizing people analytics to identify hidden talents and monitor development progress, and establishing inclusive pathways for the advancement of diverse leaders.

Possible Research-Based Opportunities:

Research in 2022 by Allan H. Church and Gina A. Seaton emphasizes the significance of learning agility in predicting leader performance and potential. Incorporating learning agility into talent review processes can strengthen leadership pipelines by identifying employees with leadership potential, recognizing the correlation between learning agility and high performance, and understanding how managers translate experience into practical learning. By assessing and fostering learning agility in future leaders, organizations can ensure the resilience and readiness of their leadership pipeline.

Call to Action: As you refine your succession planning and talent identification strategies, ask yourself: how effectively are you assessing and developing learning agility within your future leaders? The answer may determine how resilient and future-ready your leadership pipeline truly is.

Conclusion:

Succession planning is not merely about filling leadership positions but about preparing organizations for the future. By transitioning from static replacement charts to dynamic development-oriented pipelines, organizations can cultivate diverse, agile leadership teams capable of navigating uncertainties. The integration of coaching, inclusive development strategies, and data-driven talent insights is vital for bridging the readiness gap and securing long-term organizational success.

References:

Church, Allan H., and Gina A. Seaton. "Learning Agility as a Key Driver of Leadership Potential for Talent Identification, Pipeline Development, and Succession Planning in Organizations." *Consulting Psychology Journal*, vol. 74, no. 3, Sept. 2022, pp. 237–252.