

Succession Planning

It's not uncommon for clubs to think about pulling together a succession plan as a key person is on the way out the door!

The ideal time to get succession planning on your club's agenda is now. Make it an integral part of your overall project planning for setting up your club activities.

A succession plan provides opportunities for potential leaders within the organization to be identified and developed in readiness to move into leadership positions. Organizations that plan for smooth transitions of leadership positions are less likely to experience disruptions to their operations and can better position themselves to replace volunteers who vacate their current positions.

- Do you ever ask yourself why it is always the same people who put up their hands to help out around the organization? Why is it that the same faces always appear at meetings? When there is a meeting or workshop to be attended externally, why is it that the same person always attends?
- What would happen if that person left your organization tomorrow? What would happen if other committee members left the organization tomorrow?
- Succession planning is the process that can assist in ensuring that your club does not cease to operate due to one or several people relinquishing their commitment, and that the result of their work continues well beyond their involvement.

A good succession plan includes:

- **A business plan** – this does not have to be lengthy. It is a working document outlining the organization's priorities, and should be consulted regularly throughout the year.
- **Position Descriptions** – this makes it easier to recruit new people to the position, and ensures that you know what jobs the vacating volunteer was responsible for.
- **Policies and Procedures manual** – this outlines the day-to-day tasks of your organization, and who is responsible for carrying them out. It will also contain policies about selection processes, and volunteer management.
- **Reporting procedures** – these show the reporting lines back to the committee, either directly or through supervisors.
- **Education and development opportunities** – not only do these increase job satisfaction, but also they broaden the range of skills of each volunteer. This means that if someone suddenly leaves, you are more likely to have someone else ready to step into the vacant position.

Barriers to succession planning:

Consider how your organization might tackle these obstacles:

- **The gatekeeper** – one person holding all the knowledge within a system only they understand

- **Believing they are irreplaceable** – considering that some members and volunteers are irreplaceable
- **Poor records** – a lack of formalized reporting procedures
- **Poor management** – a lack of volunteer management (i.e. recruitment, screening, orientation, training, recognition, replacement)
- **Senior members take all** – senior members taking all the administrative responsibility, restricting the development of juniors with an interest in the area
- **Time to go** – committee members who have served the organization well for many years, but now may be reaching their ‘best before date’
- **Fear of change** – a fear-of-change culture within your organization

How will you know when you have a successful succession plan in place?

The ideal succession plan should allow the existing administrators, management, coaching staff and volunteers to walk away from the club without being missed!

How to plan for the departure of your club’s primary advocate or “champion”

Look for “partners” as well as primary advocates and “champions”. At the beginning of your program consider seeking people or organizations to partner with your club to share the load and input their energy. Don’t turn away any offers of help even if you doubt what benefit they could bring at first. Often the first who join up are the most committed in the short to medium term.

Those who stand to gain from the program being conducted are obvious targets to approach for being partners. Offer opportunities to all club members, volunteers and program participants to participate in promoting and managing the program. If you develop your club’s partners right from the outset of your program you may find that from one of these will emerge your next “champion”.

Concepts and outline courtesy of Department of Sports and Recreation Western Australia
http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/clubs/volunteers/volunteers_retaining.asp