

# Valuing Succession Planning and Leadership Development: Why

INCORPORATING STRONG, THRIVING succession planning and leadership development programs into a large organization is a tremendous undertaking. The required investment of time, resources, and personnel is significant, which makes it imperative that the three key individuals involved—the Visionary, Architect, and Board Advocate—have a clear understanding of the value of implementing these programs. They should be able to clearly articulate *why* succession planning and leadership development are important based on their individual roles in the organization:

- **The Visionary’s “why.”** The Visionary’s role is to paint a picture of the future and help everyone in the organization see it. One of the best ways to establish this future perspective is to put a succession planning program in place. A succession planning program clearly illustrates the organization’s commitment to upward mobility and the growth of its team members, as well as an intention to be around for years to come. From the Visionary’s perspective, a succession planning program helps build a staff of individuals who are dedicated to the organization and willing to work together to continue moving it forward. To be successful, the Visionary needs to commit

to being the “messenger-in-chief” about succession planning and leadership development. He needs a clear, simple message about the long-term benefits these programs will provide to the organization.

- **The Architect’s “why.”** The Architect’s role is to create a blueprint for bringing the Visionary’s picture of the future to life. Her job is to design and implement the critical infrastructure that will be required to make succession planning and leadership development a consistent part of the company’s culture. To the Architect, these programs add value because they promote skill building and personal growth at every level of the company. The Architect highlights how these programs make the organization more productive, creative, and collaborative—and better equipped to handle future challenges.
- **The Board Advocate’s “why.”** The Board Advocate’s role is to maintain stability and longevity in the organization. Therefore, he is primarily concerned with how succession planning and leadership development can be used to smoothly transition high-level leadership positions from one individual to another and to avoid frequent or highly disruptive executive turnover. The Board Advocate also has a significant fiscal responsibility to the organization. As such, he values succession planning and leadership development as long-term investments that will save the company significant sums. The Board Advocate must be able to articulate these points to his fellow board members, whose approval and support are critical to building successful succession planning and leadership development programs.

Although the Visionary, Architect, and Board Advocate have slightly different perspectives on why succession planning and leadership development are important to an organization, their viewpoints overlap significantly. These programs offer an organization stability,

In our conceptualization of succession planning and leadership development programs, we, the authors—Steve, Kathie, and Larry—represent the Visionary, Architect, and Board Advocate, respectively. This book therefore refers to the Visionary as “he,” the Architect as “she,” and the Board Advocate as “he” for consistency throughout the text.

evidenced by higher employee retention; long-term financial savings; and smooth transitions of executive leadership positions. Stability also allows an organization to be more forward thinking, which is supported by the commitment to improve leadership skills at all levels of the organization as well as by the board’s ability to understand how an investment in these programs is an investment in the organization’s future. All three key individuals need to understand the complete picture of the value that succession planning and leadership development provide—although they may highlight or tailor certain elements of their message, depending on the audience.

Now that the value of succession planning and leadership development has been established, it is time to dive in and get started.