

# Diverse succession planning

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



## Introduction

“ The future of many organizations is likely to depend on their mastery of diverse succession planning given that building bench strength among women and minorities will be critical in the competitive war for talent”. (Charles R. Greer and Meghna Virick, 2008. ) They stressed further: “ Aside from the leadership provided by CEOs and diversity officers, management of diversity should be embraced by the entire leadership team and not perceived as the exclusive domain of the HR function. Cisco System becomes a \$12 billion high-technology company with over 47, 000 employees in not less than 54 countries of the world due to its strategic management policies and practices among which is diverse succession planning. Cisco puts in place its diversity initiatives and gender Initiatives because of its belief that connection of businesses, people and communities is a business imperative. This simple presentation on diverse succession planning is intended to explain the following points:

1. The concept of diverse succession planning (DSP)
2. The advantages of diverse succession planning
3. The steps involved in developing a diverse succession plan
4. Conclusion with the comments of some senior diversity leaders.

What is Succession planning and diverse succession planning? Simply put, Succession planning is the process of identifying high-potential employees, evaluating and improving their skills and abilities, and preparing them for advancement into positions which are keys to the success of business operations and objectives. Diverse Succession implies incorporation of

gender and racial diversity with succession planning by identifying methods for developing women and minorities as successors for key positions. Charles R. Greer and Meghna Virick 2008). Putting together, diverse succession planning is a process of identifying high-potential employees of any age, culture, ethnicity, gender, geographic background or sexual orientation, evaluating and improving their skills and abilities, and preparing them for advancement into positions which are keys to the success of business operations and objectives. Workforce diversity" describes the differences, similarities, and unique features that exist in an organization's workforce due to the mixture of gender, ethnicity, race, national origin, disabilities, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs and other factors.

The advantages of Diverse Succession Planning (DSP) Diverse Succession Planning has the following advantages:

- It helps to avoid extended and costly vacancies in key positions and assure the stability of business operations.
- It provides meaningful developmental opportunities for both the organization and its employees as it targets key leadership positions at varying levels. It helps to develop a diverse workforce by enabling decision makers to look at the future make-up of the organization as a whole.
- It helps to connect business people and communities.
- It facilitates better decision making
- It helps in anticipating important market changes and be more responsive to customer needs.

- It facilitates equal opportunity policy through recruitment, training and promotion process regardless of employees' race, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious background and nationality.
- It boasts global workforce.

The steps involved in developing a diverse succession plan Succession planning involves:

- Understanding the organization's long-term goals and objectives.
- Identifying the high-potential candidates and their respective developmental needs.
- Determining workforce trends and predictions.
- Identifying legal and diversity issues to consider.
- Establishing present and future leadership roles and objectives.
- Selecting key employees.
- Evaluating the strengths, weaknesses and readiness for succession in key employees.
- Planning for the individual development of and ways to retain key employees. Identifying “ emergency” positions without successors.
- Planning for positions that cannot be filled internally.

Going by the recommendations of Greer and Virick (2008) Companies should formalize a commitment to diverse succession planning throughout the organization and viewing it as a broad-based strategic imperative instead of solely a human-resources function. The company must clearly envision diversity as essential to business strategy because of the competitive advantages that follow. Companies should also identify early on the talented individuals who can be developed for advancement.

They should design objective standards for performance evaluations. They should also identify and cultivate outstanding mentors. They should also allow the chief diversity officer to have direct access to the CEO. They should also base executive bonuses partly on achieving diversity goals. “Companies need to reach deep, almost down to entry level, for talented women and minorities who can rise to leadership positions. Early identification and development of talent is crucial,” says Dr. Greer. “Also, identifying skilled mentors and fully utilizing their talents should be a priority.

Mentoring has great importance in terms of succession. “Patience and persistence are required, he says. Results can take four or five years, or more. So companies should be ready for a long-term commitment and be willing to work through the risks and challenges. Diversity Succession Planning in Malaysian Context John PG Tan (2009) revealed that most of Malaysian Companies do not engaged in leadership succession planning and implementation and few that engaged in it report low success rates. Companies commonly practice leadership replacement rather than leadership succession.

Meanwhile, leadership positions are the key positions upon which rest the success of any organization. Western Companies are flourishing due to incorporation of diversity in to their succession planning. However, in Universiti Utara Malaysia, there has been a kind of diversity succession planning. Some foreigners are being employed as Lecturers in the University. This is also observed in some Universities in Malaysia. This would provide

meaningful developmental opportunities for both the organization and its employees as well.

It will also give the university an opportunity to pursue more effectively its mission through the participation of a diverse workforce; also there would be enrichment of the dimensions of expanded organizational learning. Observations of some experts in Management An emerging body of empirical evidence (e. g. , Richard, 2000; Wright, Ferris, Hiller, & Kroll, 1995) indicates positive performance effects for diversity, and there are increasing indicators of the strategic importance of diversity to the success of companies.

PepsiCo's previous CEO, Steve Reinemund, has said, " I believe that companies that figure out the diversity challenge first will clearly have a competitive advantage" (Terhune, 2005). A leading insurer, Allstate, also has embraced diversity and sees it as a source of competitive advantage, particularly in terms of expanding the number of minority policyholders (Crockett, 1999). Cosmetics maker L'Oreal attributes its global success in developing and marketing cosmetics to marketing initiatives that have drawn on international diversity (Salz, 2005). Bridge Partners LLC ([www.ridgepartnersllc.com](http://www.ridgepartnersllc.com)) is a retained executive search firm founded by principals with extensive experience and credentials in leadership and senior-level recruitment, both in the US and internationally. Billie Williamson, Partner, Americas Inclusiveness Officer, Ernst & Young: " We have to ensure the talent is here to begin with, so hiring the right people and making sure they are trained and provided with the right experiences is key ... A second thing that is key to getting diversity to the top of an organization is people have to learn to put their biases aside.

Sometimes we think it's risky to put a woman or an ethnically diverse individual or an LGBT individual in a leadership role, and it's really not a risk, but somehow we have created that in our biases and our frame of reference. The third thing that is key is that [senior] leadership has to set this as a personal goal that they care about. " Eugene Kelly, Worldwide Director, Global Workplace Initiatives, Colgate-Palmolive Co. : " It is critical for us to manage our talent well if we are going to continue to be successful.

We have 30, 000 employees around the world, 8, 000 in the United States, and today, 82 percent of our revenues are generated outside the United States. Those statistics alone will tell you why we must get this right and why we must manage our talent. It's a discipline that enables us at any point in time to identify the next two leaders or successors for any key position. Having a diverse slate of talent to do that is really the key. For us, it's really important to have discipline and the CEO's direct commitment. Rohini Anand, Senior Vice President, Global Chief Diversity Officer, Sodexo: " It's really an end-to-end process. It's about doing the diagnostics, understanding where the gaps are. For us, it's about getting more women and people of color into operational ... profit-and-loss kinds of roles, which is the career path to senior-level positions in our company, doing that early on and making sure we provide enough substantive career tracks. In terms of succession ... having that accountability and commitment from the top is absolutely critical.

It can't only be a numbers piece. It has to be the behavioral piece. It has to be the commitment along with the metrics and the data so you get a holistic approach. " Conclusion All said and done, once those high potential individuals are a part of an organization that places value on diversity-

inclusion initiatives, retention rates will increase as employees take pride in those initiatives, viewing their firm as an employer of choice, where appreciation for all people and their differences creates a work environment where all can thrive.

The flip side is that, in companies where diversity initiatives are a low priority, employees may leave because they don't believe they are valued, because they perceive a workplace to be unwelcoming, or because they believe a competitor organization shows precedent in developing careers paths for a more diverse range of executives. Both money and time invested in those employees are lost. Without a succession plan an organization will find it harder to grow. Without a strong diversity inclusion initiative, retention is a whole lot more difficult.

## Reference

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