



# Career Insights

from Lucy Randle, STAR Medical

This month Career Insights looks at one of the hottest topics of the moment: succession planning. There is no question that some organisations are better at this than others. One thing is for sure: the companies that get it right will benefit from an attractive hook for recruitment purposes and a more solid leadership team in the mid – and long-term future.

### What is succession planning?

The objective of succession planning is to identify those employees with the potential to fill future key leadership jobs. There are two types of successor: short-term and long-term. Short-term successors are almost ready to take over a leadership position, and would do so should one arise suddenly and unexpectedly. Long-term successors are ready to be developed from mid-career onwards in the direction of future senior positions.

### Why is it important?

Succession planning ensures that when a senior role needs to be filled, there is a diverse group of talented candidates to choose from. Existing senior management and HR will have already been working with these employees to prepare them for this step, developing them in alignment with anticipated future organisational needs.

### The employer's perspective

The organisation's senior management team should work closely together to analyse future succession gaps. The earlier these are identified the better, so that the successor can be effectively trained by the time the role comes up, thus minimising disruption.

There should be a collective involvement in the management and ownership of the succession planning process. Line managers must take responsibility for developing successors, with HR challenging and supporting the managers' views. The MD/CEO's involvement is principally based around adding weight and importance to the process. Between them, they will carry out a skills audit to assess the skills currently available to the company and the skills that may be needed in the future in line with business strategies. From here, potential successors can be identified. 'Pools' of talent can then be developed, i.e. groups of successors who currently possess or have the potential to develop both generic leadership skills and the specific skills required for the future success of the business.

The organisation needs to be sensitive in its approach to succession planning. Not everybody from the pool of talent will eventually be selected for a senior leadership position, and managers will need to keep all employees motivated and happy after this event. Similarly, not all employees will be suitable or interested in being involved with the succession planning – for example, 'career reps' who plan to remain at the representative level because they love selling and have no interest in managing. These employees need to feel that they too are valued and developed within their own roles. All employees need to understand how succession planning works and how potential successors are identified and judged. The process must be fair and open to anyone who is interested.

### The employee's perspective

A critical success factor for succession planning to work is for the manager and the successor to share their aspirations honestly and openly. As a potential successor, you must understand your organisation's current and future needs. You should also be very open about your needs in terms of your career ambition and personal commitments (e.g. family, location restrictions). A programme of career moves and development activities can then be agreed between you and your manager.

Once you have been identified as a (potential) succession candidate it is likely that you will work closely with a mentor, sometimes even the person whose role you will take over in the future. You may also be involved in job rotation or secondments to gain an understanding of other areas of business and broaden your experience. As a succession candidate, you may also benefit from more explicit career management – potentially with a clear timetable indicating dates and targets to help you, your manager and HR know exactly where your career is heading.

For further advice around career management, please feel free to call Lucy or any of the team at STAR Medical.



**TIP**

The STAR team is constantly being exposed to useful and innovative ideas relating to aspects of employment and recruitment. Each month, a member of the team will share a favourite tip with you.

Stewart Musselle, Recruitment Consultant for the South-East

"When attending an interview, be sure that you take a well-organised brag file. Write careful notes on the company and place them at the front of the file – that way, when they open it up the first thing they will see is your research about their company!"



Career Insights has been sponsored by STAR Medical Specialist Recruiters for Pharmaceutical Sales & Marketing

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