

**The Bill Blackwood
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**Succession Planning
For Impending Retirements**

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement agencies around the nation have similarities when someone in upper management retires or leaves unexpectedly. Someone has to fill his or her position. The replacement should be someone who can manage all of the day-to-day operations of an agency, which could include personnel, budget, and the safety of the citizens they serve. It can be either success story or a dilemma. When someone retires, they take with him or her vast amounts of knowledge and experience. It could have a short term or long-term effect on the relationship they have built with their employees or the community.

An agency's legacy could be determined by not making the right choice when replacing someone in upper management. Wolfe (n.d.) stated, "There are two types of succession planning: crisis and long-term" (para. 3) Crisis succession planning, an organization develops an emergency plan of action in the event that key members of the organization are no longer able to fulfill their role (Wolfe, n.d.). Long-term succession planning identifies actions that can be taken over many years (Wolfe, n.d.). Therefore, without a solid succession plan, the agency could set themselves up for failure. By not having someone prepared with the proper training, an agency could end up picking the wrong person. With proper vision, an agency can prepare their personnel for promotion from within their agency, or, if they choose, they could select a candidate from outside of their agency who possesses the proper training and has the knowledge and experience needed in upper management.

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INTRODUCTION

Around the nation, most law enforcement upper administrations typically employ a sheriff, constable, or chief of police as top tier administrators. The second tier typically employs a chief deputy sheriff, deputy chief constable, or commander(s). The third tier typically has a major(s), the fourth tier typically has a captain(s). This can flow down from upper management to mid-level management. When an upper administrator decides to retire, someone has to fill his or her shoes. Whether the retirement is prearranged or happens suddenly, the person leaving takes with them a vast amount of experience and knowledge. If an agency did not have the foresight to train someone as a replacement or give someone an opportunity to receive proper leadership training, the experience and knowledge is lost when the person leaving is out of the organization. This could have a negative short-term and long-term impact; it depends on how the organization has implemented succession planning.

Employees of an organization want to improve the succession process and be a part of how their "future leaders are chosen" (Hughes, 2010, para. 2). Having employees involved in succession planning prepares law enforcement organizations "for the future" (Stiehm, 2008, para. 1). What typically happens is an organization fails to preplan (Stiehm, 2008). Succession planning is important because if it is not done early, agencies are left with vacancies within the organizational structure. The wrong individuals may be put into a position where they may or may not have the proper training and experience to work in the position. Law enforcement organizations should implement a succession plan for impending upper management retirements.

POSITION

There are a large number of baby boomers retiring from law enforcement. Many of them hold law enforcement positions in upper management. One study found that only 13% of today's upper management is less than 40 years of age. Nearly 71% were under 40 in the 1970s (Tilly, 2011). With 71% of law enforcement upper management leaving, there will be a huge hole created from the departure of those who have the experience and knowledge in many aspects of law enforcement. Bratton (2008) stated, "Succession planning defined is the process of reviewing agencies for leadership talent. Identifying possible successors, and then providing those individuals with the training, mentoring, and support, they need to prepare themselves for critical roles within the organization when vacancies occur" (p. 1). There are numerous areas to consider when putting together a succession plan.

Succession planning allows upper administration to select people who have certain competencies or to develop people on certain competencies. Succession planning candidates are recognized "based on multiple criteria, including skills, performance and social competence" (Schroeder, 2011, para. 7). Law officers are in contact with people every day of their lives. Not only on traffic stops and on routine calls, they are involved directly with people during social events. Upper management personnel routinely have meet and greet and question and answer sessions with the community. Social competence is especially important on this stage.

Another competency to be looked at within succession planning is political competence: "In addition to 'passive' succession planning, i.e., identifying people from above based on performance; high potentials are expected to find ways to get noticed"

(Schroeder, 2011, para. 8). This can incorporate social competence. Political competence is needed so an upper management employee can get others on board with their agenda for not only employees but the community as well. It helps with getting everyone on board with the agencies culture and mission.

Succession candidates should also exhibit functional competence. Schroeder (2011) stated, "Succession candidates do not make it to the top just by socializing and getting on high profile projects, they have to perform consistently high quality work over a long period in multiple roles" (Schroeder, 2011, para. 9). This is especially important because of new technology within law enforcement. Today's agencies have numerous databases and reporting software. It is important for a person to be up on technology and being able to work as a section chief under any circumstances.

Additionally, agencies should look for potential competence in their succession planning. Potential competence plays a big role in what individuals are capable of, or what they believe they can achieve (Schroeder, 2011). Individuals with goals, ideas, and having progressive ideas fall well into succession planning. Leadership competence is another area to be aware of for succession planning: "It is not uncommon to give people new responsibilities without a promotion to see if they sink or swim before making the new role official. This may sound unfair, but there is something to be said for making someone demonstrate leadership skills before formalizing their leadership role" (Schroeder, 2011, para. 12). Good leadership competence is more than just saying someone is a good leader. Good leaders are confident, consistent, and have good character. Their officers will follow them through the door.

A final area an agency needs to examine is a successor's teamwork competence, which means that "internal mobility is common so to keep the best people managers have to develop and recognize them" (Schroeder, 2011, para. 14).

Teamwork competence is important because it gets individuals to work together and combine their ideas to meet a common goal. In this case, it is to meet the mission and goals of an organization. Combining all of this allows individuals who do good work, continue doing good work, and share their knowledge and experience with others. It will help the agency meet the challenges of the community and the challenges of the agency. This is all-important when adopting and implementing a succession plan.

A solid succession plan will help ensure an organization's legacy. Leading by legacy strengthens the capacity of individual leaders and organizations and enhances the reputation of the law enforcement profession. Effective leadership is all a part of an organization and its ability to ensure a variety of positive organizational aspects. This includes a foundation for the culture of the agency and setting "expectations for individual and organizational performance and other outcomes" (Weinzel, 2012, para. 4). An understanding of the principals and concepts of an organization's legacy is incumbent on how it was passed along generation to generation. The importance of foundational principals is that "legacy-oriented leadership requires a strong continuity that addresses organizational practices and norms" (Weinzel, 2012, para. 4). Legacy oriented leadership is about understanding what an organization has done in the past, using its experiences to grow, and sharing its knowledge with employees, so they can someday move up in its ranks and repeat the positives outcomes of lessons learned (Weinzel, 2012). Something to remember is that for a legacy to remain intact; it has to

have value for the organization. The legacy must be positive and productive, and it must be something that an organization would want its employees to follow (Weinzetl, 2012). For organizational legacy to continue, the employee must buy off on it.

Employees want a type of leader to look up to, one they can trust, someone they can emulate. This gives them the skill set they need to develop into a good leader when they attain an upper management position. This is passed on from generation to generation (Weinzetl, 2012, para. 10).

Agencies should make sure there is no impact on morale when incorporating succession planning. Agencies should develop positive employee morale and maintain the continuity of an agencies mission. Agency morale keeps employees around longer. Succession planning enhances employee retention and occurs because succession plans are “created to solve an agency need, are centered on the goals of the employee” (Santa, n.d., para. 5). Furthermore, “Filling a vacancy with a qualified member from within the police department also ensures that community relations and the mission of the department are maintained” (Santa, n.d., para. 5).

There are steps that have to be taken in order to keep a “thriving and successful organization building towards positive morale is to build and maintain a thriving and successful business” (Cuma, 2013, para. 6). Law enforcement agencies are run like a business in that they continually work on having adequate resources like training and enough personnel to do the job safely and efficiently. Ones that do not use this model are the ones who find themselves with morale issues. With the right supervision-leadership, any organization can rise to the surface and find success (Cuma, 2013, para. 6). Enhancing morale issues can be as simple as giving personal recognition; and

“appreciation for a job well done go a long way to improve employee morale” (Cuma, 2013, para. 7).

Employees will go the extra mile and go to great lengths for leaders and co-workers that matter. Cuma (2013) cited that in workplaces with “low morale, employees would frequently say they seldom, if ever, receive a word of thanks from their supervisor” (Cuma, 2013, para. 7). Employees need positive organizational communication. Although no one likes getting bad news, employees handle it better if there is positive organizational communication. Employees are quick to offer ideas or suggestions to help improve a bad or difficult situation if positive communication is in place. The idea here is to keep everyone apprised of what is going on, whether it is bad or good news. Organizations with positive communication strategies will find it is easier to encourage employees to continue training for upper management positions (Cuma, 2013, para. 8). An organization has more of a reason to promote from within, which increases employee morale. “Good morale and effective leadership go hand in hand” (Cuma, 2013, para. 12).

In order to maintain the continuity of the agency mission, they first must incorporate a mission statement. A mission statement is a statement of who the agency is, what they want to accomplish, how they are going to get there and the purpose of it. The mission statement has to be obtainable and realistic (Roberts, 2011, para. 12). Some agency mission statements incorporate professionalism, respect, integrity, dedication, and excellence (P.R.I.D.E.).

Employees incorporating P.R.I.D.E. into their personal and professional lives share the same sentiment. While this may seem like a daunting task, one can break it

down into four simple answers. Who they are; what it is they do; how they are going to do it; and what its intent or purpose is. It is these principals or mission statements that should be carried on to the next generation and beyond. This can be passed on with a well-planned and initiated succession plan. Having a mission statement gives employees a sense of direction, and something to consider in their everyday lives, both on and off duty.

A truly important part of the mission statement brings about “continuity of leadership. Organizations that develop leaders from the ranks of current employees are more likely to adhere to their missions and manage new challenges” (Webb, n.d., para. 2). This is also helpful with community relations. Bringing in individuals from other agencies to fill the upper management ranks could change the look of the mission because of different views and or ideas being brought in. Developing leaders within the organization gives them the opportunity to experience numerous aspects of upper management in law enforcement as they advance through their career. Experienced upper management employees share their knowledge and experience to aspiring employees seeking promotion to areas they might someday promote into.

COUNTER POSITION

Succession planning is an important part of an agencies future. However, it has its pros and cons. There are several perceived disadvantages to succession planning that can be mentioned. Depending on how succession planning is implemented, it might not allow outside candidates to be selected, the wrong person could be selected to lead, and, lastly, there could be favoritism by the selectee over other officers. A good succession plan will begin with looking at who is retiring and who is leaving for

other reasons. That information is the baseline on which to build a plan for developing future leaders.

There are times when outside candidates should be considered for upper management positions. In some situations, it is better to replace someone in upper management with an outside candidate in order to bring new ideas and experience to the agency. Another reason an agency may select from outside is that "there simply may not be a suitable candidate within the organization" (Newton, n.d., para. 2). The issue with outside candidates who are hired is that it could lead to internal problems. It can lead to those individuals who were "motivated losing interest and not trying as hard in the organization" (Newton, n.d., para. 2). Without motivation, those employees could lose interest and wonder why they are putting forth effort if they believe there are no possibilities of them being promoted into an upper management position (Newton, n.d., para. 2).

Employees need to develop so they can survive to meet new challenges in today's law enforcement. Newton (n.d.) stated, "Sometimes a person may be developed for a role in the organization that may not exist in the future" (Newton, n.d., para. 5). According to Newton (n.d.), this can leave a negative impact within the organization. Also, additional training costs money. If an agency's upper management later eliminates a position, it will have wasted resources developing a person for a role that no longer is needed (Newton, n.d.). Paying an outside candidate to relocate and join to an agency, then discovering later that they do not meet the requirements or are not a good fit for the organization can also become a waste of resources.

However, some agencies need outside candidates because otherwise there

would be issues of favoritism. With succession planning, there are some who benefit from favoritism. No succession-planning program is perfect. Most of these are complex, and if not managed well, problems can occur. Some may feel like there is favoritism from within the regular members. Candidates can be subjected to the political fallout of agency reorganization after a new administration takes over or someone retires. When upper administration makes outside appointments, some worthy "people get passed over, others benefit from favoritism" (Schroeder, 2011, para. 4).

Another reason why some agencies need to promote externally is that sometimes current employees do not match up with and agencies future goals. Smaller agencies are so small that they may not be able to afford to pay for upper management training. For these agencies, looking outside the agency is the only choice. However, if an agency is large enough, they should invest in their current employees to build a significant pool of candidates.

RECOMMENDATION

All law enforcement agencies should have a succession planning toolbox. Training should be implemented to assure employees have everything they need to complete their job effectively and efficiently. This would allow an employee to grow and be able to see what opportunities await them. There should also be a mentorship and coaching program for the employees. This would allow the veteran officers and upper older upper administrators and opportunity to share their knowledge about organizational culture, departmental policies and procedures, and employee management. An employee's performance needs to be evaluated, so an agency can

provide both positive and negative feedback. Whether positive or negative, it important this feedback is available so where there are deficiencies, an agency can implement plans to improve on (Tilly, 2011, para. 16).

Garcia (2010) stated that before baby boomers retire, taking their leadership knowledge with them, which could have public safety implications at every level, succession planning must be emphasized as a necessary tool. When Police Chief Michael Barth retired after 30 years in law enforcement, he was asked how he prepared his agency for his impending retirement. He quoted, "Part of the strategic plan I introduced when I became chief included a succession plan," he added. "I tried to make sure they would be qualified when this day came" (Kolumbic, 2013, para. 5). Schlechter (2013) suggested that "Whether an agencies plan is to develop talent internally, or hire from the outside, the critical issue is to continually evaluate and plan for the future needs of your organization" (para. 11). Law enforcement agencies should implement a succession plan for impending upper management retirements.

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