


Planning for Succession Planning

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**Developing Succession
Planning Capacity
within Caltrans**

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A Research Report from the Pacific Southwest
Region University Transportation Center

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Challenges at Caltrans – May 2025

- About 44% of employees are 50 and older
 - About 18% are 60 and older
- About 63% of supervisors and managers are 50 and older
 - About 23% are 60 and older
- **Does this resemble your organization and what best practices can your organizations implement to succession plan?**



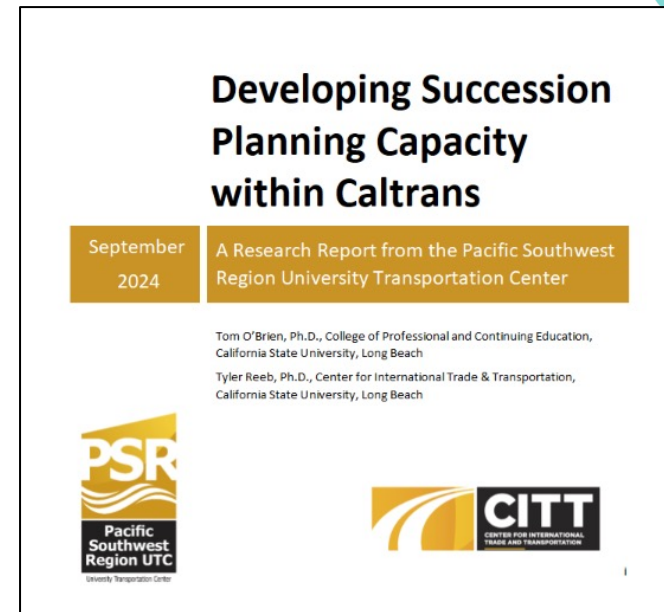
Whoa Daniel, Slow Down!

- Shouldn't we develop a plan first?
- Peer Exchange with DOTs from Michigan, Montana, Colorado, and Arizona
- Challenges observed
 - Competing with other State DOT and private sector
 - Strategies such as transitional training are difficult to implement on a regular basis
 - Bureaucratic hurdles



Report on Succession Planning

- Purpose: Conduct research to help Caltrans develop/update its succession planning strategy
- Methodology:
 - Analyze existing strategies used by State DOTs
 - Assess the use of Caltrans' Knowledge Transfer Guidebook
 - Evaluate the success of existing strategies within Caltrans
 - Conduct a peer exchange with DOTs from MT, MI, AZ, and CO



Succession Planning vs. Knowledge Management

- Succession Planning (SP) focuses on developing people for future roles
- Knowledge Management (KM) focuses on capturing, storing, and transferring information, skills, and expertise
- Effective Organizations use KM to document the expertise of current employees and SP to train future employees using that information



Michigan DOT Lessons Learned

- Best practice 1: Organizations should invest in 35-49 year-olds
 - Prepares them for the future
- Best practice 2: Engage under 35 year-olds
 - Encourage to seek and hone leadership skills
- Best practice 3: Separate talent management from knowledge management and address the two subjects separately





Who is Responsible for Succession Planning?

Everyone:

- Senior Executives = Champions
- Department Heads = Leaders
- HR Professionals = Technical Experts
- Employees = Validators



Image Source: Corporate Performance Strategies

3 Steps to Preparing a Succession Plan

- Develop Risk Matrices based on position or similar grouping
 - List benefits (identify needs & priorities, will help to develop the end strategy, etc.)
 - List key players to develop this (HR, mgmt, etc.)



Image Source: Talentprise

3 Steps to Preparing a Succession Plan

2. Assess morale and culture
 - Use anonymous survey if employees are responsive
 - If employees are non-responsive use 1:1 meetings to ask what could be improved or make work culture ideal
 - Use open-ended questions and take notes
 - Employees will not buy-in to succession planning or any concept when morale is low

3 Steps to Preparing a Succession Plan

3. Develop Pre-and-Post Measurables

- Best practices for Pre-Measurables:
 - Use survey to gather baseline for your organization
 - 1:1 if surveys net insufficient results
 - Set goal to exceed industry morale minimum:
66% Positive feedback ++

- Best practices for Post-Measurables:
 - Verify they validate pre-measurables
 - Share with entire organization or division of organization
 - Be accountable – State areas for improvement and take action
 - Recruit new talent with succession planning in mind

- Institutionalize!



Are You Prepared to Succession Plan?

1. Develop Risk Matrices based on position or similar grouping
 - Prioritized what's important to organization and employees
2. Assess morale and culture
 - Feedback needs to be acted upon to improve morale and culture
3. Develop Pre- and Post-Measurables
 - Best practices will shape your organization and increase the buy-in to a strong succession plan
 - Know how you define success

Setting up for Success

- Goal for the plan is to maximize employee buy-in
 - There is data collection, but it is not the end goal
- Share plan feedback organization/department/division-wide
 - Gain trust and accountability; will improve morale and buy-in
 - Share outcome of plan
 - Share next steps and strategy
- Provide periodic updates as planning is finalized
 - Goal is transparency; improve buy-in

Budgeting Resources

- Keep the succession planning team accountable
 - Provide expectations in their role
 - Mentor, train, answer questions, and determine employee interest in leadership
 - Ensure 5-10% of time & resources are dedicated to succession planning

- Secure resources or a team to develop guidance, training and set future schedules
 - Doesn't need to be a full-time job
 - Guidance to document and update succession planning
 - Training must be recurring offered at least twice a year

Summary

- Who is Responsible for Succession Planning
- 3 Steps to Succession Planning
- Setting up for Success
- Budgeting Resources

Next Week: Implementing the Succession Plan

Thank you!



Any Questions? Contact Us:

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