

Succession Planning and Development

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Abstract

This paper discusses Succession Planning and Development for officers within the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Some of the information shows that planning is not enough but developing a working model is more efficient. It further covers that formal mentoring programs are beneficial. Mentoring programs allow individuals looking to promote the opportunity to learn from seasoned veterans not only text book regulations but soft skills that cannot be learned in a book.

Introduction

Having a succession plan in place for any organization is what separates the strong from the weak. Every organization is undergoing change; be it daily, weekly, monthly or yearly. Succession planning requires more than just a well thought out idea and should cover every area of the organization, not just the top executives. General George S. Patton, Jr., stated "By perseverance, study, and eternal desire, any man can become great." If you apply this way of thinking in succession development, any member of an organization will have the ability to achieve greatness. Succession plans should cover the same basic ideas no matter if the organization is private or public. Every plan needs formal mentoring, informal coaching, understanding, and growth. When law enforcement agencies take an active approach to leadership development and step away from closed door training, succession planning can move from planning to development. This leads us to ask ourselves, are law enforcement agencies preparing their lower level employees to successfully assume leadership roles? This assessment will cover the basic essentials in Succession development planning.

Literature Review

What is succession planning you ask? It is the process of reviewing an organization for leadership talent, identifying possible successors, and then providing them with training, mentoring and support needed to be successful. Succession planning is not just for high level executives, but for any level position with key role persons. With proper training and mentoring any open position can easily be filled by promoting from within. This is extremely important among law enforcement agencies, given they have a small limited resource pool to work with (Bratton, 2008).

In today's market human capital is an organization's most prized asset. Organizations need to have a succession plan or development in place to ensure that knowledge is not lost as key role persons retire or move on to other agencies or career

fields. With a succession development plan in place, key role employees are more likely to be retained by an organization; the employees are able to see where there is potential for career growth within the organization and that the organization is stable for such growth. Most succession plans focus on three areas: the need for succession planning as senior management ages; plans prepared in the event of an unexpected loss; and plans to ensure current employees are capable of filling priority roles if needed. Succession plans are in need of constant updating and management (Butler & Roche-Terry, 2002).

Challenges that face most organizations when starting a succession plan are that plans don't leave room for change. Four tips to successfully implement a succession idea are as follows: 1) Change the name from succession plan to succession development. Succession development gives individuals experience in which to grow personally and professionally with an organization. 2) Measure outcomes, not the process. This allows for executive leaders to work with mid level management to establish common goals that benefit the entire organization. 3) Keep it simple. With this tip the organization ensures that any member can understand the succession development and the idea it is supporting. Less is more with succession development. 4) Stay realistic. Organizations can lose focus on what they are looking for in a replacement candidate if the organization is looking for unrealistic qualities in a potential candidate (Goldsmith, 2009).

Many times the challenge in law enforcement agencies is the implementation of a successful Succession plan. Succession plans can be less effective due to the extreme number of retirements within any organization. This has become evident since the implementation of the DROP program. Most officers who graduate from the academy together retire together. Thus creating a void in leadership roles and leaving a steep learning curve for any individual stepping into the leadership role. The gap between new recruits and senior officers can be bridged if each law enforcement agency would set up and follow a leadership development program. Three incentives to establishing a leadership development program are: 1) Bridges a gap between succession planning and employee development with training and mentoring programs with higher level management decision making involved. 2) Shows the investment level of the organization in its commitment to leadership. 3) Shows organizational development initiatives through one on one executive development (Putney & Holmes, 2008).

Succession planning should not just be limited to top executive positions. Every position should be viewed as a key position and thus be protected with a succession plan. Every successful succession plan process begins with getting support from the top-level executives. The next step would be making sure the required job skills are noted; not just the technical but the soft skills as well. Soft skills include communication skills, interpersonal skills, political sensitivity, and leadership ability (Fleischmann, 2000). These soft skills are not something that can be learned from a book or manual; they are learned from formal mentoring and informal coaching. By having a mentoring program, a new officer can learn from a seasoned officer both technical and soft skills needed to adequately perform a leader's position. An example of formal mentoring would be a craftsman would study under a master craftsman of any given trade. Thus allowing the individual to advance from apprentice to journeyman and finally to master status (Reeves, 2010). Paramilitary organizations with rank promotion structure are

excellent programs for mentoring and succession planning. Examples are firefighting, law enforcement and correctional agencies. A factor that tends to hinder great succession planning or development is the financial restraints and budgetary deficits in local and state government agencies. When individuals are “pushed” or openly encouraged to take early retirement options such as DROP, it can ultimately affect succession planning or development of qualified successors (Reeves, 2010). Elements that can help with financial and budgetary deficits are identifying target roles. Segmenting talents enables organizations to devote scarce resources; examples are money, attention, training and assignments, to those in roles that make the most difference (King & Hazucha, 2013). Another element is identifying and assessing succession candidates. It has been proven that most candidates show a strong performance in their current roles with relevant track records; but there is no data on how they will perform in a new role. Four types of information to help assess possible candidates are: performance, potential, readiness, and fit. 1) Performance: examining a person’s current and recent track records will allow for a basic understanding to know if the candidate will be a likely consideration for a higher role. 2) Potential: when nurtured over time a potential candidate would succeed in a higher role. 3) Readiness: a challenge to assess, but if the candidate is trained they can succeed. 4) Fit: using structured judgment match up candidates’ characteristics with the higher roles’ requirements. (King & Hazucha, 2013).

Informal coaching is another way to assess possible candidates, by placing lower level employees in acting roles just above their current grade. Assign shifts working with acting supervisors; trainees do all the work required of the position, under close supervision. This, in turn, allows them to gain necessary experience to fulfill the requirement of a higher leadership role (Milner, 2010). Having lower level employees learn from senior management ensures that vital skills and knowledge are not lost as individuals reach retirement.

Some recommendations from organizations with considerable “good succession plans” were the following: keep the process simple, engage technology to support the process, align succession management within overall business strategy, and secure senior level support for the process (Fulmer, 2002).

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to determine how the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Division of Law Enforcement sworn employees feel about succession planning and development. The method used to conduct this research was a questionnaire survey. The survey was given to those individuals currently employed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission division of law enforcement.

A total of 849 sworn members received the survey utilizing the agencies Power Document Management System (PDMS) program. The populace was among individuals ranging in rank from officer to lieutenant colonel. Experience and tenure varied among those surveyed from 0-26+ years.

Results

Of the 849 surveys that were sent out to the sworn members of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission using the organization's PDMS system, 754 were returned. This is an 88.81% response rate. Using this information the following was derived, in summary:

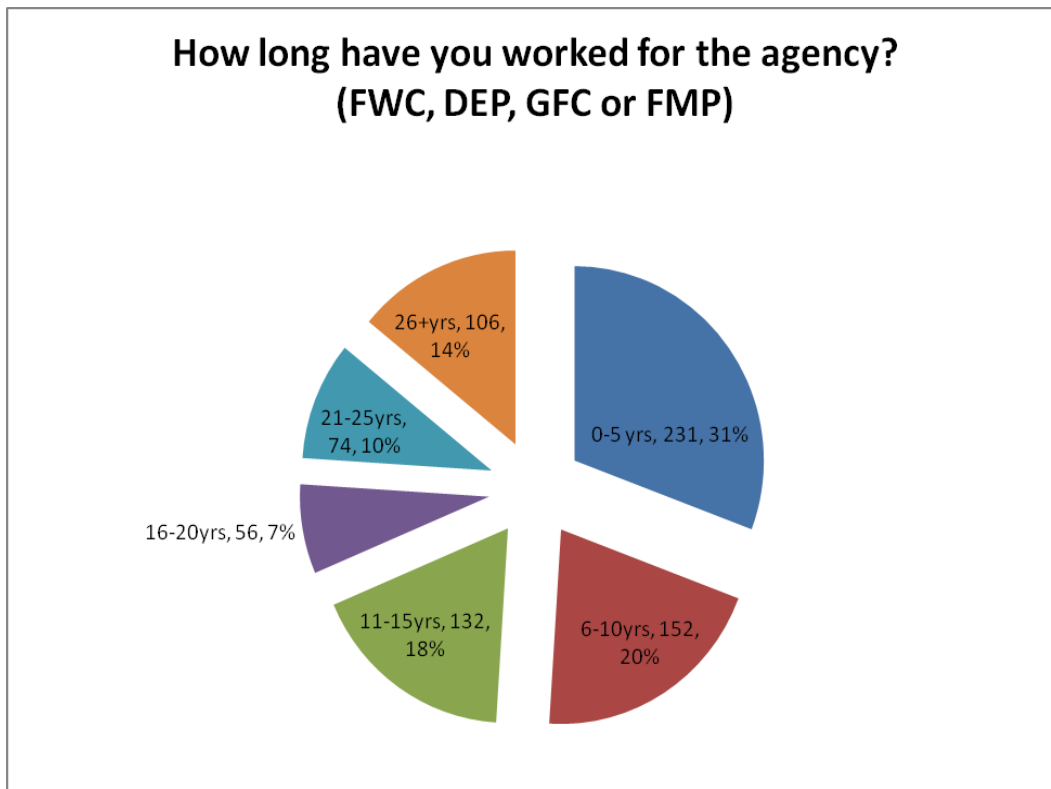
- 1) Most officers who completed the survey have been with the organization for less than 5 years.
- 2) The majority of those that responded are of the rank of officer.
- 3) Most have only held their current rank for less than 5 years.
- 4) The vast majority were neutral on their answers to - if individuals with prior military service were better prepared for leadership roles.
- 5) More individuals felt neutral about a person with a college degree being better prepared for leadership roles.
- 6) Most respondents disagreed with being required to have at least a 2 year degree before working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- 7) When asked how they felt about all supervisory positions within the organization having formal mentoring programs, the majority agreed.
- 8) The majority that responded agreed that having a mentoring program would better prepare them for advancement in the organization.
- 9) Out of those who responded the majority agreed that individuals should have taken at least two courses prior to being promoted to the rank of investigator or lieutenant.
- 10) From those who responded, the majority felt area supervisors should take advanced leadership courses prior to being promoted to the rank of Major.

Discussion

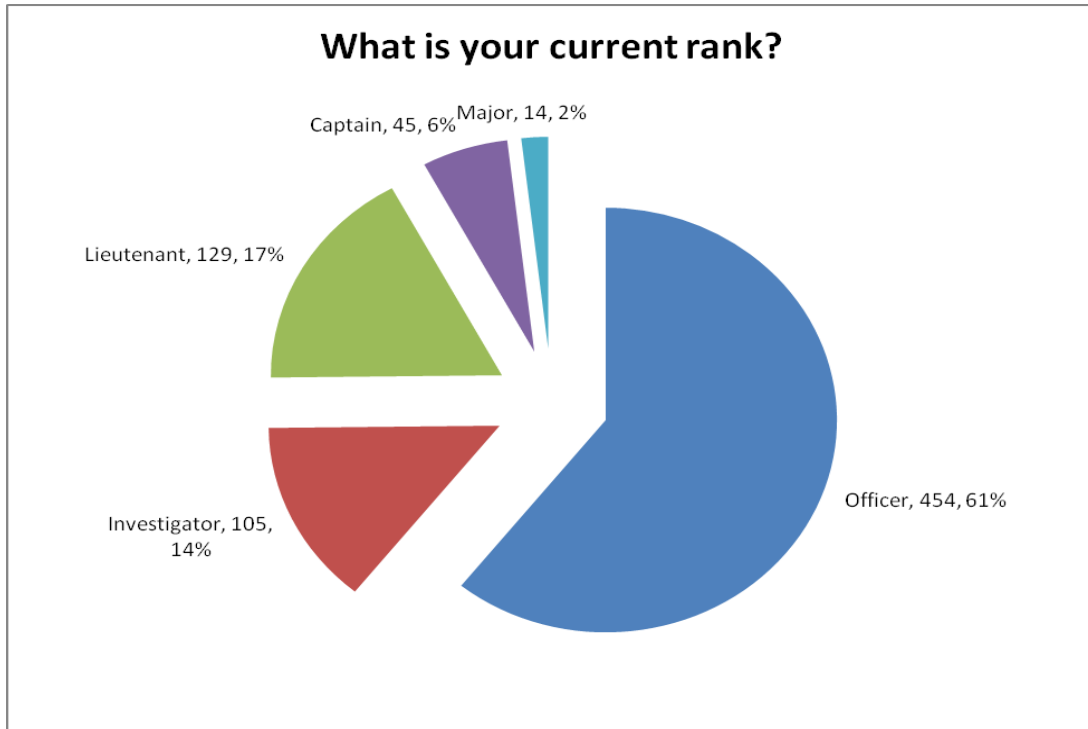
The point of this research was to look closely at the Succession Plan for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. During the research, it was noted that others in the organization also feel that formal mentoring programs should be implemented for training.

Out of the 849 officers asked to complete the survey, 754 responded. Each survey asked the sworn members a total of 11 questions. Not all 754 respondents answered all of the questions.

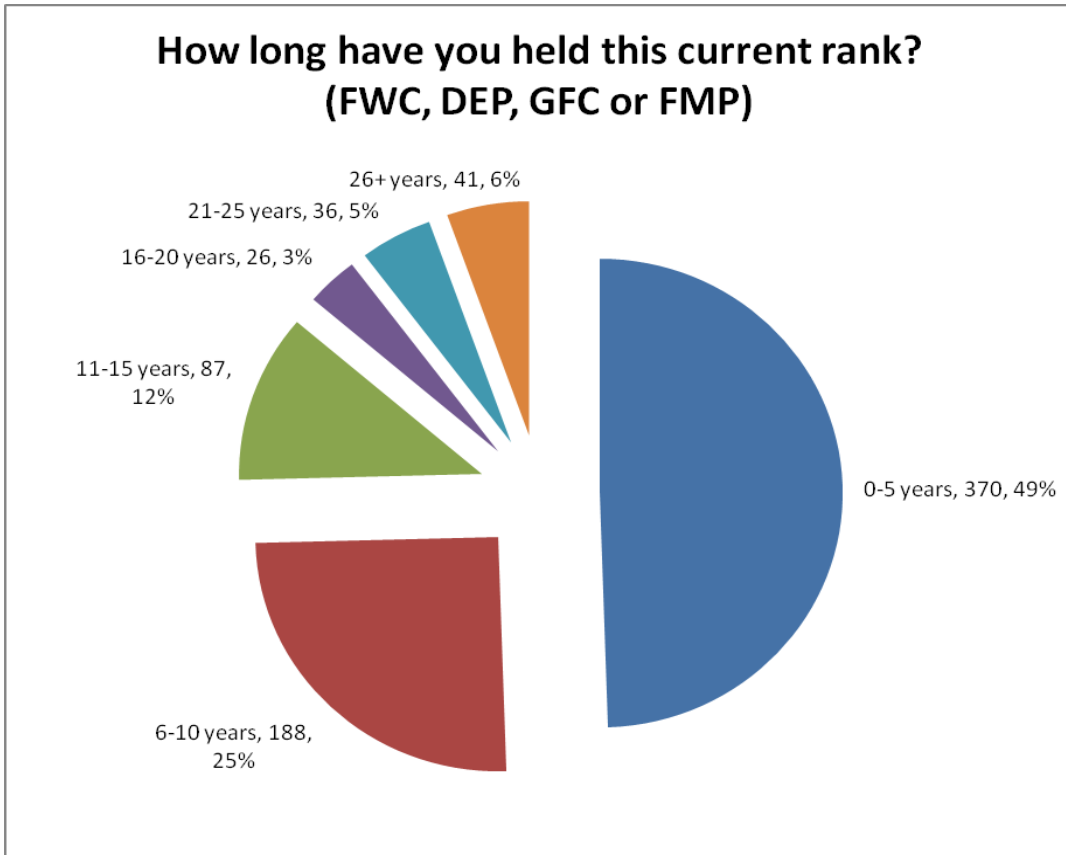
Of the respondents, 231 have worked for the agency for 5 years or less, which is 30.76%; 152 have worked for the agency for between 6-10 years or 20.24%; 11-15 years is 132 persons, or 17.58%; 16-20 years is 56 persons, or 7.46%; 21-25 years is 74 persons or 9.85% and 26 years more is 106 persons or 14.11%. This is alarming information, we have more “new recruits” than seasoned veterans in the agency and soft skills are going to lapse without a formal mentoring program for those skills to be learned. (Historical perspective: At one point, the Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Law Enforcement (DEP), The Florida Game & Freshwater Fish Commission (GFC) and the Florida Marine Patrol (FMP) all were folded into the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)).



The largest group of respondents was individuals with the rank of Officer (454 or 60.78%). The other respondents were investigators totaling 105 or 14.06%; Lieutenants totaling 129 or 17.27%; Captains totaling 45 or 6.02% and Majors totaling 14 or 1.87%.

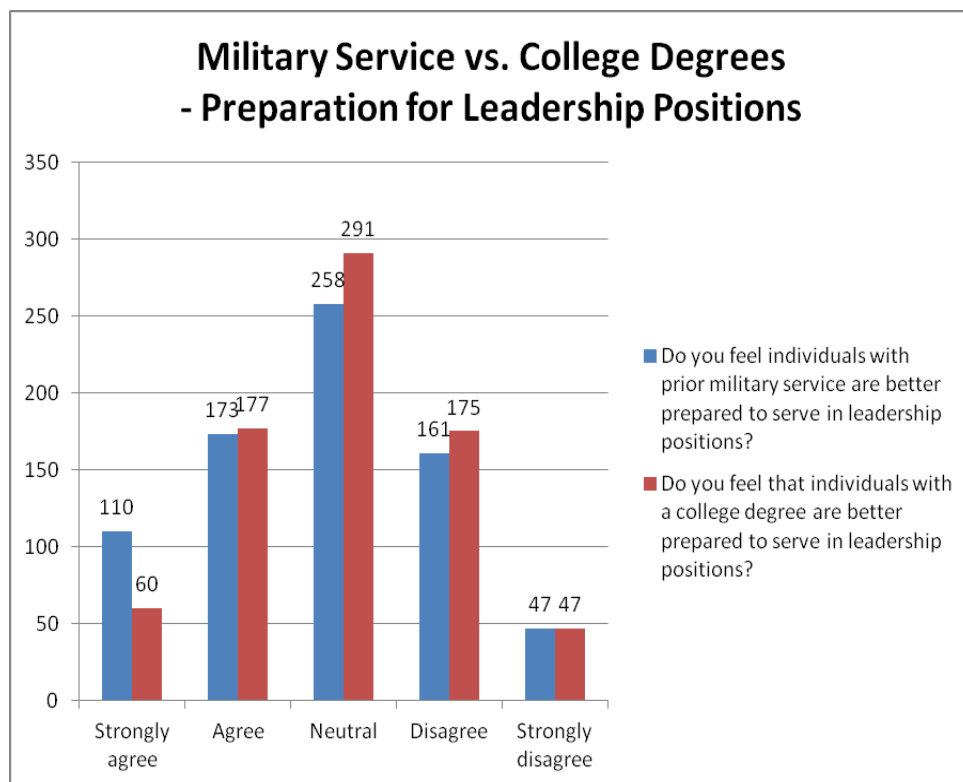


The majority of officers who responded to the survey have held their current position for 5 years or less (370 persons or 49.47%). Officers who have been with the agency 6-10 years total 188 or 25.13%; 11-15 years total 87 or 11.63%; 16-20 years total 26 or 3.48%; 21-25 years total 36 or 4.81% and 26 years or more total 41 5.48%.

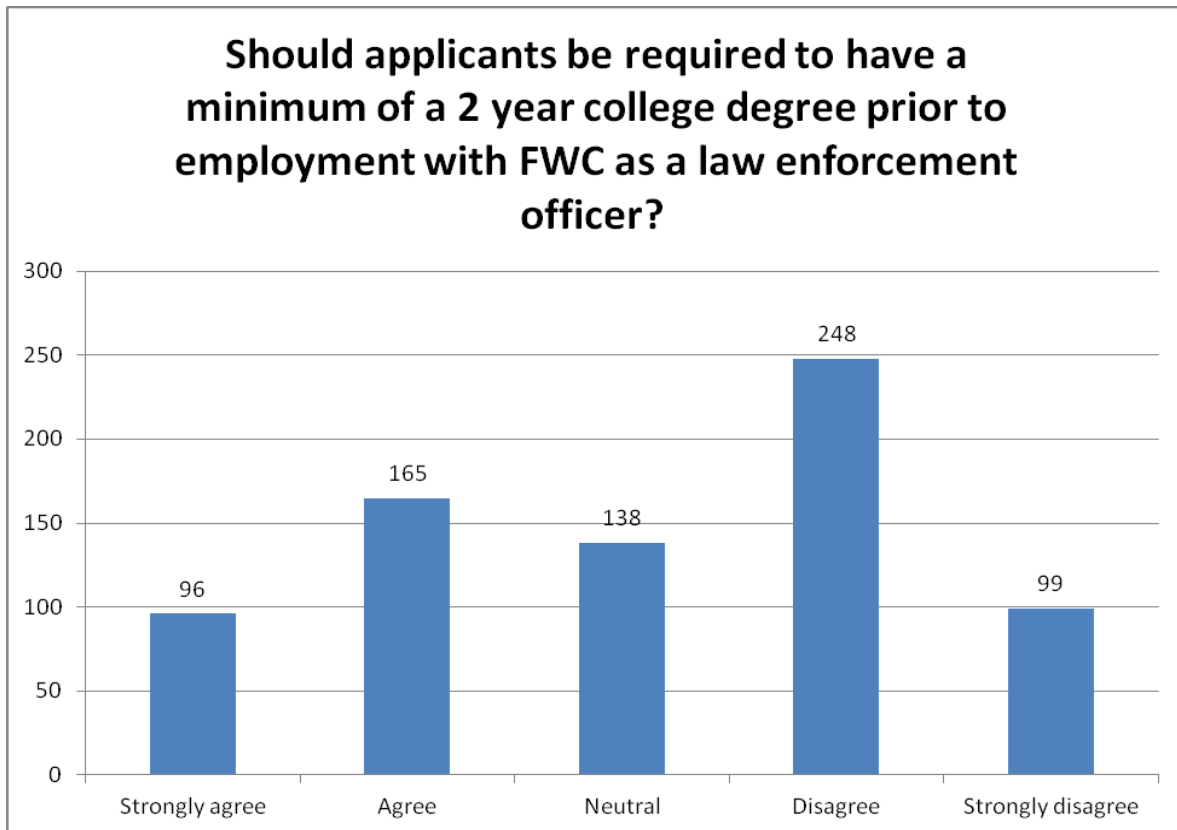


The respondents were asked if having prior military service better prepared individuals for leadership roles and the results were close. Those that strongly agree totaled 110 or 14.69%; agree totaled 173 or 23.10%; neutral totaled 258 or 34.45%; disagreed totaled 161 or 21.50% and strongly disagreed totaled 47 or 6.28%. If you combine those that strongly agree and agree you have a total of 283 or 37.79% and those that disagree and strongly disagree for a total of 208 or 26.78%. This makes for the outcome for this question almost 50/50.

When the respondents were posed with a question asking if having a college degree better prepared an individual for leadership roles the results were as follows: strongly agree totaled 60 or 8%; agree totaled 177 or 23.60%; neutral totaled 291 or 38.80%; disagree totaled 175 or 23.33% and strongly disagree totaled 47 or 6.27%. If you combine the results, strongly agree with agree you have a total of 237 or 31.60% and if you combine strongly disagree with disagree you would have a total of 222 or 29.60%. Again, almost a 50/50 outcome if you combine totals.

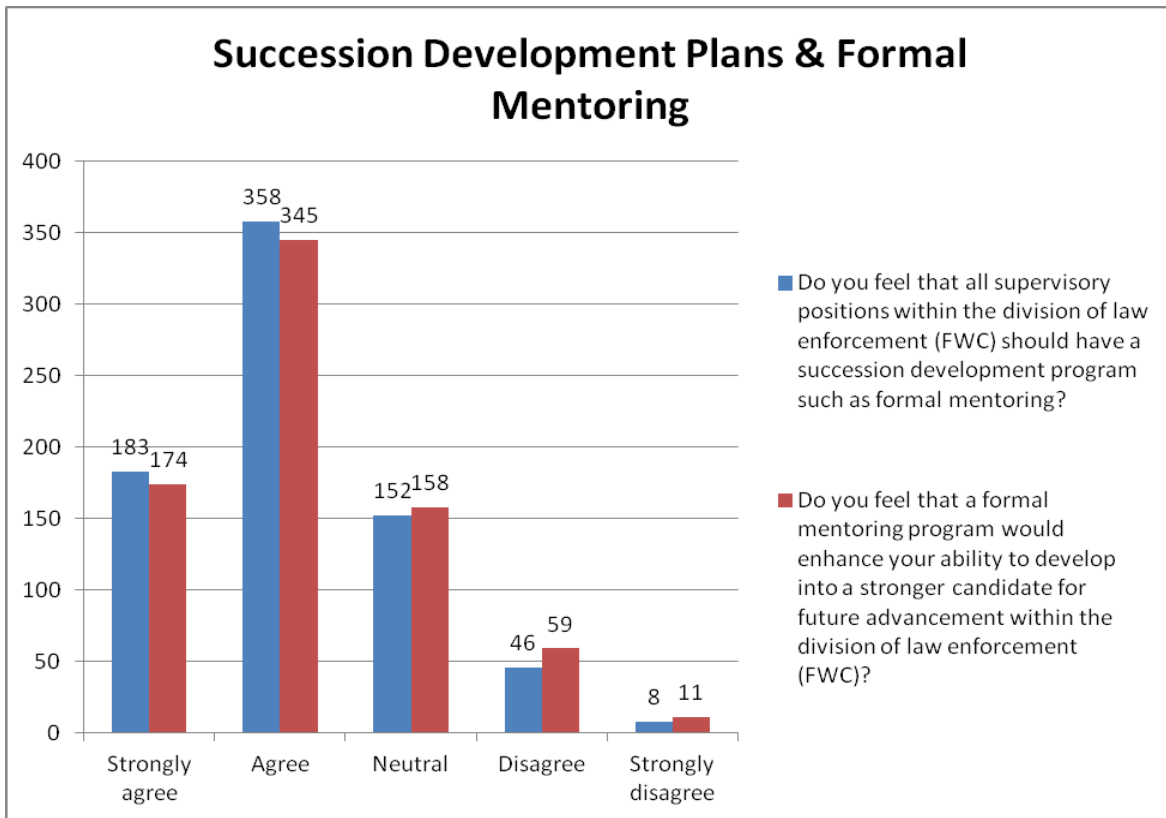


The survey asked the respondents if a 2 year college degree should be required of individuals prior to employment with FWC, the majority disagree with this question (248 or 33.24%). The other results were as follows: strongly agree 96 or 12.87%; agree 165 or 22.12%; neutral 138 or 18.50% and strongly disagree 99 or 13.27%.



The next question posed to the respondents was if a succession development plan for all supervisory positions within FWC was a good idea. The result was they felt a formal mentoring program is a good idea. The total results were as follows: strongly agree 183 or 24.50%; agree totaled 358 or 47.93%; neutral is 152 or 20.35%; disagree totaled 46 or 6.16% and strongly disagree totaled 8 or 1.07%. This leads to a conclusion that the majority of officers within FWC would like a succession development plan that incorporates formal mentoring for officers.

The respondents were asked if they felt a formal mentoring program would develop them into better candidates for leadership roles. Their results show most officers agree. 174 or 23.29% strongly agree; 345 or 46.18% agree; 158 or 21.15% are neutral; 59 or 7.09% disagree and 11 or 1.47% strongly disagree.



Respondents were asked if having at least two courses prior to being considered for the rank of investigator, the majority agreed (332 or 44.39%). 267 or 35.70% strongly agreed; 77 or 10.29% are neutral; 63 or 8.42% disagreed and 9 or 1.20% strongly disagreed. This is part of succession planning; making sure all members are capable of handling a supervisory position before they are in that position.

The respondents were then asked if an individual should have at least two courses prior to being considered for the position of Lieutenant and the majority agree (338 or 45.19%). 225 or 30.08% strongly agreed; 100 or 13.37% are neutral; 67 or 8.96% disagreed and 18 or 2.41% strongly disagreed. This further shows that having a working succession plan for all officers within the agency is a vital factor to being successful in the event of an emergency.

The survey asked the respondents if area supervisors should have advanced leadership courses prior to being considered for Major, the majority agreed (321 or 42.80%). 276 or 36.80% strongly agreed; 96 or 12.80% are neutral; 50 or 6.67% disagreed and 7 or 0.93% strongly disagreed. This would allow for more adequately trained area supervisors before promoting to Major and a more finely tuned succession plan.

Recommendations

Based on the above research and findings of the survey administered, it is the recommendation of this author that the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission Division of Law Enforcement implement a formal mentoring program for its sworn workforce at all levels, from officer to executive leadership.

A means of tracking an employee's progress in the succession process should be devised, which could be accomplished utilizing a template for each employee. A database could be created to help both the employee and management develop and plan, as well as guide the employee's advancement goals. Some of the fields captured could involve advanced training, leadership courses, management courses, and mentoring program. Methods to measure performance, potential, readiness and fit of the candidates could be defined and then incorporated in such a system.

Policies on promotional recommendations vs. requirements should be reviewed for individuals seeking advancement. An example would be to require a minimum number of advanced courses at each level/rank in order to make application for promotional consideration. The data supports the establishment of such a requirement in that over 80% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that advanced courses would enhance and benefit not only the individual, but the Division as a whole.

Captain Donald C. Duval has worked for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for 18 years. He started his career in the Florida Keys in 1995. He was promoted to a Field Lieutenant in 2002 where he was assigned to the Naples Field Office. In 2004 he transferred to the FWC academy as a full-time instructor. Captain Duval was promoted to Area supervisor in the Northwest region in 2006. Since that time, he has also supervised the Northwest region's investigations section.

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Appendix A

Please complete the following survey with specific responses to succession planning and development of current division employees.

Question #1			
Multiple Choice			
How long have you worked for the agency? (FWC, DEP, GFC or FMP) (Choose one)			753 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	0-5 yrs	231	30.76%
<input type="radio"/>	6-10yrs	152	20.24%
<input type="radio"/>	11-15yrs	132	17.58%
<input type="radio"/>	16-20yrs	56	7.46%
<input type="radio"/>	21-25yrs	74	9.85%
<input type="radio"/>	26+yrs	106	14.11%
Question #2			
Multiple Choice			
What is your current rank? (Choose one)			749 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Officer	454	60.78%
<input type="radio"/>	Investigator	105	14.06%
<input type="radio"/>	Lieutenant	129	17.27%
<input type="radio"/>	Captain	45	6.02%
<input type="radio"/>	Major	14	1.87%
Question #3			
Multiple Choice			
How long have you held this current rank? (FWC, DEP, GFC or FMP) (Choose one)			750 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	0-5 years	370	49.47%
<input type="radio"/>	6-10 years	188	25.13%
<input type="radio"/>	11-15 years	87	11.63%
<input type="radio"/>	16-20 years	26	3.48%
<input type="radio"/>	21-25 years	36	4.81%
<input type="radio"/>	26+ years	41	5.48%

Question #4			
Multiple Choice			
Do you feel individuals with prior military service are better prepared to serve in leadership positions? (Choose one)			751 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	110	14.69%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	173	23.10%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	258	34.45%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	161	21.50%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	47	6.28%
Question #5			
Multiple Choice			
Do you feel that individuals with a college degree are better prepared to serve in leadership positions? (Choose one)			752 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	60	8.00%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	177	23.60%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	291	38.80%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	175	23.33%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	47	6.27%
Question #6			
Multiple Choice			
Should applicants be required to have a minimum of a 2 year college degree prior to employment with FWC as a law enforcement officer? (Choose one)			748 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	96	12.87%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	165	22.12%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	138	18.50%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	248	33.24%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	99	13.27%

Question #7			
Multiple Choice			
Do you feel that all supervisory positions within the division of law enforcement (FWC) should have a succession development program such as formal mentoring? (Choose one)			749 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	183	24.50%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	358	47.93%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	152	20.35%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	46	6.16%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	8	1.07%
Question #8			
Multiple Choice			
Do you feel that a formal mentoring program would enhance your ability to develop into a stronger candidate for future advancement within the division of law enforcement (FWC)? (Choose one)			749 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	174	23.29%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	345	46.18%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	158	21.15%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	59	7.90%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	11	1.47%
Question #9			
Multiple Choice			
Do you feel that individuals within the division should have at least two of the following courses: Basic Interviews and Interrogations, Advanced Report Writing, Boating Accident Investigations, Vessel Theft and Title Fraud; prior to being considered for promotion to Investigator? (Choose one)			750 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	267	35.70%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	332	44.39%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	77	10.29%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	63	8.42%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	9	1.20%

Question #10			
Multiple Choice			
Do you feel at least one of the following advanced courses such as: Situational Leadership, Line Supervision, Middle Management, Florida Leadership Academy (FDLE) should be required prior to individuals being considered for promotion to Lieutenant? (Choose One)			750 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	225	30.08%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	338	45.19%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	100	13.37%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	67	8.96%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	18	2.41%
Question #11			
Multiple Choice			
Should area supervisors (Captains) have advanced leadership development courses such as, Senior Leadership Program (FDLE), Advanced Leadership Tier (FWC), Chief Executive Leadership Program (FDLE) prior to being considered for advancement to a Major's position? (Choose one)			752 Answered
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree	276	36.80%
<input type="radio"/>	Agree	321	42.80%
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral	96	12.80%
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree	50	6.67%
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree	7	0.93%