

Succession Planning

Donald Kandalec

Abstract

As in the corporate setting, law enforcement agencies must fill management positions as openings occur due to retirement, transfers, and unforeseen circumstances. This paper will examine the aspect of succession planning in the law enforcement community. Succession planning is more involved than the mere filling of open positions. It involves planning, developing, and coaching a pool of qualified candidates from which to choose when a position becomes available. This paper will examine the prevalence of succession planning in law enforcement in the State of Florida. After study and analysis of survey results recommendations for succession planning are explained.

Introduction

Succession planning deals with the process of developing leaders to succeed incumbent managers and senior administrators. The corporate world has been involved in succession planning in an effort to maintain the value of the company. Many times the value of the company rests with the top level managers. In the law enforcement community, top level administrators are either elected by the public or appointed by governing bodies. Succession planning for law enforcement agencies focuses primarily on middle management positions. Whereas the top officials may not spend their entire career with one agency, many middle managers have worked within the same agency for their entire career. Law enforcement agencies should create a plan to develop future middle managers to ensure an efficient transition when middle management positions need to be filled. Some law enforcement agencies experience rapid growth at times. With this rapid growth, a number of employees may progress to the ranks of middle management at the same time. As these employees reach the end of their careers, there is the possibility that a number of middle management positions will need to be filled at the same time. The goal of this research project is to compile data on current methods that law enforcement agencies in the State of Florida use to develop future leaders and construct a comprehensive succession planning guide for use within law enforcement. Key steps in the process include: planning, recruitment, training, and mentoring.

Literature Review

According to Johnson, "a succession plan is one of a company's best tools for developing and retaining people" (Johnson, 1998). Law enforcement agencies share the challenges of development and retention with their civilian counterparts. Rothwell states, "succession planning is usually based on the assumptions that: 1) a goal is to

identify a talent pool of many people who are willing to be considered for promotion and work to be developed for it, 2) the future may not be like the past, and the competencies required at each level may be different in the future so that merely cloning past leaders is not appropriate, and 3) development occurs primarily on the job rather than by off-the-job training experiences” (Rothwell, 2005). A law enforcement organization may have inherent differences than its corporate counterpart; however, the concepts involved in developing and training people transcend organizational differences. As middle and top law enforcement executives reach retirement age, agencies must be prepared to fill the gaps in leadership roles. Johnson states there are four generations of succession planning. The first generation simply fills openings as they appear. This may be due to retirement, sickness, or moves to other law enforcement agencies. Rothwell refers to this as replacement planning. However, succession planning expands the range beyond individual positions or departments (Rothwell, 2005). The second generation applies the same principles downward. Who demonstrates the potential to fill future gaps? The third generation expands the principle beyond the organizational chart, while the fourth looks outside the organization (Johnson, 1998). Law enforcement has typically drawn its managers and leaders from the ranks. This paper will focus on the first two generations of succession planning and examine the steps an organization can take to ensure there is a qualified pool of candidates to fill positions of management and leadership. According to Rothwell, a talent pool should be identified to prepare as many successors as possible to be 80 percent ready for promotion (Rothwell, 2005). In addition, where a large portion of key personnel are scheduled to retire at approximately the same time, an acceleration pool of employees being developed on a faster than normal basis should be identified. Planning is a key factor in successful succession planning. The organization must incorporate into its strategic plan a method of replacing key managers and leaders. A part of the planning phase has to analyze the workforce, taking into consideration the demographics, tenure, and turnover rate. Other factors that provide input to the planning phase include reviewing the strategic plan, undertaking a future scan to anticipate future needs, conducting an assessment of Human Resources (HR) practices and comparing them to corporate best practices (Trahan, et al, 2007). As in any strategic plan, the organization should look and plan forward three to five years. According to Burnett, “this sets the stage for determining the type of people and capabilities the organization will need to execute its strategies (Bingham, 2008). As part of this strategy, law enforcement agencies must clearly communicate the goals and objectives to the middle managers. As Kristick states “by taking a holistic approach that addresses the full talent management lifecycle – from developing to managing, to optimizing and rewarding talent – companies can maximize their talent investment while increasing employee productivity, satisfaction, loyalty, and retention” Kristick, 2009). Organizations will have to creatively recruit to obtain the best available talent. Moore suggests recruiting in unusual places. She relates that an innovative police chief sent his recruiters to spring break (Moore, 2007). This paper will explore methods of recruiting in the state of Florida and offer creative ways to obtain a pool of qualified candidates.

Training is a broad area that covers both formal classroom instruction and on the job training. What key topics should be covered to best prepare the talent pool? Kristick

states that matching employee skills and training to organizational needs and goals enables organizations to quickly and effectively respond to major disruptions. He also states, "Continued investment in leadership development, employee training, and overall talent management" is critical to success (Kristick, 2009). An off-shoot of succession planning has evolved into talent management. According to *The Public Manager*, "one sign of the value of the learning function is whether or not an organization's leaders continue to invest in it during tough economic times such as those facing many countries and industry sectors today" (Bingham, 2008).

There have been many articles written on the practice and effectiveness of mentoring. According to Williams, "many researchers have documented the fact that mentors and mentoring relationships have a positive and powerful impact on professional growth, career advancement, and career mobility" (Williams, 2000). With a large number of experienced law enforcement members reaching retirement age, the need to pass on the corporate culture and years of experience can be benefited by a mentoring program. According to Munro, "Mentoring accelerates career progression, acclimatizes new recruits to organizational culture and values; and is recognized as an unrivalled approach for transferring organizational wisdom skills and abilities from seasoned practitioners to new recruits" (Munro, 2009). Most, if not all law enforcement agencies utilize the Field Training Officer (FTO) program to train new hires in the policies and practices of their agencies. Munro states, "mentoring has been introduced to groom high-potential recruits, especially in underrepresented groups such as women and minorities, for management positions; to promote socialization of new managers; and to fulfill their developmental needs" (Munro, 2009). An area to be explored through this project is the rate in which mentoring programs are used throughout the state of Florida. Are these mentoring programs formal or informal?

To evaluate the succession plan, organizations should review the plan on an annual basis. According to Borwick, to accomplish goals, one should set expectations that are real and appropriate. Organizations should tie the succession plan into the strategic plan, and not rely on the succession plan as an end unto itself. While in the planning stage, attempts should be made to discover potential obstacles, rather than standard answers. Many times an organization's succession plan is a closely held secret. Borwick recommends closing the communication loop, to include the final top-down communication, to provide transparency in the process. There should be a time-frame for implementation of the process put into the plan and the decision process should include all levels, including the lower levels in the chain of command. Finally, organizations should simplify the process by reducing information gathering (Borwick, 1993).

Methods

In order to develop a base-line for determining the prevalence of succession planning within the law enforcement community, a survey was developed that asked ten (10) key questions related to succession planning. The survey was sent to the sixty-seven (67) counties in the state of Florida. The base-line determined the percentage of agencies that would experience a large turnover in personnel, primarily in the next three

to five years due to retirement, and the percentage of agencies that incorporate succession planning in their strategic plan. The survey determined the number of agencies that have formal plans in place and structured training plans for the development of future leaders within the organization. During the research for this paper, there have been numerous articles that mention the benefit of mentoring. A question included in the survey determined the number of agencies that have a formal mentoring program. Other considerations included in the survey determined the importance the agencies placed on formal education, whether agencies considered recruiting from outside the organization for command staff and middle managers, and what was considered to be the primary consideration when filling middle management positions (i.e. education, experience, seniority, or other). In addition, interviews were conducted within the organization with newly promoted personnel to determine a subjective analysis of the individuals' preparedness for promotion.

Results

The survey resulted in twenty-four agencies responding. Of five out of the ten questions, one agency skipped answering the question. This resulted in an overall response rate of 35.8 percent with a 34.3 percent response rate taking non-answered questions into consideration. A majority of agencies responding (73.9%) will experience a large turnover in management personnel over the next three to five years. Surprisingly less than half of the agencies (45.8%) have incorporated succession planning into their strategic plan. Twenty-two of the twenty-four agencies (91.7%) responding stated they did not have a formal plan/policy in place. Responses to questions related to training and mentoring indicated sixteen of twenty-four (66.7%) do not have a formal training program in place for promotion and nineteen of the twenty-four (79.2%) do not have a formal mentoring program in place other than the Field Training Officer Program. Twenty-three of the twenty-four respondents answered yes to selecting command staff from inside the agency. One agency skipped the question. In regards to middle management positions, three agencies (13%) answered they recruit middle managers from outside the agency, twenty (87%) answered they did not, and one agency skipped the question. The majority of agencies, ten of twenty-three (43.5%) required no degree to be considered for a middle management position. Five of twenty-three agencies (21.7%) answered they require an Associate's Degree to be considered for a middle management position. Eight of twenty-three (21.7%) answered they required a Bachelor's Degree for middle management positions. None of the responding agencies required a Master's Degree or higher to be considered for a middle management position. One agency skipped the question. Twenty-three of twenty-four agencies answered the question asking what percentage of personnel being considered for middle management positions had advanced degrees. Seven of those (30.4%) possessed answered zero to twenty-five percent. Five of the twenty-three responded 26 to fifty percent. Seven of the twenty-three responded fifty-one to seventy-five percent, and four of the twenty-three responded seventy-six to one-hundred percent. The last question of the survey pertained to the primary consideration when filling middle

management positions. Twenty-three of twenty-four agencies responded, with one skipping the question. Of the twenty-three respondents, six (26.1%) answered education, seventeen (73.9%) answered experience, three (13.0%) answered seniority, and seven (30.4%) answered other. Since the majority of agencies select or recruit management from within the agency, the length of time with the agency prior to being selected for a management position should be examined. Recruitment for entry level positions was not examined in this survey. An investigation of recruiting practices and locations calls for further examination in order to establish a baseline of education level upon hiring.

Discussion

A majority of the responding agencies will be affected by turnover of middle managers in the next three to five years. However, less than half have incorporated succession planning into their strategic plans. Further study of those agencies which have incorporated succession planning into their strategic plan should be pursued to determine the effectiveness of the plan. With the large amount of turnover, an overwhelming majority (91.7%) did not have a formal plan in place to fill the gaps in management positions. Experience appears to be the key factor in filling management positions. Mentoring has been discussed by several authors as an effective means of enhancing the experience level of the qualified candidate pool. According to the survey results, a majority of agencies do not utilize a formal mentoring program other than the Field Officer Training Program. Further surveys should incorporate a question regarding the reasoning behind this. While a formal plan and mentoring program to prepare individuals to fill gaps in management positions may benefit the individual and agency in the long term, budget restrictions and personnel shortfalls may preclude them from being placed into affect. Experience is best gained from actual performance of the duties and responsibilities required. However, in order for an agency to transfer an individual to a different department to gain experience, the vacancy left by that individual would need to be filled. Merely swapping individual for individual would leave an experience void in both departments. The military routinely transfers personnel to different departments at predetermined times. Prior to assuming new duties, personnel typically receive classroom training in the new area of responsibility. This reduces the experience gap left when the personnel change takes effect. The lack of a formal mentoring program may be lacking for similar reasons. The most qualified to be mentors are those who have gained the most experience. They are the personnel that will be leaving within the next three to five years. With a formal mentoring plan in place, the knowledge of these individuals can be transferred to those who will replace them. The answers for educational requirements for a managerial position showed the most varied results. This supports the results that experience is the dominant factor in the selection of managerial staff within law enforcement. Future study should investigate whether a college degree was required as a hiring condition or whether the college degree was earned after employment with the agency. This could be correlated to the number of managerial positions with college degrees. It would also be an indicator on the importance an agency places on higher education.

Recommendation

The key to effective succession planning is strategic thinking. Agencies must look at short, medium, and long range goals and objectives and match the personnel needs with these goals. An organization must develop a qualified pool of candidates well in advance of vacancies being identified. The process should begin with the recruitment and hiring process. Law enforcement differs from the general corporate world in that it is a paramilitary organization. Those involved in law enforcement may be required to work under conditions that are not normally found in the corporate world. A possible pool of candidates for employment in law enforcement may be found in those separating from the military. Military personnel are accustomed to the discipline and varied working conditions that may be encountered in law enforcement.

While education was not ranked as the highest consideration when placing management personnel, local colleges and universities may provide a qualified pool of candidates. They possess the technical abilities and cognitive skills to adapt to law enforcement. With the increase in the use of technology in law enforcement, candidates with the educational background in technology can quickly adapt to new equipment. Strategic planning is an important key to effective succession planning. Agencies develop strategic plans for programs and capital improvements; however, a plan/policy is not in place for succession planning. This is substantiated by the response to the survey question regarding having a formal plan for succession planning. Over ninety percent of respondents replied "no" to this question. It is recommended that a formal plan or policy be put into effect that delineates the requirements of succession planning. This plan/policy should be reviewed on a regular basis and adjusted accordingly based on agency needs.

Training the future managers of the agency should be considered an important part of the strategic planning process. Many times it is left to the individual to develop their own training plan in order to gain the requisite knowledge and experience to be considered in the pool of candidates. Agencies should prioritize which characteristics and traits are of the most value to them in a managerial position. A training plan, whether formal or informal, should be developed to enhance the knowledge of their staff in a progressive and logical way. Training can be a combination of formal classroom instruction and self-study. Topics should include leadership, team-building, managing different generations, and diversity as well as technical aspects of management. This would provide a foundation for a mentor to build on. The mentor could hone the skills the individual learned through classroom training and suggest how to apply them in their organization.

Once hired, the new employee is typically placed with a Field Training Officer (FTO). The FTO acts as a mentor to the newly hired employee, providing training and guidance. The role of the FTO is more than as a trainer of the technical aspects of the job. The FTO is a representative of the corporate culture of the agency. Through them the new employee learns the traditions and traits of the agency. It is recommended that throughout an individual's career, a mentor be available. This mentor can guide the employee through their career, offering advice and guidance. Advice and guidance need not be limited to the technical aspects of the position. The mentor should coach

the employee on the subtleties of cooperation between departments, important points of contact, and dealing with personnel of different generations.

There may be no single answer to how an agency may best address the issue of succession planning. The plan for succession planning should be constructed in a manner that best meets the needs of the agency. While the concept of succession planning was first developed to identify future Chief Executive Officers, the principles can be applied to all levels of management. The key to successful succession planning is early and effective planning, identification of a qualified candidate pool, and the professional development of those in the pool to prepare them for future positions.

Lieutenant Don Kandalec is a member of the Pasco Sheriff's Office. He has been a member of the Sheriff's Office Detention Bureau for seventeen years. He is currently a Shift commander in the Housing Division responsible for the care, custody, and control of over 1400 inmates. His previous duties have been: Housing Deputy, Property/Cashier Supervisor, Intake/Release Supervisor, and Housing Supervisor. He was also in the United States Naval Reserve. He spent ten years on active duty serving in both surface fleet and aviation units. He was designated a Naval Flight Officer and flew in the F-14 Tomcat from the U.S.S. Eisenhower with fighter Squadron 143.

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Appendix A

Response Summary

Total Started Survey: 24
Total Completed Survey: 24 (100%)

PAGE: 1

1. Will your agency experience a large turnover in management personnel due to retirement in the next three to five years?

	answered question	23
	skipped question	1
	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Yes	73.9%	17
b. No	26.1%	6

2. Is succession planning incorporated in your agency's strategic plan?

	answered question	24
	skipped question	0
	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Yes	45.8%	11
b. No	54.2%	13

3. Does your agency have a formal plan/policy in place for succession planning?

		answered question	24
		skipped question	0
		Response Percent	Response Count
a. Yes		8.3%	2
b. No		91.7%	22

4. Does your agency have a structured training program for promotion in place?

		answered question	24
		skipped question	0
		Response Percent	Response Count
a. Yes		33.3%	8
b. No		66.7%	16

5. Does your agency have a formal mentoring program, other than the Field Training Officer (FTO) program in effect?

		answered question	24
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5. Does your agency have a formal mentoring program, other than the Field Training Officer (FTO) program in effect?

skipped question		0
	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Yes	8.3%	2
b. No	79.2%	19
If Yes, is participation voluntary?	12.5%	3

6. Does your agency choose command staff personnel from inside the agency?

answered question		23
skipped question		1
	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Yes	100.0%	23
b. No	4.3%	1

7. Does your agency recruit middle managers from outside the agency?

7. Does your agency recruit middle managers from outside the agency?

	answered question	23
	skipped question	1
	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Yes	13.0%	3
b. No	87.0%	20

8. What formal education requirements does your agency require middle managers to have?

	answered question	23
	skipped question	1
	Response Percent	Response Count
a. No degree	43.5%	10
b. Associates degree	21.7%	5
c. Bachelors degree	34.8%	8
d. Masters degree or above	0.0%	0

9. What percentage of employees considered for middle management positions have advanced degrees?

9. What percentage of employees considered for middle management positions have advanced degrees?

		answered question	23
		skipped question	1
		Response Percent	Response Count
a. 0-25%		30.4%	7
b. 26-50%		21.7%	5
c. 51-75%		30.4%	7
d. 76-100%		17.4%	4

10. When filling management positions, what is the primary consideration? (Choose one).

	answered question	23
	skipped question	1
	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Education	26.1%	6
b. Experience	73.9%	17
c. Seniority	13.0%	3
d. Other	30.4%	7