



Leadership Succession Planning: Implications for Nonprofit Human Service Organizations

Suzanne Gothard
MSW Mack Fellow
Mack Center on Nonprofit Management in the Human Services

&

Michael J. Austin
Mack Professor and Director
Mack Center on Nonprofit Management in the Human Services
School of Social Welfare
University of California, Berkeley

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Abstract

Informed by the existing literature on executive exit, leadership succession, and leadership development related to the for-profit, public, and nonprofit sectors, this analysis identifies the key elements of succession planning with implications for nonprofit human service organizations. It focuses on the role of self-leadership in executive exit and the interpersonal dynamics between nonprofit executives and their board of directors. Based on a comparison of different types of succession, the analysis includes a call for the need to make the transition from traditional replacement planning to a more comprehensive succession management approach that features emergency and planned succession preparedness, developing and retaining leadership talent, and the importance of strategic planning. It concludes with a call for both nonprofit executives and their boards to align succession-based and strategic planning efforts in order to foster smooth leadership transitions and develop healthy organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

As record numbers of non-profit founders and executives near retirement age, further investigation into the complex nature of executive exit is critical to the future health of the non-profit sector. Executive exit and the process of leadership succession presents organizations with unique challenges and opportunities, including risk, a limited applicant pool, and inevitable organizational change (Gilmore, 1988; Khurana, 2001). In addition, executive exit requires psychological and task oriented adjustment for the departing executive, as well as those staying in the agency through the course of the transition (Austin & Gilmore, 1993). It involves considerable self-reflection and assessment by the outgoing executive and the board. Exiting executives are often faced with difficult and soul-searching questions: Am I emotionally and financially ready to make this decision? Is this the best time to leave the organization and its continuing unmet needs? “Do I have the necessary support systems in place...?” (Adams, 2005, p. 11). Exit often requires a “proactive letting go” and an engagement in activities that help prepare the way for the transition (Adams, 2005, p. 12). This period of immense change requires the “capacity to reflect on what might have been... to disengage from satisfying relationships, and to come to terms with one’s accomplishments and disappointments” (Austin & Gilmore, 1993, p. 48)

Executive exit can be planned or unexpected and though it can be difficult to discuss, it is an organization’s responsibility to be prepared for either. The exit process can be launched by

retirement, termination, promotion, merger, sale, acquisition, internal transition, death, disability, unexpected resignation, investigation or indictment (Austin & Salkowitz, 2009; Cingoranelli, 2009; Dalton & Dalton, 2007a; Kesner & Sebor, 1994). Though organizations are increasingly acknowledging the critical role of succession planning prior to executive exit, few¹ have plans in place to guide them through the process (Austin & Salkowitz, 2009; Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006; Garman & Glawe, 2004; Santora, 2004; Santora, Caro, & Sarros, 2007).

This analysis begins with the role of the Executive Director and the self-assessment and communication tools needed for succession planning. It then moves to the role of Boards and how they can be educated and involved in policy development and implementation. Building on the literature that identifies types of succession and the need to both plan and manage succession, a framework is described and followed by an elaboration on promising practices. The analysis concludes with a focus on leadership development and the role of the board and executive director.

The Role of Self-Leadership in Executive Exit

The concept of self-leadership can be found in the public sector middle management literature related to leadership development. It is defined as self-directed strategies that can influence behavior, internal systems of reward, conceptions of effectiveness, performance standards, and outcomes (Hardy, 2005). Manz and Henry Sims (as cited in Hardy, 2005) note that in order to become an effective leader, one must first learn to be an effective *self-leader*. As agencies

¹ Garman & Glawe's (2004) review of existing literature found that only an estimated 40 - 65% of organizations have formal succession planning processes in place. The validity of the findings are limited due to a lack of first hand sources and the use of convenience samples.

decentralize and increasingly move to structures with less formalized mechanisms for promotion, employees find themselves faced with greater responsibility for their own performance outcomes and career trajectories.

Many current nonprofit executives have used self-leadership to help them advance to the positions they are in today. In a similar way, an executive's personal clarity about her own departure, particularly related to timing and role, is critical to the success of her exit (Adams, 2005; Austin & Gilmore, 1993). This, often coupled with an absence of formal policies or plans for succession, creates an opportunity for executives to again engage in a practice of self-leadership in order to prepare themselves and others for succession planning and implementation. The use of self-leadership strategies can help exiting executives develop an organizational climate of trust that enables others to more successfully and openly navigate difficult conversations about organizational and leadership change (Hardy, 2005; Austin & Gilmore, 1993).

Initiating Sensitive Conversations

The mere topic of leadership succession can stir up considerable emotion, fear, stress, conflict, and question, and thereby create potential discomfort between boards and executives. In addition, the executive-board relationship is often affected by differences in ideology, social class, and ways of identifying with the agency (Kramer, 1965). These differences can exacerbate power struggles, misunderstandings, and conflicts that make both the personal (as well as the professional) aspects of succession that much harder to discuss openly in a board meeting

(Kramer, 1965). Despite the strain that can result from these differences, non-profit boards and executives need to minimize conflict, in order to develop a safe space for dialogue that reflects a healthy system of exchange throughout the leadership succession process. Effective and purposeful collaboration between executives and their boards is critical for the success of the transition (Axelrod, 2002). Kramer (1965) identifies the following mitigating factors: 1) board members respond according to their view of community interest as opposed to their own personal gain; 2) the potential for shifts in attitudes based on new learning about the operation of nonprofits; 3) external factors (e.g. financial crisis, desire to maintain critical relationships, etc.) may prevail over ideology when making agency-related decisions, and 4) ideological differences may enhance succession planning where opposing view points can contribute to a more comprehensive assessment and analysis.

Sensitive conversations can move beyond the personal to the organizational. The exit of an executive provides the board with an opportunity to reposition the organization by taking into account its history, its present needs for leadership, and its future in the community. For example, some boards have found that the search for a new executive director proved to be more difficult than expected, causing a major reassessment of the agency's future that opened the door to considering merger with another agency in the same field of practice (Benton & Austin, in press). While such a reassessment could or should take place before launching an executive search process, it is clear that a leadership change provides the board with an opportunity to make decisions that would serve the best interests of the clients and staff of the organization (Gilmore, 1988).

ED's Role in Educating the Board

The consensus in the literature is that leadership succession planning is ultimately the board's responsibility, yet boards often rely on their Executive Director (ED) to initiate the planning processes (Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006; Dalton & Dalton, 2007a; Liteman, 2003; Santorin, 2004, as cited in Khumalo & Harris, 2008). This delegation is due, in part, to the desires of board members to be sensitive to the needs and autonomy of the ED, resulting all too often in the avoidance of the conversation all together (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). The reluctance to discuss leadership succession planning is further exacerbated when the exiting director is also the founding director of the organization (McLaughlin & Backlund, 2008).

Although succession planning is a critical element in the role of the board, agencies can benefit if the ED offers her time, support, and guidance to the board's process (Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006). The ED can facilitate opportunities for the board to gain exposure to high-level talent inside the agency (Dalton & Dalton, 2007a) and she can guide the board in identifying the ideal competencies for a successor related to the organization's future direction and goals (Adams, 2006). The human resource (HR) staff may also play a role in advising boards and should be involved throughout a leadership transition process. Boards need to examine their own composition in the succession planning process, as board diversity can affect both the selection and success of the new ED (Adams, 2006; Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006).

In addition to working with the Board, the exiting ED is also responsible for helping the organization prepare for succession by allowing adequate time for planning, updating

organizational documents, managing the transition of internal and external relationships, delegating partially completed projects, and attending to staff needs throughout the transition process (Adams, 2006; Austin & Gilmore, 1993). Exiting executives can help to ensure organizational momentum by identifying an advocate for each key issue on the organization's agenda (Austin & Gilmore, 1993).

Using Exit Discussions to Develop Leadership Succession Policies

At a time when record numbers of executives between the ages of 50 and 70 are planning to retire from their current positions², succession discussions about their own planned exit are often the starting point for the development of a succession plan. While conversations aimed at formalized planning may seem premature or awkward to initiate, post-succession challenges are often magnified without the presence of a formal succession plan (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Adams (2006) notes that a common pitfall among nonprofit executive succession is the practice of beginning to groom potential successors without board knowledge or approval, often leading to problems once the official executive search begins. In the absence of existing succession policies and plans, non-profit executives are encouraged to open conversations with their Boards (Wolfred, 2008).

Formal succession planning can increase enthusiasm for work, reduce anxiety, and guard against selection bias during hiring processes (Greer & Virick, 2008). It can also help organizations assure continuity, engage senior leadership in a review of the agency's talent, give more attention

² A 2006 survey of 1,932 nonprofit executives reported that 75% of EDs plan to leave their jobs in the next five years and only 29% of the executives surveyed have discussed a succession plan with their boards; of those leaving within 1 year, only 47% have discussed a plan with their boards (Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006)

to diversity, encourage the re-examination of organizational systems and structure, and align various units within an organization (Gersick, Stone, Desjardins, Muson, & Grady, 2000; Leibman, Bruer, Maki, 1996).

Defining Types of Succession

Drawing heavily from the for-profit literature, the following section provides a brief review of the pros and cons of the various types of succession. The different types of succession include:

- “Relay Succession” (also known as “Crown Prince(ss)” or “Crown Heir” succession) involves the identifying of a member of senior management in an organization as heir apparent well in advance of the actual transition, providing a period of overlap for the outgoing executive to “groom” (transfer knowledge and power) to the successor (Vancil, 1987).
- “Non-Relay Inside Succession” occurs when the successor is promoted from inside the organization, but through a competitive process, also known as a “Horse Race” when several key internal candidates are involved (Friedman & Olk, 1995).
- An “Outside Succession” is one in which the successor was hired from outside the organization (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2006).
- A “Coup d’Etat” occurs when stakeholders other than the incumbent organize to make swift succession decisions (Friedman & Olk, 1995).
- Bringing back a director from a previous era is known throughout the for-profit literature as a “Boomerang” (Dalton & Dalton, 2007b).

Though studies have sought to compare the various models for succession, there is considerable debate about the issue of whether internal or external hires are more successful (Bower, 2007, as cited in Khumalo & Harris, 2008; Gandossy & Verma, 2006; Garman & Glawe, 2004; Giambatista, Rowe & Riaz, 2005; Kesler & Sebor, 1994; Khumalo & Harris, 2008; Santora, 2004; Santora, et al., 2007; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2006). Outside succession has been found to produce stronger results than internal non-relay succession when overall instability in the sector is high (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004). In contrast, a 2005 Booz Allen Hamilton study reports that internally groomed CEOs brought in higher shareholder returns (1.9%/year) than externally hired CEOs (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Bower (2007) argues for hiring an "internal outsider," someone who has a deep understanding of the company's history and its key stakeholders, yet is not overly attached to the status quo and possesses the skills and desire to lead the organization through a change process (as cited in Khumalo & Harris, 2008).

Relay succession was found to improve performance when compared to outside succession or internal non-relay succession, especially when pre-succession organizational performance was low, as well as when post-succession instability in the industry or sector was high (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004, 2006). Despite these findings, some researchers are cautious about relay succession because of the resulting loss of flexibility, the risks associated with losing the candidate, the potential to select the wrong candidate, or the prospect of igniting internal power struggles (Dalton & Dalton, 2007b; Groves, 2006; Santora, et al., 2007; Wolfred, 2008). Shen and Canella (2003) found that stakeholders react negatively to the departure of an internally groomed candidate, but positively to successful promotion of such a candidate through relay

succession (as cited in Giambatista, et al., 2005). If relay succession is to be used, the organization needs to allow time for selecting, training, assessing, grooming, and creating a transition timetable (Santorin, 2004 and Korn, 2007, as cited in Khumalo & Harris, 2008).

While extensive grooming can produce the best results in the for-profit sector (Santora, 2004; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004, 2005), the non-profit literature notes that too much overlap in the transition can diminish an incoming executive's authority (Adams, 2005; Austin & Gilmore, 1993; Wolfred, 2008). Adams (2005) suggests that when a founding ED transitions out of the organization, an "on-call" approach for the outgoing executive tends to work best, as opposed to a more "hands-on" or "hands-off" approach (p. 19).

Organizations have the option of hiring an interim ED, but there is little agreement on the value of this approach. If it is projected that the staff and various stakeholders in a non-profit will experience significant challenges related to the "letting go" of the exiting ED (common when founders depart), the organization may want to consider hiring an interim ED before selecting a long-term replacement (Adams, 2005; Wolfred, 2008). Dalton and Dalton (2007b) note that there are risks in an interim approach if the interim is also a candidate for the long-term position.

From Succession Planning to Succession Management

For decades, the focus of succession planning (also known as replacement planning) has been the search for a well-qualified replacement for a particular position in an organization (Metz, 1998). Traditional succession planning featured selection from an internal pool of successors, with the

announcement of replacements well in advance based on specified skills or experience and the performance appraisals of superiors (Leibman, Bruer, & Maki, 1996). While this approach to succession planning worked well in an era with lower rates of turnover and fewer leadership transitions, it does not provide the flexibility needed for rapidly changing environments facing organizations today (Leibman, Burer, & Maki, 1996; Metz, 1998). The changes in organizational structures and cultures also contribute to the need for a more comprehensive model for leadership succession. These major changes include: 1) the rise of self-career management and external recruiting, 2) attention to increased diversity issues, 3) the prevalence of mergers and acquisitions, 4) the role of new technology, 4) downsizing of middle management, and 5) the overall flattening of organizations (Beeson, 1998; Metz, 1998).

The current literature calls for a fundamental shift from traditional replacement-succession planning towards a more comprehensive succession management approach (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Succession management is defined as “formal, ongoing... holistic and strategic... systematic, consistent,... [and] aims to build a reliable supply of talent” throughout an organization. (Gandossy & Verma, 2006, p. 39) Succession management includes the search for talent from both internal and external talent pools, linking selection criteria to a candidate’s specific competencies and embeddedness within inter- and intra-organizational networks, and developing leaders whose strengths and experiences fit the organization’s mission and values (Cao, Maruping, Takeuchi, 2006; Leibman, Bruer, & Maki, 1996). Collins & Porras found that a “culture of succession management” existed in many of the companies that prospered throughout the 20th century (as cited in Gandossy & Verma, 2006, p. 38)

Promising Frameworks for Practice

A review of the literature provides several useful frameworks to guide succession planning and management (see Appendix A). These frameworks reflect promising practices in multiple sectors: for-profit, nonprofit, public, private, and public health. The following practices are consistently cited as key elements for effective succession management across sectors: 1) leadership development and retention, 2) organizational assessment, 3) clarification of agency direction, and 4) alignment between strategy and goals (Adams, 2005, 2006; Axelrod, 2002; Collins & Collins, 2007; Gandossy & Verma, 2009; Gersick, et al., 2000; Greer, 2008; Herrera, 2002; Jones, 2007; Lynn, 2001; Wolfred, 2008). The nonprofit literature emphasizes both acute emergency planning, as well as developing overall organizational stability and alignment in order to guide pre-planned departures (Wolfred, 2008; Jones, 2007; Adams, 2005, 2006; Axelrod, 2002). Effective management is critical following an emergency or a planned succession (Jones, 2007; Adams, 2005, 2006; Axelrod, 2002). Monitoring and evaluation are noted in the literature related to the public, private, and health sectors (Collins & Collins, 2002; Gandossy & Verma, 2009; Greer, 2008). Gersick et al. (2000) recommend the use of a committee structure and retreat setting for succession planning in family foundations. The for-profit sector emphasizes careful selection of an appropriate search committee, as well as infusing succession planning goals into performance management across the organization (Greer, 2008; Khurana, 2001).

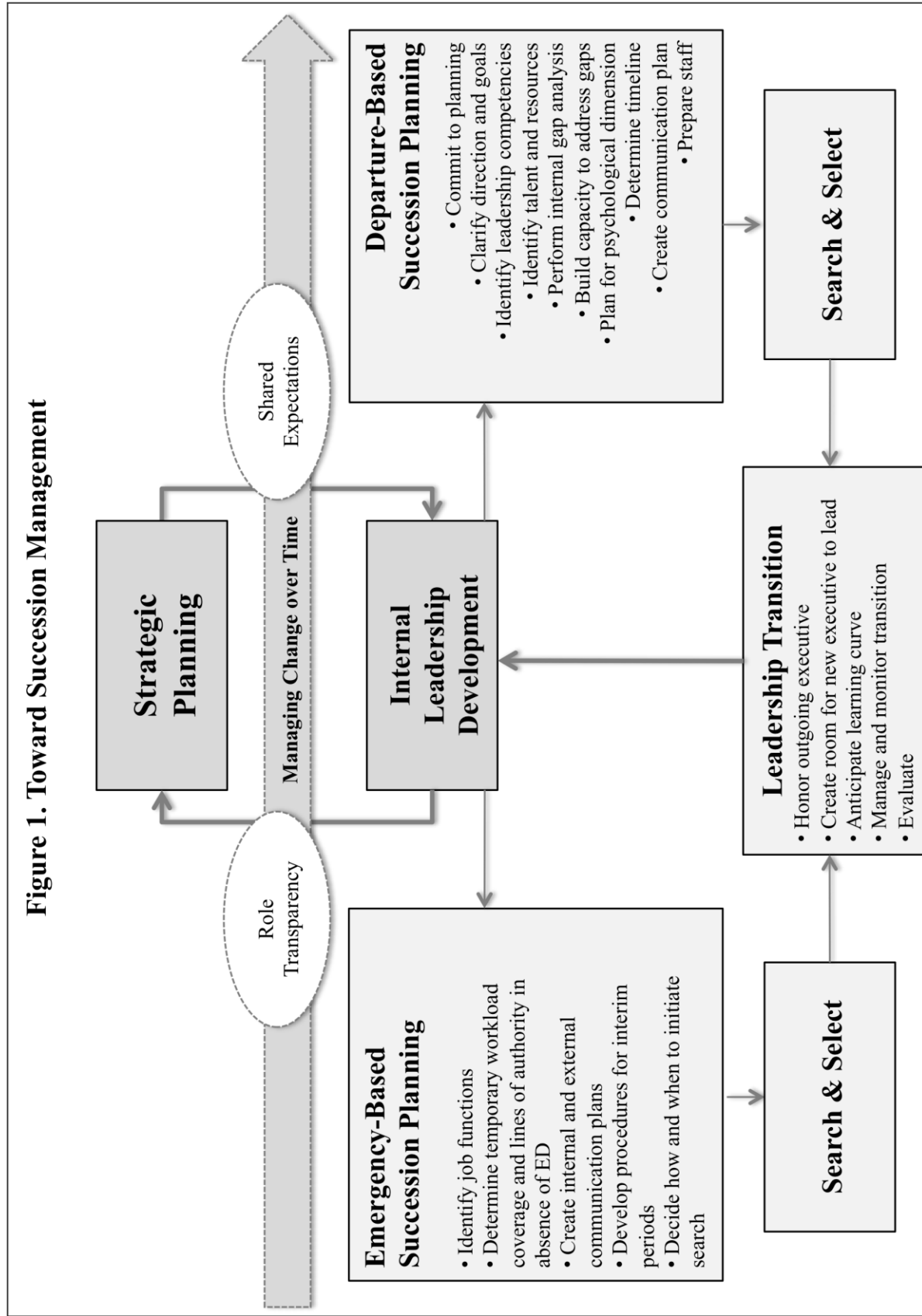
Figure 1 captures the major themes that emerged from an analysis of these frameworks. At the center of the Figure is the development and updating of the organization's strategic plan that is

based on an organizational self-assessment and the ongoing monitoring of community needs. The agency's strategic plan informs the overall approach to leadership development and succession planning and management (Axelrod, 2002; Collins & Collins, 2007; Gersick, et al., 2000; Herrera, 2002; Ip, 2009; Lynn, 2001; Wolfred, 2008). Clear communication between executives and their boards can help to facilitate the development of shared expectations related to departure. Role transparency is critical for accurate planning.

[INSERT FIGURE 1]

One aspect of succession management is emergency succession planning for all key staff and board members, in the event of unexpected departure (Adams, 2005/2006; Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006; Jones, 2007; Wolfred, 2008). This plan anticipates unplanned departures by identifying action steps that lead to the search and selection period of succession. In small organizations, volunteers or board members often implement the emergency succession plan (Wolfred, 2008). Specifying current job roles and lines of authority based on up-to-date and accessible information is needed to determine priority areas and workload shifts needed during emergency periods (Wolfred, 2008). Planning for clear and thoughtful intra- and inter-agency communication is essential (Wolfred, 2008). Boards need to have a clear understanding of the organization and anticipate its future needs in order to define and guide the search and selection process.

Figure 1. Toward Succession Management



Pre-planned departure-based succession planning can occur when the departing executive is fairly certain about when he or she plans to leave an organization, allowing a more gradual and purposeful process and timeline to drive the succession process. The effectiveness of this approach relies on a commitment to the process from organizational leaders (Gandossy & Verma, 2009). Careful analysis of the agency's goals and strategic plan can inform executives and their boards, as together they define the specific leadership competencies that are necessary to bring their organization's goals to fruition, as well as identify targeted areas for internal capacity building (Adams, 2005, 2006; Herrera, 2002; Wolfred, 2008). As with emergency succession, planned and deliberate communication is critical, in addition to providing space and a climate that assists staff in managing the various components of the transition (Wolfred, 2008; Axelrod, 2002).

Adams (2005) notes that the activities of pre-planned departure-based succession planning for founders can depend on the amount of time that remains prior to departure: 1) departure planned for two to three years away allows time for substantial strategic planning initiatives; 2) departure planned for one to two years away calls for a more focused organizational assessment and the use of existing strategic plans to inform planning; and 3) departure planned for less than a year away calls for expedited planning and decision-making related to the structure of and approach to the transition.

When EDs are also founding directors or have been in their positions for ten years or more, Wolfred (2008) recommends beginning to plan 2-3 years prior to the executive's departure. Wolfred (2008) identifies 14 steps for non-profits engaged in this type of departure-defined

succession planning: 1) ED takes time to deal with personal and professional issues related to departure, 2) set date, 3) create a planning committee, 4) develop a communications plan, 5) perform organizational assessment, 6) design and implement strategies to address areas of weakness, 7) identify future directions, 8) solidify management team, 9) build the board's capacity, 10) transition relationships and relationship building responsibilities, 11) organize and assess finances, 12) build financial reserve, 13) agree on role for departing ED and retirement package, 14) set search strategy (Wolfred, 2008, p. 10).

Managing the transition is a critical component of succession, regardless of whether the change in leadership was planned or a result of emergency-based succession. The incoming executive, the outgoing executive, the staff, the board, and other stakeholders all experience the transition in different ways. Planning to honor the outgoing executive and her legacy in specific and tangible ways is an important element of this transition, providing an opportunity for closure, signifying a new beginning, and simultaneously promoting continuity (Adams, 2005; Austin & Gilmore, 1993). Once the new ED steps into the role, it is important to help stakeholders begin to embrace the new leader (Austin & Gilmore, 1993; Wolfred, 2008). Organizations need to plan for an incoming executive's learning curve, regardless of whether the hire was an internal or external candidate (Giambatista et al., 2005). If the hire is external, Marshall (2007) emphasizes the importance of orientation sessions for the new executive to acquire an understanding of the organization's culture and history (as cited in Khumalo & Harris, 2008).

Organizations engaged in leadership succession often find themselves confronted by process issues (e.g. unclear roles and responsibilities) or people issues (e.g. resistance to process and

conflicting expectations for change) (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Organizations can address these issues during succession planning by taking opportunities for organizational introspection, selecting search committees carefully, allowing the process to be dynamic, developing internal buy-in to the overall succession process, and evaluating the process and outcome to inform subsequent transitions (Beeson, 1998; Khurana, 2001; Leibman, Bruer, Maki, 1996).

Developing Leaders

Recognizing and developing internal leadership potential is consistently cited as a critical component of succession management (Dalton & Dalton 2007a; Gandossy & Verma, 2009; Greer, 2008; Groves, 2007; Jones, 2007; Lynn 2001). Jones (2007) notes that when organizations do not consciously and continually develop leaders, they may experience both short and long term consequences. For example, when the health care industry lost several potential leaders, the causes related to inadequate resources, improper mentoring, and a lack of developmental opportunities (Doody, 2002, as cited in Groves, 2006). While Dalton and Dalton (2007a) argue that effective leadership development may increase an organization's turnover due to higher employability, boards need to support this level of preparedness.

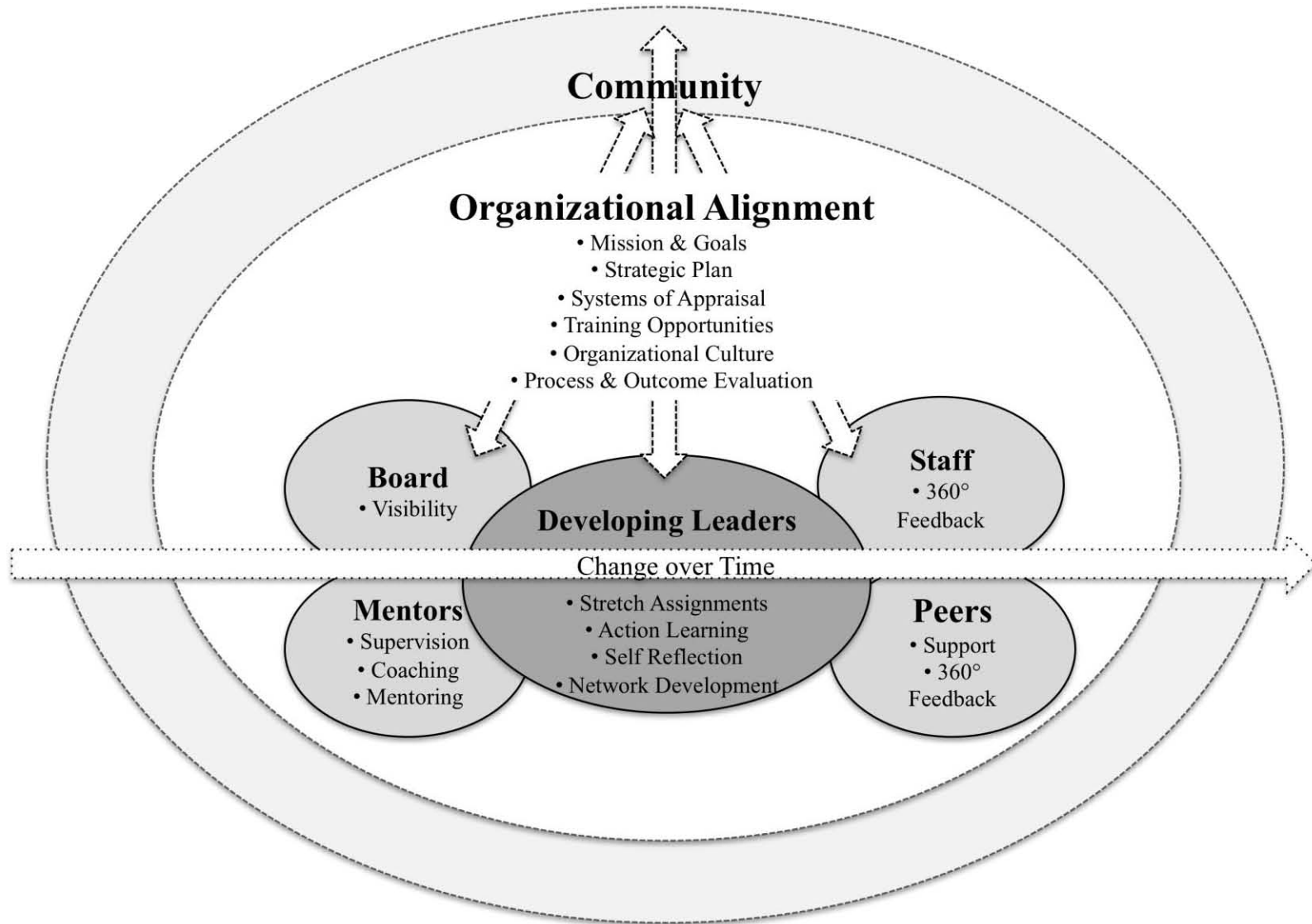
As illustrated in Figure 2, organizations can create the conditions for successful development and retention by: 1) aligning the organization's mission and goals with the overall leadership development strategy; 2) creating a supportive organizational culture that stresses learning and a healthy work-life balance; 3) providing training opportunities that align with the agency's current needs and future directions; and 4) evaluating the development strategy's processes and

outcomes (Austin & Salkowitz; Cingoranelli, 2009; Groves, 2007; Jones, 2007). Strong and consistent communication with internal and external stakeholders can increase an overall commitment to a leadership development strategy (Beeson, 1998; Jones, 2007).

[INSERT FIGURE 2]

Developing and retaining organizational leadership requires a commitment from all levels of the organization, as well as buy-in and support from external stakeholders in the community. A national study of nonprofit leadership calls on executives to seek funding for leadership development, noting that funders are increasingly viewing leadership development efforts as worthwhile investments for long-term organizational success (Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006). Boards need to be exposed to up-and-coming talent in order to prevent succession discussions from being the first occasion at which they gain exposure to potential successors (Dalton & Dalton, 2007a; Greer & Virick, 2008). Existing leadership can identify employees with high potential and help develop them through coaching (one-on-one practical learning), mentoring (developmental advisory role), providing effective supervision, and managing change to avoid the turnover of high potential employees (Austin & Salkowitz, 2009; Beeson, 1998; Cingoranelli, 2009; Groves, 2007; Greer & Virick, 2008; Herrera, 2002; Jones, 2007). Peer support and feedback is critical for professional development and on-the-job learning (Austin & Salkowitz, 2009). Developing formal mechanisms to integrate staff feedback into the appraisal of those in supervisory roles has been identified as a best practice for effective leadership development (Groves, 2007). Rising leaders are encouraged to engage in active self-reflection while working with mentors to seek out opportunities for stretch assignments, on the job

Figure 2. Developing and Retaining Leaders



learning, network development, and feedback from a variety of sources (Groves, 2007; Hill, 2003). Measurement and evaluation are key elements to leadership development and its role in overall succession management. Several ways to measure the effectiveness of internal leadership development strategies include: 1) the organization's capacity to fill vacant positions with internal candidates, 2) the average number of qualified internal candidates per open position, 3) the ethnic and gender diversity among those who are promoted, 4) percentage of employees who complete and implement their development plans, and 5) staff and management retention rates (Gandossy & Verma, 2006).

Key Practice Principles for Successful Succession Planning

In the case of succession planning for founders, Adams (2005) identifies two critical factors that should influence the timing of the actual departure: 1) the founder's engagement and ability to make a positive contribution to the transition (taking into account burnout and/or the board's level of trust in the executive), and 2) the level of succession planning and training in which the organization has engaged prior to the departure announcement. Wolfred (2008) notes that when resources allow, EDs can take a leave of absence (1-3 months) well in advance of a departure date as a way of testing the management team's skills and succession readiness.

Some organizations may need to modify aspects of their organizational culture in order to create an environment that facilitates leadership retention, healthy succession planning, and transition; for example: 1) adjust work/life balance and compensation rates (i.e. curbing the practice of

typically low salaries for nonprofit executives); 2) invest in and nurture younger leaders and more leaders of color; 3) hold leadership accountable to policies and procedures around leadership development; 4) examine the fit between organizational structure, values, goals, and technologies and make adjustments as necessary; and 5) foster promotion based on leadership skill and specific competencies as opposed to simply seniority (Austin & Salkowitz, 2009; Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006; Cingoranelli, 2009; Greer & Virick, 2008; Kunreuther, 2005; Wolfred, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This analysis describes the complex, yet essential, nature of succession planning in nonprofit human service organizations. Executive transition requires organizations, groups, and individuals to remain focused on the mission and strategic plan of an organization while managing change and the emotions associated with a change in leadership. A succession plan can help guide and direct the different participants during the challenges that arise throughout the process. Though effective succession planning requires a commitment from all levels of an organization, executives and their boards need to initiate and lead the process. Executives are called to navigate a highly public event, while leading a process that is deeply personal. In many cases, executives are approaching retirement and confronting significant changes to their relationship to work. Executives need to manage their own personal exit process, as well as the transitions occurring in the organization by balancing preparation with the process of letting go, as well as managing change while providing continuity. Succession planning calls for boards to engage in sensitive conversations while respecting the executive's role and not being afraid to

plan based on an understanding of the organization's direction, as well as the emerging talent in the organization. Ultimately, the board needs to acquire the capacity to facilitate a smooth transition and a healthy post-succession organization.

By opening and closing with a focus on executives and their boards, this analysis emphasizes the critical roles that each can play in the process of leadership succession planning. The concept of self-leadership can be used to identify the unique ways that a departing executive can provide considerable guidance to her board throughout the planning processes. Citing factors that contribute to a healthy executive-board exchange, it is clear that successful succession planning and policy development is based on open communication at the executive-board level.

A review of the literature on the different types of succession, drawing heavily from the for-profit sector, suggests that there is no single best approach to succession planning and implementation. Recent research does, however, call for an overarching shift from a traditional replacement-planning model to a more comprehensive succession management approach. Based on a synthesis of the literature on succession planning, a conceptual model is proposed for promoting succession management in the human services by distinguishing between emergency-based and departure-based succession planning that is linked to strategic planning and leadership development. The second conceptual model illustrates the key concepts needed to build an internal pool of leadership talent. Together, these models provide a framework for understanding the key practice principles underlying effective leadership succession policy and planning in nonprofit human service organizations.

Frameworks for Leadership Succession Management by Sector

Nonprofit		
Author	Title	Elements of Framework
Wolfred, 2008	Succession Planning for Non-Profits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Leader Development (define strategic vision and identify, recruit, and retain leadership) - Emergency Succession Planning (identify job functions, roles, lines of authority; develop of cross training plan, communications plan, and procedures) - Departure-Defined Succession Planning (identify goals; determine successor skill set; capacity building with board, managers, and systems)
Jones, 2007	Greater Stability During Nonprofit Leadership Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage risk (create an emergency succession plan in the case of an unplanned leadership change) - Use a strategic approach to develop leadership throughout agency (staff and board) - Manage leadership transitions
Adams, 2005; 2006	Executive Transition Management Approach (ETM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan (emergency planning and ongoing strategic planning or pre-departure planning) - PREPARE: Transition and search planning (clarify direction, stabilize, outline capacity building efforts) - PIVOT: Search, select, prepare (outreach, prepare staff, strengthen infrastructure) - THRIVE: Post hire launch and support (define roles, responsibilities, and expectations)
Axelrod, 2002	Ongoing Succession Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perform institutional self-assessment - Define core leadership and management competencies - Create chief executive profile - Develop and implement communications plan - Search, select, appoint - Orient and coach new leader
Gersick et al., 2000	Continuity Planning in Family Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Select a planning leader and committee (diversity in age, gender, and family branch) - Decide who will participate - Complete the Foundation Continuity Survey and summarize results (survey is included in succession workbook with sections that assess mission and vision, organizational structure and leadership, developing successors, and family dynamics) - Plan a retreat - Facilitate retreat to discuss continuity planning and readiness, family structure, assumptions - Explore culture, history, and values
For-Profit		
Ip, 2009	Modified Quality Function Deployment for Business Succession Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess competencies of business, incumbent, future business, and successor - Use matrix to systematically compare results - Specify and plan tasks

For-Profit continued		
Author	Title	Elements of Framework
Greer, 2008	Diverse Succession Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Integration (align business strategy with diverse succession planning) - Leadership (develop buy-in) - Planning (communicate competencies, use valid performance measures, evaluate recruiting programs for diversity concerns) - Development (provide mentorship, training, visibility, and avoid tokenism) - Program Management (infuse into appraisal systems, monitor, evaluate)
Khurana, 2001	Optimum CEO Succession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish goals and objectives of search - Select search committee - Define roles and responsibilities (of search firm and the search committee) - Define candidate pool broadly - Analyze factors affecting company performance - Choose candidates to fit goals and objectives
Public and Private		
Herrera, 2002	Steps to Succession Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Envision the future organization - Inventory current resources - Define strategies to meet goals - Implement, monitor, and adjust plan
Gandossy & Verma, 2009	Best in Class Succession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Align (leadership fits strategy) - Commit (hold managers accountable and invest financial resources in succession planning) - Assess (assess key positions and potential talent) - Develop (deepen the leadership bench and avoid one size fits all approach to leadership development) - Measure (include organizational and individual achievements)
Public and Public Health		
Collins & Collins, 2007	Succession Planning Conceptual Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate organizational goals - Focus on essential positions - Analyze available candidates - Match organizational skills with candidates - Examine gaps - Identify the development process of proposed successor - Address transition issues - Attempt to retain talent - Evaluate and begin process again
Lynn, 2001	Sequential Steps for Succession Management in the Public Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systematically identify organizational needs - Discover a pool of high-potential candidates - Provide learning experiences to increase knowledge, skills, and abilities of potential leaders - Select leaders from pool

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