

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO USE COACHING TO SUPPORT SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT?

Successful Succession Management helps to “de-risk” the process of making internal appointments to senior roles. An internal successor will be a “known quantity” who already understands the organisation and has established relationships so potentially can deliver more quickly than an external recruit.

Organisations that get Succession Management right make sure there are seamless links between identifying, developing, coaching and appointing successors. This ensures that coaching is only used for successors where coaching is going to be a valuable intervention –with clear goals and expectations for the coaching investment. When used wisely as part of a succession process, coaching can be highly motivating and engaging for high-potential employees. Coaching signals a true willingness to invest in their future with the organisation - as opposed to putting someone on a succession plan and just assuming they'll get there on their own, which happens all too often.

Here are some tips that we see in best-in-class organisations who have partnered with us at The OCM:

1

When identifying successors, make sure that the development plan for each individual successor is clear. Document the skills, competencies and experiences necessary for each individual to achieve in order to be ready for the next role – using a consistent process across all roles. Equally importantly, share feedback on what they currently do well and where the organisation feels the gaps are. This whole process can be made more accurate and consistent by using some or all of the following processes:

- Talent forums
- Consulting with line managers and current role holders around job demands and successor capability levels
- Consistent job evaluation of target roles (current and future job demands)
- Assessment processes of successors.

2

Talk to successors about their future plans and ambitions – and make sure successors are aware that they are on succession plans. And be sure to check that they are motivated by the target role! Executive coaching can complement this process by testing and building motivation and commitment – or encouraging individuals to be clear about the future roles that they want, and don't want. If someone is genuinely unmotivated by a target role, it's important that decision-makers know this and can adjust succession plans appropriately.

3

Clarify the selection and appointing process. Make sure your organisation is clear with the potential successors about the process for appointing them to the identified role. Will they be slotted in if they are successful in their development, or will there be an open recruitment /selection process? There is a risk of demotivating people if they believe they might be slotted into a role and then have to apply for it, especially if they are ultimately not appointed. Coaching can be a valuable source of support if they will need to go through a selection process.



4

With the goals around skills, competencies and experiences in mind, evaluate the extent to which coaching will be a valuable intervention for each individual – it may not be! Coaching is particularly well suited where the goals involve:

- Building a coachee's awareness of the gaps between how they are currently operating and the demands of the future role – and building their commitment to address these gaps
- Developing strategic thinking and the ability to make decisions under pressure
- Developing the ability to lead large and widely dispersed teams
- The ability to lead and inspire change and turn businesses around
- Transitioning from a more technical role to a role centred on broader leadership.

Bear in mind that coaching is not always the right intervention to support everyone on succession plans. Sometimes an internal mentor will be more valuable, e.g. where the development gaps are around developing a specific technical skillset. An individual's current line manager is often an under-used resource – but to get the best of the line manager they need to be clear on the development plan and devote additional time to the process.

5

Use coaching to accelerate development in 'stretch assignments'. Where the development plan involves a secondment or stretch assignment in preparation for a target role, an external coach can help the individual quickly make a success of the assignment. This means they're able to carry forward the learning from this development and apply it more readily when they are appointed to the target role.

6

Keep the feedback loop open from the coaching. Coaching is always confidential – but external coaches working with your Talent can provide a valuable role in feeding back general themes that are emerging from the coaching. Coaches can identify systemic barriers and opportunities that leaders across the organisation face. Similarly, it's important to maintain the feedback loop between the individual, coach and organisation during the process, ensuring that the individual successor knows if their development is on track or if they need to make any adjustments.

7

Use coaching to support people transitioning into their target role. Once an individual is appointed to a role, coaching should begin up to 6 months before the start date. This speeds up their onboarding process and helps them get ahead of the role's challenges – meaning they are as effective as they can be and add value from day one.

Overall, executive coaching can be an important tool for organisations that are looking to identify and develop their next generation of leaders. By working closely with potential successors, coaches can help to identify their strengths and weaknesses and provide the support they need to reach their full potential.

For more on this, and to organise a time to talk about what sort of coaching support your organisation might need, please email us enquiry@theocm.co.uk.