

Colleen B. Mendel, MBA, Executive Director, T/TAS
Eric Dupree, MBA, Management Specialist, T/TAS

SUCCESSION PLANNING:

Planning and Managing Succession of the CEO and Other Key Positions



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INTRODUCTION

A transition in the leadership of an organization can unleash a perfect storm, just as the confluence of weather conditions in Sebastian Junger's novel *The Perfect Storm* conspired to sink the *Andrea Gail*. Like Captain Billy Tyne, some managers and boards might court disaster. Are you seeking thrills that come with a leadership crisis?

- **Engaging in denial**
He/she will never leave. Health and family crises happen to other people.
- **Relying on untested assumptions**
He/she is surrounded by strong capable staff who can take over in an emergency or in an interim. Everything we need to proceed with executive selection is in place and up-to-date.
- **Believing that not getting it right is not the end of the world.**
Executive recruitment and selection is so much fun that we can do it over and over again until we get it right. And it's not all that costly.
- **Believing that standing still is not, in fact, going backwards,**
We're doing good work, so the community will cut us some slack. Turnover isn't all that disruptive - after all people change jobs all the time. Another grant opportunity is just around the corner, if we miss this one.

Rather than a single, dramatic movement, the smooth succession of a business more resembles a flow of events that occurs over time. Like a well-run relay race, the handing over of a company should be graceful, carefully strategized and well executed if it is to be successful.

*Succession Planning:
Passing on the Mantle*

An article from *The Non-Profit Times* provides a prescription to ensure your own perfect storm:

- ◆ Avoid any opportunity to assess leadership performance
- ◆ Eliminate all succession planning talk from your strategic discussions
- ◆ Ignore administrative support, infrastructure or operational systems needs that would ensure you have the appropriate, skilled hands on deck
- ◆ Invite board members or unprepared staff to fill your leadership vacuum
- ◆ Rely on board members to conduct your [CEO] search or undertake other assignments [without professional support]
- ◆ Broadcast your vacancy widely, then accept the first hungry prospects
- ◆ Keep everyone in the dark, as guessing is much more entertaining

...Leadership planning is boring - and no match for the excitement that comes from crisis management and an uncertain future - all the conditions you need to create your own perfect storm management. ¹

If all of that excitement is not for you, please join us for a thoughtful, logical, and intentional look at ensuring the future of your organization. By engaging in a process of succession planning and tying it to the strategic directions of the organization, your staff and Board of Directors can chart the organization's course for the future and have skilled and committed people at its helm.