
Design And Implementation of a Succession Planning System and Examination of Its Impact on Organizational Productivity

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to implement a succession planning system and assess its impact on organizational productivity within the framework of a manufacturing plant (Iran Cable Manufacturing Company). The research method is applied in nature. In this study, a succession planning system was designed and implemented within the organization, and its effects on the factors influencing organizational productivity—namely, 1- increase in production volume 2- reduction in production time 3- decrease in waste 4- reduction in start-up time 5- consumption of raw materials 6- rework 7- equipment malfunction—were analyzed and examined. Ultimately, the primary hypothesis of the research, that "succession planning is effective on organizational productivity," is confirmed.

Introduction

Organizations are collections of individuals gathered to achieve a specific objective. In order to successfully attain this goal, individuals must be organized within the most effective structure possible. Decisions regarding structure represent the most fundamental strategic decision. Structure can either create or dismantle an organization. Rapid changes in the environment have significant impacts on the structures of organizations (Olivier Landy and Alan Cowling, 2014). Human resource management scholars believe that leading organizations in the new millennium can only respond to organizational needs more swiftly and flexibly by employing advanced models for human resource development, organizational learning, and strategies for the development and enhancement of employee capabilities (Kakayi Nejad et al., 2024). Thus, the development of human resources is one of the most critical strategic objectives for leading organizations of the present era (Mahdiyar, 2023). Wherever there is a need to design a system that exceeds a certain threshold in terms of dimensions and complexity, a holistic perspective is required (Mohammad Ali Abasi et al., 2005). Therefore, reengineering human resource systems can be seen as one of the methods for creating a competitive advantage for the organization, ultimately leading to increased productivity. Productivity is a vital element for organizations, and organizations are increasingly striving to find ways to enhance productivity in order to acquire and maintain a competitive advantage (Sözbilir, 2018). The aim of this paper is, in fact, to design and implement a succession planning system, which is a method for organizations to successfully develop and enhance their human resources, ultimately enabling them to achieve their vision and organizational objectives through increased productivity. This research is classified as applied and falls under the category of descriptive-analytical studies. The statistical sample of the research consists of 150 employees from the Iran Cable Manufacturing Factory located in Shiraz, Fars Province, comprising all the employees of the factory.

Research Methodology

This study, in terms of its nature, is categorized as quantitative research and, regarding its objective, it falls under applied research. In this investigation, theoretical information was collected using library methods, while additional information was gathered through fieldwork. Data collection involved daily reports from all employees at the factory, encompassing all units under examination and all personnel thereof. The target population for this study consists of the employees of Iran Cable Factory, totaling 150 individuals.

The aim of this article is to design and implement a succession planning system and to assess its impact on organizational productivity.

The main research question: Is the implementation of a succession planning system effective on organizational productivity?

Statement of the Problem

Succession Planning

In the strategic planning of organizations aimed at ensuring continuity and survival, the significance of human resources and the necessity of developing a long-term program for the provision of specialized and adept human resources are emphasized. This is essential so that in case of absence or unavailability of personnel, the organization not only does not face disruption but can also replace personnel with more competent individuals aligned with the strategic orientations of the organization (Arash and Hanifnejad, 2024). In this context, the utilization of the succession planning process, which is knowledge-driven and a product of applied knowledge (Yazdanpanah et al., 2024), has become a focal point for managers in organizations as one of the key tools for overcoming the crisis of human resource shortages and for attracting and retaining skilled personnel (Noghrea et al.,

2021). Succession planning serves as one of the missions of managers to enhance knowledge and skills, thus motivating experienced employees to transfer their expertise to others. Succession planning is an intelligent strategy that can help retain talent within organizations and ensure that they possess the necessary skills to respond to the rapid changes presented by today's business environment (Yazdanpanah et al., 2024). Initially, the concept of succession planning focused on identifying future leaders; however, from the perspective of human capital strategy, it is now regarded as a process to prepare all individuals within the organization, at all organizational levels, to assume future responsibilities. It is perceived as a systematic and thoughtful process that facilitates the continuity, retention, and development of intellectual and knowledge assets for the future while encouraging individuals to advance (Mahfoozhi et al., 2019).

Productivity

The term productivity is the English translation of the word "productivity," which denotes the ability and capacity for production. In the Encyclopedia Britannica, productivity in economics is defined relatively as the output produced compared to the input required for that production. According to the Oxford Dictionary, productivity signifies efficiency, which in the industrial context is measured by comparing the amount of production to the time spent or resources consumed in producing it (Nasiri, 2020). Productivity pertains to the effective use of facilities and conditions, enhancing performance in terms of efficiency, and achieving organizational goals from the perspective of effectiveness (Jafarzadeh, 2023). Furthermore, Drucker posits that the study and examination of the histories of leading organizations reflect the capabilities of their human resources (including staff and management) and their ability to continually improve their collective achievements. Since ancient times, humanity has sought to utilize available capabilities, resources, and opportunities in a productive and efficient manner (Kakayi Nejad et al., 2023). Efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity constitute the essence of an organization, which can ensure the sustainability and survival of organizations and provide a strategy for acquiring competitive advantages (Mahiar, 2023). In the contemporary era, this issue has garnered serious attention more than ever before. The limitations of available resources, increasing populations, and the growing needs and desires of humanity have compelled stakeholders in the fields of economics, politics, and management within society and organizations to prioritize productivity enhancement in their agendas (Taheri, 2014).

Data Analysis

Initially, the organization's vision, goals, and strategies were redefined, and efforts were made to continuously explain the organization's vision to employees and motivate them towards achieving it. To improve and increase the organization's efficiency and effectiveness, a SWOT analysis was

designed with a PESTLE approach, and then the following actions were formulated and implemented:

Reengineering the Recruitment and Hiring System:

Effective recruitment serves as the foundation of productivity and management, necessitating the attraction and hiring of suitable personnel for appropriate succession. To reengineer the recruitment and hiring system, the following actions were undertaken:

Reengineering Job Specifications

This entails determining the features, skills, and competencies required for the position. In this regard, the following questions must be addressed:

1. What educational background do I desire for the job?
2. Is prior experience necessary? If so, how many years? Should this experience be relevant?
3. What skills are required?

Skills were categorized into three groups: 1. Technical and specialized skills pertinent to the job; 2. Behavioral skills such as motivating, communication abilities, delegation, body language, and active listening; 3. Cognitive skills including mindset and attitude, foresight, risk-based thinking, process-oriented thinking, systems thinking, and strategic thinking.

Moreover, the higher the level of the recruited personnel and their proximity to managerial positions, the stronger the required behavioral and cognitive skills should be, while for lower-level positions closer to labor roles, the emphasis should be on behavioral and cognitive skills as illustrated below.

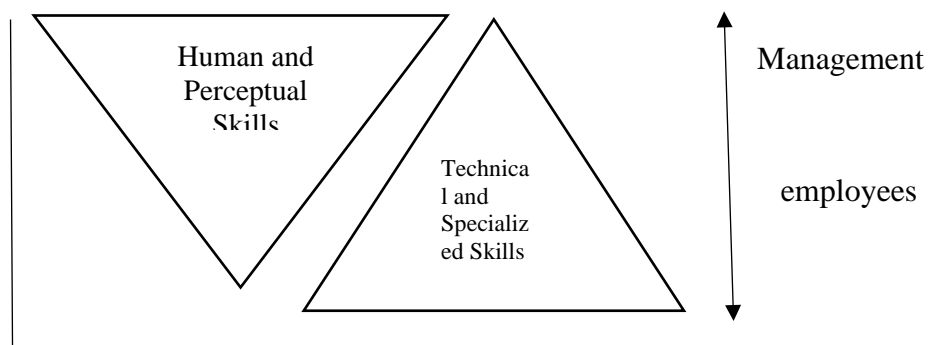


Figure 1 - Skill Levels for

- 4- Other characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, accent, intelligence quotient, physical conditions, facial features, height, and personality type.

Reengineering the Job Profile: To reengineer the job profile, the following actions were undertaken:

- 1- Determining the job title and position within the organization.
- 2- Establishing objectives and expected outcomes along with key performance indicators (KPIs) for job performance evaluation.
- 3- Defining job responsibilities based on organizational goals, duties, and authorities, as well as their KPIs (KPI metrics should be as quantitative and measurable as possible).
- 4- Identifying conditions for qualification and job competencies.
- 5- Defining working conditions and hours of operation.
- 6- Establishing remuneration and benefits.
- 7- Determining the channels of job-related communications (who the superior is and from whom directives are received).
- 8- Establishing onboarding training.

Determining Onboarding Training:

The following training programs were created for newly hired employees:

- 1- Safety training
- 2- Product knowledge training
- 3- Material science training
- 4- Training on necessary equipment
- 5- Familiarization with the organizational chart, personnel, and workflow hierarchy.

Due to the ongoing growth of the factory, it was decided that all of the above conditions would be updated every six months.

Interview Process for Recruitment:

An interview guideline was initially designed, followed by the formulation of necessary questions.

Performance Management Using the PDCA Method:

After recruiting deserving personnel, it is crucial to ensure their retention. Therefore, performance management utilizing the PDCA method was developed. This approach, based on a SWOT analysis, aims to facilitate effective planning and increase organizational efficiency. The PDCA system, also known as the Deming Cycle or continuous improvement cycle, is employed as follows:

- 1- PLAN: Setting performance goals and plans for employees aligned with organizational objectives.
- 2- DO: Continuous coaching and supervision.
- 3- CHECK: Performance evaluation and feedback provision.
- 4- ACT: Analysis and review of performance and implementation of improvements.

The inputs of the management system based on PDCA include:

- 1- Organizational goals and strategies
- 2- Organizational values
- 3- Definition of responsibilities, duties, and job qualifications
- 4- Establishing a reward and punishment mechanism.

Subsequently, the Deming Cycle is designed step by step as follows:

1- PLAN: Determining employees' goals and expectations (these goals and expectations should be SMART and challenging while aligned with organizational strategies). 2- Establishing evaluation metrics (results and behaviors). 3- Defining target criteria for each metric. 4- Drafting a performance agreement.

2- DO: Securing necessary resources for employees; 2- Supporting and backing employees; 3- Continuous monitoring of employee performance; 4- Providing continuous and frequent feedback to employees; 5- Training and empowering employees.

3- CHECK: Identifying performance gaps among employees and raising their awareness as follows: 1- Evaluating employee performance based on performance indicators; 2- Identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses and determining instances of positive and negative behavior; 3- Preparing and presenting performance reports to employees, and ranking them when possible; 4- Holding meetings with employees to provide both positive and negative feedback; 5- Communicating met and unmet goals and expectations to employees.

4- ACT: This phase is corrective and is designed as follows:

1- Reviewing and analyzing employee performance, diagnosing, and identifying the root causes of undesirable performance and behaviors; 2- Identifying employees' talents, capabilities, and potential; 3- Identifying training needs of employees for their growth and development; 4- Determining necessary actions and solutions for correcting and improving employee performance

with their participation; 5- Drafting personal development plans for employees with their collaboration; 6- Providing rewards to employees with outstanding performance.

Establishment of a Performance Agreement

The performance evaluation system must be transparently explained to all employees so that they understand the expectations placed upon them and how they should effectively fulfill their responsibilities (i.e., what their key performance indicators are). When the performance evaluation system is transparent, fair, and universally applied, employees feel that their performance is recognized and that the evaluation is commensurate with their contributions. When employees sense that their efforts are acknowledged and they understand the steps they need to take for career advancement, a sense of hope gradually develops within them.

The following criteria were considered in the performance evaluation:

- 1- Goals should be clear
- 2- Measurable (quantitative)
- 3- Challenging (not easily achievable)
- 4- Time-bound
- 5- Aligned with organizational objectives
- 6- Achievable (feasible)
- 7- Agreed upon by both management and employees.

Three additional points were considered in the performance evaluation:

- 1- The activities that employees should or should not undertake were incorporated into the performance assessment.
- 2- Negative feedback regarding their performance was communicated to them, along with solutions and suggestions for improvement, inviting their input and sharing our perspectives as well.
- 3- Employee involvement was sought, as this engenders a sense of ownership of the tasks; by articulating their feedback, they became more engaged in the process.

Feedback encourages employees to develop self-awareness, enabling them to repeat commendable actions while improving and rectifying ineffective ones. The feedback provided to employees must be designed to inform them about areas of success that warrant repetition and areas requiring enhancement. These sessions were held weekly with the participation of the employees and their unit heads.

Reengineering Motivational Systems

Wherever employee actions are recognized and appreciated, those actions are likely to be repeated. There are no unmotivated employees; motivation must be intentionally cultivated and activated by management. It is essential to create an environment where employees feel visible. Consequently, the motivational system is outlined as follows:

- 1- Establish a recognition board where several employees are tasked with capturing exemplary behaviors through photographs. These images, once approved by management, are displayed on the recognition board along with a corresponding statement.
- 2- Provide each employee with a disposable cup weekly or monthly, featuring a slogan of their choice.
- 3- Delegate authority using the Eisenhower model.
- 4- Organize group recreational activities such as hiking or soccer.
- 5- Provide leisure vouchers, such as free entry to a swimming pool or visits to recreational parks.
- 6- Select an outstanding employee at the end of each year in the presence of their families.
- 7- Facilitate the attendance of employees at training courses of their choosing (especially concerning the new generation).

- 8- Express gratitude towards employees in front of their peers.
- 9- Create and distribute awards to exemplary employees.
- 10- Acknowledge employees publicly in virtual spaces by managers.
- 11- Offer mentoring opportunities.
- 12- Feature the outstanding employee on the company's website.
- 13- Establish a recognition box where employees can express their appreciation for colleagues; management or a representative will read these acknowledgments to the staff weekly or monthly.
- 14- Purchase snacks, such as ice cream, for distribution among employees biweekly during lunch hours.
- 15- Assign tasks and responsibilities that align with employees' interests.
- 16- Offer monetary incentives in the form of performance-related bonuses.
- 17- Establish a suggestion box that rewards the three best suggestions with cash prizes according to clear guidelines.

The principles and foundations of reward distribution are defined as follows:

- 1- Rewards are not universally distributed; they are reserved for those who have surpassed expectations.
- 2- Each employee receives rewards commensurate with their level of performance, meaning that the reward should reflect the accomplishment.
- 3- Rewards must be performance-based; they should not be given merely for presence, but rather for achieving targets.
- 4- Reward criteria should align with the organization's strategy and goals.
- 5- Rewards must not be solely financial.
- 6- Rewards serve as tools for fostering culture; therefore, they should be publicly recognized and the reasons for them should be transparent.
- 7- All employees must have equal opportunities for receiving rewards.
- 8- The rewards must be motivating.
- 9- Rewards should be given immediately following a commendable action.
- 10- The reward distribution mechanism should have a defined set of guidelines and procedures.

Additionally, Maslow's hierarchy of needs was utilized for engineering the motivational system .
Designing a Succession Planning and Talent Management System

After attracting, hiring, and effectively retaining suitable personnel, the next step involves advancing deserving staff. To reengineer the succession planning and talent management system, the following actions were undertaken:

1. Readiness Assessment

2. Establishing a Steering Committee

This group comprises influential and reputable individuals, adhering to the Mars Group model. The Mars Group model posits that 7-8 individuals from the organization, whom one would be willing to take to Mars to establish an organization akin to their own, should be included in this team.

Note: Individuals who exhibit dwarfism in their professional outlook, selfishness, or cynicism should never be part of this group.

3. Identification of Key Positions

Succession planning and talent management are conducted for key positions. Key jobs are those that are linked to the organization's strategy and profitability.

4. Needs Assessment / Workforce Planning

This pertains to determining how many individuals should be recruited from outside the organization and how many should be developed internally.

5. Designing Competency Modeling

In this regard, we must identify the specific skills required along with their quality. The competency list for future managers should be developed through the following methods: 1. Interviews with experts; 2. Discussions with individuals associated with these positions; 3. Benchmarking against successful companies; 4. Some organizations, such as ONET, have defined standard qualifications for various jobs; 5. Conducting foresight studies to extract the desired characteristics of the prospective manager; 6. Utilizing the values and culture that we aspire to have in the future organizational framework.

6. Extracting an Initial List of Individuals

In this regard, we should 1. Consult managers; 2. Review records and files; 3. Utilize performance evaluation histories; 4. Implement a 360-degree evaluation: inquire from individuals connected to the position in question.

7. Thorough Evaluation of Individuals

1. The primary tool involves examining the individual's biography, including their attended courses and years of experience. 2. Review of prior performance appraisals. 3. Facilitate group discussions: create a discussion to observe who participates, who speaks authoritatively, and who demonstrates knowledge. 4. High-pressure interviews: conduct private interviews with selected individuals, posing challenging questions to scrutinize their responses while applying provoking tactics, such as smirking, to evaluate the applicant's composure and patience for future managerial roles.

5. Utilize personality assessments such as MBTI and behavioral assessments such as DISC. 6. Implement Role Play: assign individuals to a role they are expected to occupy in the future and observe their actions. For instance, in sales management, evaluate who demonstrates superior selling skills during the interview. 7. Administer standardized creativity assessments. 8. Administer the standard Baron assessment for emotional intelligence measurement. 9. Conduct interviews. 10. Simulate the situation the individual will encounter and observe their response .

8- Formation of a Talent Reservoir Bank

Ultimately, we select the number of talented individuals identified and establish a database, striving to update and develop this bank over time. Subsequently, career pathway guidance and individual development programs are designed for them.

9- Nurturing Talents

Methods of Learning:

1- Learning by Doing: Engage in activity to learn.

We should provide them with the space, opportunities, and autonomy to immerse themselves in situations where they can perform tasks and learn effectively.

2- Learning by Others.

3- Learning by Mistakes: Learning from errors and failures.

Here we have two approaches:

1- After Action Review: After completing any task, we reflect on it and learn the necessary lessons (Why did we succeed? Or why did we fail?).

2- Before Action Review: Prior to undertaking a task, we analyze it to avoid repeating previous mistakes (preventive action).

4- Providing Feedback: The output of the feedback session should encompass four key elements known as KISS, which include:

- 1- Keep: Maintain these positive aspects.
- 2- Improve: Enhance these positive aspects.
- 3- Start: Initiate these positive aspects.
- 4- Stop: Eliminate these negative aspects.
- 5- Teaching Others: To teach effectively, one must learn deeply to be able to instruct well.
- 6- Attending classes, conferences, and seminars.
- 7- Visiting other factories and drawing inspiration from them.

Re-engineering the Training Unit

Recent developments have profoundly impacted the field of human resources education. Therefore, the establishment of this unit must be taken seriously and redesigned appropriately. Initially, a needs assessment must be conducted, followed by the consideration of two training courses each month, which may take place both within and outside the organization. A training program planning form has been developed. The presence of new generations, with diverse perspectives and expectations, has transformed educational methodologies. By integrating education with entertainment, we can design engaging training that ignites the enthusiasm of learners.

Gamification is one of the methods that can be employed to implement the training process through play. In gamification, efforts are made not only to fulfill human needs for play but also to leverage this need for business profits by attracting and retaining more customers and increasing their cognitive engagement with the company or business for enhanced credibility. In essence, gamification is typically defined as a technique aimed at employing gaming mechanisms in non-gaming contexts.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the training, the Kirkpatrick model will be utilized. The Kirkpatrick model is recognized as one of the most widely used and successful frameworks for evaluation within a comprehensive human resource management system. This goal-oriented model employs a structured and analyzable approach to assess individuals post-training, yielding positive outcomes for organizational educational planning. In this model, the effectiveness of training programs is evaluated at four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results.

1.Level of Reaction

At this level, also referred to as the emotional level, the extent of learners' reactions to the influential factors in executing an educational program is measured and evaluated. What is assessed at the reaction level includes participants' feelings about the educational program and their opinions regarding the instructor, educational content, educational facilities, and the organization of the course. Learning and development professionals utilize this level to determine the degree of student engagement, the manner of their participation, and their responses to the training received, as well as to evaluate its usefulness. In the Kirkpatrick model, employee reactions to training courses are examined in three distinct categories :

- Reaction as an emotional response
- Reaction to the training provided
- Reaction to the effectiveness of the training provided

2. Level of Learning

Learning is defined as the determination of the extent of skills, techniques, and facts that participants have acquired during the educational course. What is measured at the level of learning is the

quantifiable knowledge that participants have learned during the course .

3. Level of Behavior

At the behavior level, the degree of knowledge and skills acquired and their impact on changing the behavior of participants in educational courses is measured and evaluated. At this level, challenges are encountered in evaluating behaviors :

- Changes in employee behavior do not occur immediately and a period must be considered for behavioral change .
- Evaluators cannot accurately predict when these changes will begin .
- Organizational context and changes may affect employee behavioral changes after the completion of the training course .

4. Level of Results

At the results level, the extent to which organizational goals are achieved after conducting training courses is measured and evaluated, taking into account factors such as cost reduction, production and service levels, profit, and sales volume .

Discussion and Conclusion

Researchers and experts also cite succession planning as a key variable in achieving organizational goals and preventing the loss of capacities and talents from the system. For example, Elbassal and Atalla concluded in 2023 that to overcome workforce shortages and future instability in the healthcare system, nurses with high operational potential should be cultivated to provide quality care. Yudianto and colleagues, in 2023 as well, found advantages in planning through the approach of succession planning in finding suitable nurses. Additionally, the findings of Ard and Beasley in 2021 emphasized nurturing motivated individuals and the significance of implementing succession planning schemes to achieve this objective, also highlighting the role of nursing managers as essential for the continuity of this process. Arash and Hanifehnejad in 2024 examined the factors influencing the effective implementation of a succession planning system and identified organizational training, organizational culture, organizational management, and human resources as influential factors in this regard. Akbari and colleagues in 2024 addressed the impact of organizational learning on succession planning and found that cultural, educational, managerial, and innovative factors play a significant role in organizational learning for the purpose of succession planning. Radpour and Mohammadi Nejad in 2024 concluded that an effective combination of professional development and succession planning could translate into a sustainable competitive advantage for organizations and aid their success in facing future challenges. Abdolrezaei and colleagues in 2023 investigated the barriers to establishing succession planning and concluded that individual barriers, organizational barriers, managerial barriers, job nature barriers, human resource barriers, and implementation barriers are recognized. This study focuses on the design and implementation of a succession planning system and examines its impact on organizational productivity .

After a year of designing and implementing the succession planning system, its impact on the factors influencing organizational productivity, which include 1- production rate 2- speed of production 3- waste levels 4- equipment breakdowns 5- consumption of raw materials 6- rework, was analyzed and evaluated. The results obtained indicate that the design and implementation of the succession planning system positively affect organizational productivity, thus confirming the research

hypothesis .

This research presents a good example for other manufacturing companies in Iran regarding how and what factors can lead to improvements in their organizational productivity. It is noteworthy that this study addressed the design and implementation of a succession planning system and its effect on organizational productivity. Future research could explore the impact of succession planning systems on other organizational structures, as well as investigate the challenges that lead to reduced productivity in organizations, or the factors that contribute to the failure of succession planning systems and the associated challenges.

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