



PROVINCE OF EAST KENT

Support and Development Group

Succession Planning... Ensuring your Lodge's Future

We are all familiar with the scenario in which the same Brother has been Secretary or DC of his Lodge for as long as anyone can remember. He is re-appointed year after year either because he is reluctant to give up, or more likely because there is no one else willing or able to take on the role. The sudden death or incapacity of such a Brother can cause enormous problems for his Lodge such as loss of knowledge and expertise, lack of continuity, and the wasted time and effort of those required to play "catch up". Problems which could be avoided by taking a more structured approach to succession planning in respect of the key roles.

So what exactly is Succession Planning?

Succession Planning is a process of identifying and developing Brethren who have the potential to fill these critical leadership roles in the future. In other words to create a "leadership pipeline" which ensures that not only are experienced and capable people available, but they are willing and able to step into these key roles as they become vacant. It is an integral part of the Mentoring Programme.

Why do we need Succession Planning?

In the past it was assumed that talented individuals would manage their own careers, and that "the cream will rise to the top" by some unknown form of osmosis. However with reducing membership numbers and an increasing age profile, skill shortages are likely to be exacerbated in the coming years, which in turn may lead to a diminution of confidence in the leadership potential of our mainstream membership.

A proper Succession Plan enables a Lodge to prepare for likely or inevitable changes now, in order to minimise their impact later on.

There are 4 main stages in developing a succession plan for your Lodge...

1. Identify which are the key or critical roles for succession and establish how soon a replacement is likely to be needed. Short term replacements are fine but a long term "successor" should be the preferred option. In most Lodges the succession of the WM is largely taken care of by the natural progression through the floor offices, but the roles of Secretary, Treasurer, Director of Ceremonies, Charity Steward, Almoner and Lodge Mentor require careful planning.
2. Develop a clear understanding of the capabilities and skill sets required by those who will fulfil these roles in the future.
3. Identify those Brethren who have the potential to perform well in these roles.
4. Prepare individual development plans for each member of your "Talent Pool" to prepare them for future advancement. Consider "Job Experience" by getting them to shadow their predecessor. Set up skills training and coaching whereby experienced brethren pass on their knowledge and expertise well before they consider giving up the job.

Involve all your members

Succession Planning is not something to be done in secret. All your Lodge members should be aware of the process and understand how it works. Those involved should have the opportunity to input their own ideas, aspirations, preferences and constraints to ensure that the outcome meets their own personal requirements.

They should also get regular feedback to let them know how they are viewed by the Lodge, what their perceived development needs are, and the jobs for which they are being considered.

Who is responsible for Succession Planning?

This process needs to be owned by those already in senior management positions in the Lodge. The Secretary is often referred to as the “Chief Executive Officer” so in most cases ownership of the process should reside with him. He in turn should advise each new Worshipful Master to ensure that appointments are made which balance the needs of the Lodge with the aspirations of it’s members.

As Senior Officers are appointed they should be advised of their expected length of tenure, and invited to consider who might succeed them in due course. Having identified a potential successor and checked that he has both the potential and the willingness to take on the role, an active development plan should be put in place to ensure that when the time comes he is fully equipped to take on his new responsibilities with confidence.

Shaping the Future

Benjamin Franklin, a lifelong Freemason once said “The only things certain in life are death and taxes”; to this he might have added.... “Change”.

Change is inevitable. As circumstances change, so organizations must adapt to their surroundings and evolve in order to survive. We should recognise that whilst change can provide challenges, it also provides opportunities for renewal and improvement. It also allows us the opportunity to provide our membership with one of the greatest benefits Freemasonry has to offer....Personal Development.

In conjunction with your Lodge’s Mentoring Programme; a proper, well managed Succession Planning process will help to attract and retain quality candidates and in so doing ensure that your Lodge is passed on to future generations in the best possible order.

NOTE: Invicta Lodge No 709 have developed a very useful Succession Planning Form. To download a copy, see “Succession Planning Form”.