



Small Scenarios for Changing Times:

MVP (Most Valuable People):

Modern Succession Planning for Operational Continuity

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Modern Succession Planning for Operational Continuity

In times of abundance, organizations view leadership as the critical element. Succession planning is ranked lists of possible successors to high level positions. Although the named replacements rarely get the job, the exercise creates and distributes the precious commodity of status.

It is good to be in the succession plan. It is the ultimate evidence that you've joined the club.

You are nearly indispensable. Excepting the fact that leaders rarely make good replacement choices, succession planning is a useful exercise.

In times of scarcity or crisis, the rules change. Rather than progression to the C-suite, business continuity becomes the governing question. The conversation changes from 'who is the next leader' to 'who do we need to make things run?'

Remember Ted in the HiPos scenario? He was the one person who knew how to pull all of the levers that make payroll happen. Without him, the pay cycle would fail, and employees would not get paid.

There are Teds all over the organization.

These are the people who have exclusive knowledge about how to run pieces of equipment or software that the organization depends on. They live in accounting, engineering, operations, HR, sales, marketing, and operations.

Sometimes, they are people who are disliked because their job is to say: "No." They manage processes that give access to resources, from institutional knowledge to requisitions and purchasing. They examine inventories and perform quality checks. Often maligned, they keep the

business operating within bounds and are essential to cost control in a downturn.

And then, there are the people without whom revenue doesn't happen. They make sales, write invoices, label packages, drive trucks, and coordinate logistics.

Each of these groups are emblematic of the

kinds of people who are actually critical for the continuing function of the organization. In times of abundance, they are often considered replaceable.

In order to really ensure your organization's longevity, these are the people you need to identify. Know who they are, why they are critical, and where to find a replacement for those skills and knowledge if you need them. The most important people are often not on the 'leader's pets' list.



The Way We Worked: Halibut on the Railway, National Archives, Records of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Things to do:

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For the foreseeable future, plan for the possibility that up to 20% of your workforce will require extended hospitalization and that 1% to 3% will die. This is a huge threat to the ongoing operation of the company. Knowing how to navigate succession in mission critical roles is essential.

1. Get All Employee Profiles Completed

Typically, the profiles in your HRIS are only about 25% complete. Now, more than ever, you need a detailed and accurate look at your workforce and their individual skills. Getting this done should be a top priority.

2. Identify your MVPs

Find the pockets of expertise that have no backup. It isn't an easy chore. Look for people who control access to resources, have technical specialties, or special knowledge essential to making things run.

3. Document Their Knowledge

Interview them. Persuade them to tell you their secrets. Uncover the magic in their work.

4. Ask Them to Identify Replacements

Who do they know who could readily replace them if they got sick or otherwise incapacitated?

5. Involve the Recruiting Experts

The better your internal profiles (see item 1), the more likely Recruiting can help you replace MVPs if needed. They may have access to software that extracts skills from resumes and profiles.

6. Use Your Internal Mobility Tools

In the days of labor shortages, many companies installed systems to help employees find other jobs within the company. Run them backwards. Use them to see who in the company meets the requirements of MVP jobs

7. Identify Risks and Gaps

No one will be a perfect replacement for your MVPs. They will have gaps in training and experience. Start cross-training now.

8. Understand the Development Plan and Its timelines

For each person in the plan, have a schedule for completion of the development required to put them into the MVP's job. You won't get much notice when the time comes. They need to be prepared with courses and on the job training.

About the Small Scenarios series:

Massive change is afoot. The pandemic gives us the opportunity to rethink and reappraise. The small scenarios project is designed to provoke thought about the medium-term future and how it will be different. The goal is to help HR prepare for the future we will encounter in a few short months.

The Small Scenarios Team



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About HRExaminer

HRExaminer is a research and publishing company focused on the evolving edges of HR and HRTechnology. The publications team includes a 25 member editorial advisory board who deliver insight and opinion. The company also produces two award winning podcasts (live on Thursday and Friday mornings at 8:00 AM Pacific). Each year, HRExaminer delivers the market benchmark report on the evolution of Intelligent tools in HRTechnology.

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