

In a survey of APPA members, it was discovered that only 51 percent had a succession plan for future staffing. When asked to describe their plan, many stated that they planned was to simply post the jobs locally or through APPA. That strategy may work today, but it probably won't in the future, due to the impending shrinking of the labor force. The United States Bureau of Labor predicts a 47 percent drop in the total number of working-age people by 2050, which means there is a real possibility that trained and prepared professionals may not be available to fill future management vacancies.

There are six additional challenges that APPA members are currently facing when filling vacancies.

- **Retiring Workforce:** As leaders and experienced employees retire they are taking with them institutional knowledge.
- **Lack of Time/Resources:** As organizations use time and resources to keep up with customer demands and

- **Lack of Opportunity:** Many facilities groups do not offer a clear path for growth and experience to their employees. When there is little opportunity for growth-to-leadership positions, it is more difficult to recruit and retain future leaders.
- **Location:** An undesirable location causes difficulty in attracting talent to an organization. On the other hand, a desirable, growing location creates the challenge of competing with surrounding opportunities that can offer more competitive salaries and benefits.

Future Hiring Needs

The research showed that 43 percent of APPA institutions will need to fill managerial positions in the next five years,

Employee Succession Planning:

Are You Prepared?

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expectations, they have little opportunity to plan and properly train potential future leaders.

- **Lack of HR Support:** Human Resource departments often inadequately evaluate positions on criteria that may not properly define the need or responsibility for a position. This causes difficulty, as FM departments cannot properly offer competitive compensation for the positions needed.
- **Size of Organization:** The size of an organization is often a determining factor in its ability to offer entry-level positions. The organization may not be able to provide adequate experience to allow employees to prove they are capable of leadership or develop skill sets needed.

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and 57 percent over the next six to nine years. Findings also showed that 68 percent of the respondents are looking outside of their organizations to fill these positions. If APPA institutions will be replacing managers and the number of experienced candidates is dwindling, the possibility of recruiting from other organizations in the industry is going to be limited.

APPA institutions were asked what type of educational background would be required to fill future managerial positions. The research showed that most would be seeking candidates with a bachelor's degree (60 percent). A master's

degree would be required of 11 percent of future positions. Associate, high school, and technical degrees accounted for 34 percent of other education requirements.

The research also showed that six to ten years of experience was desired by 39 percent of respondents and three to five years was desired by 37 percent. This reveals that 91 percent of job openings will require from three to more than ten years of experience.

This finding reemphasizes the need to prepare younger professionals by providing work experience. Where is that work experience going to come from? Who is going to provide the experience? To date, very few APPA institutions have provided internships or other work experiences for young professionals. Most internships are being sponsored by outsourcing companies working in higher education. The survey did reveal that 88 percent of respondents would like to have an opportunity to give experience to interns seeking careers in the facilities management field.

Lessons Learned From Other Industries

The literature review found practices that are being used successfully in other industries to form a framework on which to build a succession plan. No one element appeared to be more important than the other.

- **SWOT Analysis:** A Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis can be a helpful tool. Creating a matrix where the timeline, position competencies, character qualities, and cost are displayed and used in scenario planning is the best way to evaluate the SWOT Analysis.
- **Top Support:** Top support occurs when a succession plan is supported by the administration. This is very much like a coaching role played by the administration. The plan is first aligned with the mission and strategies of an organization. Someone needs to champion the plan by encouraging others to participate in its success.
- **Needs-Driven:** An organization needs to identify positions critical to the success of the organization and the qualities, which make those positions important.
- **Know Timeframe:** An organization should be aware of future vacancies so that appropriate steps can be taken to identify, develop, and prepare qualified successors in a timely manner.
- **Plan from Within:** Grow and develop individuals within the organization to enhance the quality of the staff. Identify employees that can be groomed to make smooth transitions

into vacant positions. These employees are already familiar with the organization, thus making the transition smoother.

- **Development and Training:** When potential employees are identified, it is vital to the success of the plan to discover where the employee needs to grow. The plan should assist them in developing qualities needed to succeed in the position.
- **Communication:** A succession plan should be shared with everyone in the organization to provide a clear path for growth and assist them in understanding their role.
- **Recruitment:** In order for the plan to continue, the organization must actively recruit new talent that can be developed and trained to take future positions. No organization can fill 100 percent of its vacancies internally, without eliminating other positions. Recruitment is the fuel that keeps the plan moving.

Call to Action

Succession planning is more than posting a vacancy in the newspaper or online when the need arises. It is an active discovery of what the organization needs to fulfill its long-range mission. Quality development is something everyone in the organization can participate and benefit from. A successful plan will focus on these needs to allocate resources wisely during implementation. Many participants in the survey

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Note: This research was done by a team of faculty and student researchers from Brigham Young University's Facilities Management Program in 2006. The research was accomplished by surveying APPA members on their current needs and attitudes about succession planning. The researchers also sought to discover what successful organizations and industries are doing to fill vacancies through such planning. The research involved an extensive literature review that examined best practices for successful succession planning. A select number of qualitative interviews were also conducted with leaders in APPA. An 11-question quantitative survey was sent to approximately 1,000 APPA institutional representatives. The response rate was 11.1 percent. For a complete copy of the research findings e-mail Dr. Jeff Campbell at jcampbell@byu.edu.

said that they could not afford the time and money required to plan for vacancies. An institution cannot afford not to plan; otherwise resources are unwisely used for activities that will not produce the needed results.

We suggest that institutions would benefit by taking an active role in promoting the advantages of being employed by APPA member institutions, and developing and showing career path opportunities for younger professionals. There is

also a need to bridge the gap between required levels of education and young professional experience. These suggestions give focus to help those less experienced in the industry rise to the occasion and fill those roles as future leaders in higher education.▲

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