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In this issue:

- ▶ Article - **Succession Planning Extends to Knowledge Workers**
- ▶ **Talent Talks™**, brief audio conference calls to transfer know-how between people. Our first was a hit. Registration, limited to 12 participants, is open now for our second session.

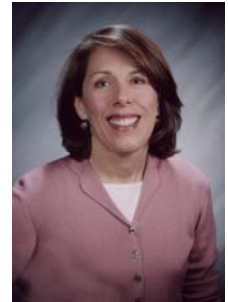
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## Succession Planning Extends to Knowledge Workers

By Carol Bergeron

Succession Planning done right solves a very important business problem – the disruption in business operations resulting from critical jobs that are vacant for too long or occupied by people not fully prepared for the increase in responsibility.

*Succession planning is not reserved for the executive suite anymore. It includes jobs at any level in the organization that require specific knowledge and expertise critical to your organization's success. Omitting succession planning for knowledge workers could put your firm's performance at risk.*



Do you find yourself scrambling to back-fill the loss of critically skilled employees and leaders? Does productivity plummet because key jobs go unfilled or are filled by folks not quite ready? If you've had these experiences then succession planning may be a missing component to your overall workforce strategy.

While every firm's succession planning program will have unique attributes, they all have a common goal regardless of company size. To build bench strength among a cadre of people who are ready, willing and able to take on greater responsibility when the need arises.

### Benefits to Succession Planning?

Benefits to succession planning include people who are prepared to take on greater responsibility, ability to fill expected and unexpected job openings quickly and cost effectively, minimal disruption to business operations when transitions occur, and improved retention among critically skilled employees. It can also help your organization proactively address labor force challenges such as the aging workforce, growing demand for knowledge workers and the desire for increased diversity at all levels in the organization.

*Investing in people shows up in business results. That's why nearly 50% of top performing companies indicated they plan to make succession planning investments over the next 24 months compared with less than 30% of non-top performing companies. (Source: Enterprise Performance Management Study conducted by Bergeron Associates™ and Insight Management Group.)*

### How do you get started?

Here are a few guidelines:

1. Get buy-in from the executive team on everything from the need for succession planning, the consequences if unaddressed and agreement to take action reflected in a basic road map that includes an initial investment of resources and ideas on how to measure the ROI.
2. Determine future talent needs within the context of business goals and strategy. Then develop profiles (knowledge, skills, abilities, behavior) for your most important and difficult to fill jobs.
3. Assess employees against your future talent needs with the intent to recognize gaps and identify high-performance folks with potential to fill those gaps.
4. Create, implement and measure the effectiveness of individual development plans. For each area of development, action items may include: special individual or group assignments, job rotations, on the job or

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cross training, coursework and coaching. For technical folks action items may include: innovation projects, writing and presenting papers at conferences and initiating a community of practice at your firm.

5. Assess the effectiveness of development plans across the organization. What percent of individual development plans were actually developed? How many were implemented? Did employees achieve their development goals? How do you know?
6. Build accountability into the equation. Link recognition and rewards to managers and employees responsible for implementation of development plans.
7. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness or ROI of your succession planning program. For instance, are you filling your most critical jobs with folks who have participated in the program? Modify the program as appropriate based on: feedback and changes in environmental conditions and business strategy & goals.

What are some tools that add value to succession planning? A process for mapping workforce investments to strategic goals of the organization. This process should include succession planning.

*82% of top-performing companies generate better results by using a formal process that aligns workforce initiatives to strategic goals. Compare that to only 65% of non-top performers that have a process. (Source: Enterprise Performance Management Study conducted by Bergeron Associates™ and Insight Management Group.)*

Other important tools: A performance coaching and feedback process, a development planning system, assessment tools, an automated process to capture employees' progress, their mastery of skills and achievement of development goals.

Succession Planning is not done in a vacuum. Thriving succession plans are tightly knit with recruiting, retention and leadership & knowledge worker development programs.

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## **TALENT TALKS™ (NEW)**

Talent Talks™- a new series of brief audio conference calls (30 minutes tops) to transfer know-how between people. Our first session, conducted Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> on "**Behavior-based Interviewing to Reduce the Risk of Costly Hiring Mistakes**", was a hit. We had a full house of attendees who appreciated the practical models discussed and the opportunity to share ideas with each other. To listen to the recorded session, follow this link: <http://www.bergeronassociates.com/talenttalks.HTM>.

*Comments from Matt H, Senior Manager of a Professional Services Company: "I found Talent Talks™ very helpful! The format and time seemed perfect for getting a good understanding of the underlying thought processes behind behavioral interviewing. I feel much more comfortable with implementing this system into my hiring process. I also found the templates & article you emailed very helpful in solidifying the concepts in my mind. Thank you very much for introducing this valuable tool to me!"*

Our next session will be Wednesday, **April 25th, 12:15 – 12:45 pm EST**. Topic: "**Assessments Galore, How to Weigh Through the Options**" Registration is open now, limited to 12 participants. Just let me know of your interest via email and I will forward you a confirmation along with the call-in phone number and access code.

*Let me know if you have interest in exploring implementation of a program similar to Talent Talks™ at your organization. Applications may include: enhancement of training and new hire orientation, sharing best practices, communicating business strategy and progress made toward goals, etc.*

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**UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERESTING RESOURCES**

- ▶ April 20, 2007 – IMCNE's Consultant Roundtable: **Enterprise Performance Management Study & Implications to Consultants** (go to calendar)
- ▶ April 25, 2007 – Talent Talks™: **Assessments Galore, How to Weigh Through the Options** (calendar)
- ▶ May 2, 2007- Mass Biotechnology Council HR Committee, **Succession Planning** (calendar)
- ▶ **Executive Summary of Enterprise Performance Management Study of over 100 executives:**  
[www.bergeronassociates.com](http://www.bergeronassociates.com).

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**ABOUT BERGERON ASSOCIATES**

Bergeron Associates™, founded in 1998, provides leaders human capital & organizational performance solutions, consulting and coaching.

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