CRITICALITY OF DATA IN SUCCESSION PLANNING – A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT: *This paper attempts to provide a framework for data in the design of a succession planning system. The study was carried out in a precision engineering company. The management intended to create an effective process to groom competent people to take up leadership positions for future organizational success. A succession-planning model was evolved for the Business Development Department. Literature survey and benchmarking provided the background data for the framework. An in-depth exercise of in-house consultation with the HR department and the managers of the Business development department was conducted to arrive at decisions on the required competence of the candidates to be groomed as successors. Competence was classified into three levels - core competence, technical competence and functional competence. Further, different levels of these competences were also defined in behavioural levels to differentiate between levels of proficiency with reference to a set of competence. The succession planning grid was created to help assess a candidate based on present performance and future potential. The modalities / milestones for implementation of the plan were also drafted as the standard operation procedures (SOP) to check for compliance of the succession planning system. The paper concludes with a presentation of a data categorization framework for the succession planning process based on the dimensions of time, level of specificity, preparation, data source and validation based on the principles of specificity and representativeness. This framework will be useful to build a system and related processes for succession planning within a company.*

Key words :
Competency identification, Core competency, technical competency and functional competency, Potential grid.

INTRODUCTION: This case study is about the design of a succession planning system in a company involved in the precision engineering field of Automotive Instruments. It had a turnover of approximately 500 crores and employee strength of nearly 4500. With growing competition, the management realized the need to retain and groom a considerable number of people for future leadership roles. It began to explore the prospects of succession planning. In the larger framework of Work force planning which includes many aspects such as recruitment, selection, performance management, compensation etc, succession planning can be seen as a smaller critical development initiative to ensure stability. It is a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement. A complete success profile for assessing readiness to move upward as judged

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from performance consists of four components (Benthal & Wellins, 2006). They are experience, competencies, knowledge and personal attributes. All these four components are greatly dependent on each other in providing value to an individual candidate who wants to grow within the organization. Experience has to be assessed based on what the employee has already done; competence is a prediction of what the person is capable of. Knowledge is to be assessed based on what one knows and finally the personal attributes have to be judged by understanding the person and his/her goals and wants. They point out to evidence of superior business performance when there are high quality leader development programs and formal succession management programs in place in organizations. The succession management system establishes a process that recruits employees, develops their skills and abilities, and prepares them for advancement, all the while retaining them to ensure a return on the organization's training investment. (OSMP, 2002). Many models exist across different companies and government agencies in implementing the same.

Harrison et al (2006) have referred to four different levels of success which qualify an individual to be a promising candidate for leadership roles. The levels move from a simple contribution through dependence, on to independent contribution, next with contributions through others and the highest level characterized by a contribution that is of strategic relevance to the organization. They clearly differentiate succession planning from replacement planning where the latter is intended as preparation for a temporary stop gap arrangement when an unexpected vacancy occurs. Benthal & Wellins (2006) state that to deal with the major challenge of finding qualified personnel, organizations have a number of options such as improving their process of identifying leaders, strengthening leader development programs and ramping up of succession management systems.

Review of Literature -

Careful review of some of those existing literature revealed that in order to be effective succession-planning programs have certain essential elements such as top management support, inclusion in the strategic plan, dedicated responsibility, top-down approach, performance of a needs-driven assessment, professional development opportunities, focused individual attention, extension to all levels of an organization as well as key stakeholder involvement (New York State Department of Civil Service, 2001) (IPMA, 2002) (AICPA, 2006).

Roth well (2002) has described a ten-step model of succession planning that includes clarifying expectations, establishing competency models, assessment of competencies, establishing of a robust performance management system, setting criteria for advancement, implementing development planning, articulating individual development plans, creation of a competency inventory, establishing accountability for the succession planning effort and finally the evaluation of the results of the succession planning effort. There is an important relationship between succession planning and career

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planning. Benthal & Wellins (2006) observe based on one of their studies that internal sourcing of leaders was successful about 65% of the time. Identifying a pool of 'high potential' early in their careers and putting them into a specalised development 'acceleration pool' to prepare them for a variety of positions of the organization is important. Failure of internally sourced leaders, are due to poor people skills, personal qualities, poor fit with company culture, poor motivational fit with the job among other reasons.

It has been observed in the literature that the Human Resource department should be responsible for the design of the succession planning process and for policing the legitimacy of its implementation. Competency mapping should be broad based relying on multiple sources of information. A consistent assessment of the potential or readiness including a 360 degree feedback, feedback surveys are important. (Harrison et al, 2006). They also propose that a strong succession planning model must be able to assess whether the individual demonstrates the organisation's core competencies and whether he/she behaves in accordance with stated values and principles. Model development in core competency is best handled through a reverse engineering approach (Grigoryev, 2006). It has to start with an analysis on the desired outcomes expected for success in a position. Once, the outcomes are delineated, the behaviours that drive success in such outcomes are outlined. It helps capture technical, professional and soft competencies. The critical factor in the whole exercise is to translate the skills into measurable behavior to analyze as well as to measure the competencies possessed by individuals. Roth well (2002) refers to additional dimensions of value systems and codes of conduct in designing competency models to assess individual morals. (Benthal & Wellins, 2006). A regular evaluation of the succession plan and process is critical. It should include a thorough review of the people in the plan, their demographics, development progress, current performance and recent assignments (Harrison et al, 2006). Key assignments may include position rotations, task force memberships, managing without authority, job assignments or taking on roles that involve a higher level of responsibility.

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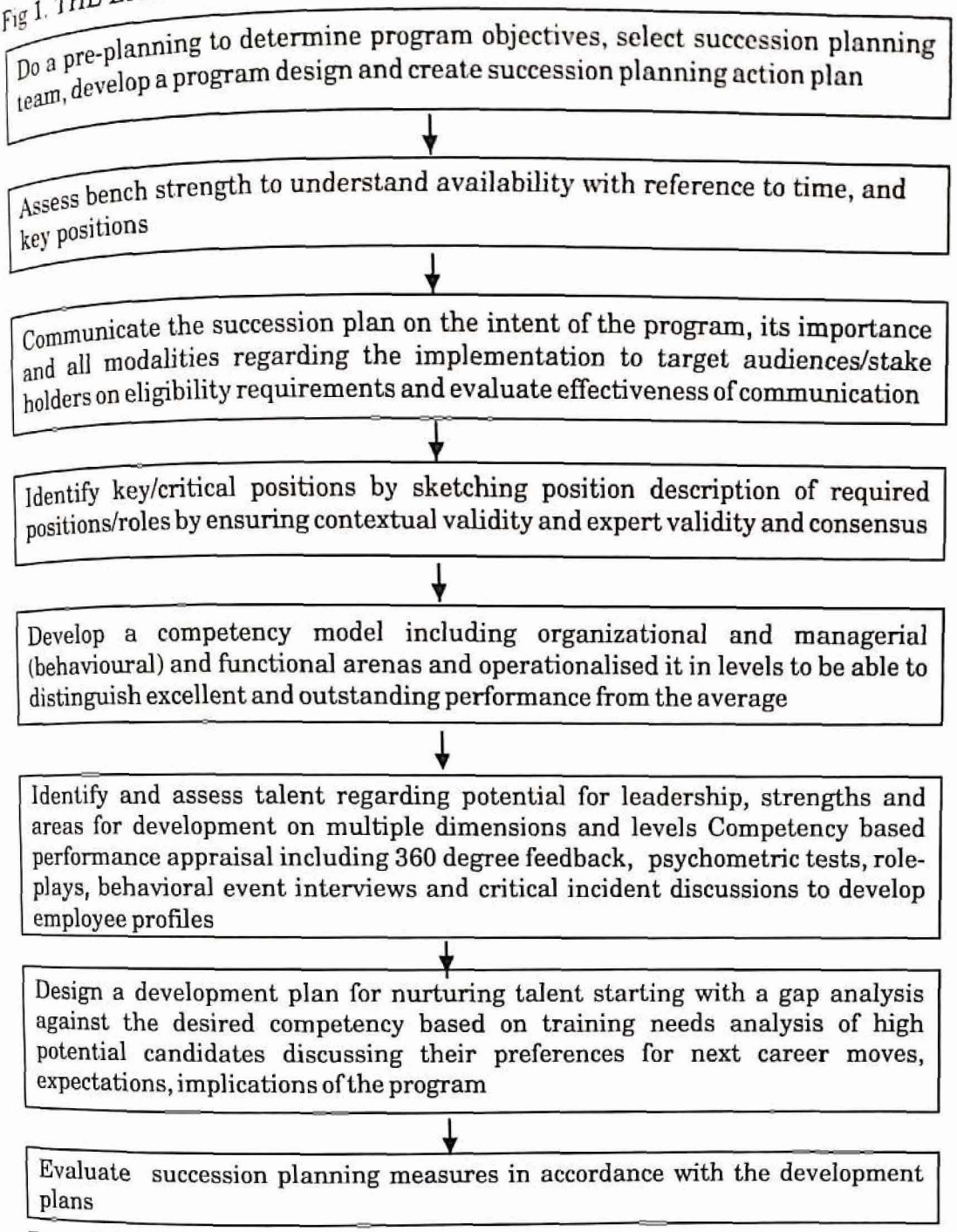
Objective:

To provide a framework for data in a succession planning exercise.

Methodology –

It is a case study. Based on literature review, a normative model is proposed and the detailed action plan / standard operation procedures (SOP) for compliance to the succession planning model is also suggested. The data collection was limited to the Business Development Department of the company. The succession planning model is designed as an eight – step model evolved after taking inputs from literature and analyzing their fit within the organisational context which included classification into technical, functional and core competencies. (New York State Department of Civil Service, 2001) (IPMA, 2002) (AICPA, 2006). The steps evolved in this model pertained to individual competencies rooted within the organizational context. The eight-step model is presented in Fig 1.

Fig 1. THE EIGHT STEP SUCCESSION PLANNING MODEL



Description of the eight stages of the process-

i) The preplanning of the succession planning – A team was formed in the HR function for the purpose of conducting a succession planning exercise for the Business Development department. The objective of the exercise was to identify potential candidates in the Customer development division of Business Development for tomorrow's leadership and then recommend suitable training initiatives to address competency gaps.

ii) Assessment of bench strength - Preliminary assessment revealed

that none of the present candidates were currently eligible for elevation to the next level of hierarchy. The criteria of judgment for the HR was years of experience in the current position and prior knowledge of the candidates performance.

iii) Communication of the plan - Since the scope of the exercise was limited to the Customer development division of Business Development, communication channel was predominantly one to one conversation. A bird's eye view of the entire exercise was given to the participants at the start of the procedure. The intent of the communication was to clearly convey the link to help employees figure out how the succession planning will help or not help with regard to what they want to do in their life and in their careers.

iv) Identification of critical positions & preparation of position descriptions: The personnel under consideration in the BD Department for inclusion in the succession pool belonged to two broad bands of leadership levels (Middle and Senior Level) out of the total four levels that existed in the organization. The leadership levels in the organization hierarchy are shown in Table I below.

The Succession planning team, hence, decided to conduct a focus group discussion for fine-tuning the Position description of customer executives and customer managers.

Position Hierarchy in the Business Development Department			
Management Level	Grades	Designation	Position
Top Management	13	Senior Vice President	
	12	Vice President	
	11	General Manager	
Senior management	10	Deputy General Manager	
	9	Senior Manager	Team Leader
	8	Manager	
Middle management	7	Deputy Manager	Customer manager
	6	Assistant. Manager	
	5	Senior Engineer / Officer	Customer executive
	4	Engineer / Officer	
Junior/frontline management	3	Junior Engineer / Officer	
	2	Assistant Engineer / Officer	
	1	Assistant	

Table I shows the position hierarchy in the Business Development department

Five of the personnel were in grade 4 and grade 5 and were customer executives. Two men were in grade 6 and had the position of customer manager in the organization. Only one person was of grade 9 and was the team leader. The position description exercise had already begun in the organization as a separate exercise. The Hay group template had been adopted by the human resource department as the tool for recording the position descriptions. Preliminary information about the Business Development positions has been collected in the said template. The Succession planning team, hence, decided to conduct a focus group discussion for fine-tuning the Position description of customer executives and customer managers. The result of the focus group discussions leads to a defined structure for the data to be collected and organized to keep track of prospective candidates. The consolidated structure for the data is presented in Table II.

Competency-based position description form		
Position Title		
Department		
Reports To		
Location (City)		
Date (Month & Year)		
1 BASIC PURPOSE OF POSITION :		
1.1 POSITION OBJECTIVE (Why it exists?):		
1.2. POSITION PURPOSE (To be given in one or two sentences on what it is expected to accomplish)		
Annual Operating Budget		
Annual Sales Revenue		
Profit for the Year		
Number of Direct Reportees :		
Number of Indirect Reports??		
2. RESPONSIBILITIES average % ge of time spent in a year to total 100, in order of importance		
3. MAJOR ACTIVITIES	4. PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES (Key Measurable Results to be Accompli shed)	
5. DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY & CONTROLS		
a) Types of decisions made alone (without consulting superiors)		
b) Types of Decisions made in consultations with superiors (to understand the latitude the position has to make decisions) *Superior / Customers / Supp liers / Colleagues / Consultants*		
6. WORK RELATIONSHIPS:		
a) INTERNAL CONTACTS (with in organization)		
b) EXTERNAL CONTACTS (Outside the organisation)		
ORGANISATION/PERSON/ POSITION	MAJOR PURPOSE OF CONTACT	HOW OFTEN
7. MAJOR CHALLENGES/ PROBLEMS/ KEY FEATURES		
Major Challenges (Current year): 2 or 3 that challenge Job holders competence Ongoing Problems : (To be solved by job holder only)		
8. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE (Hard Skills)		

Table II shows the position description form designed based on focus group discussion inputs

v) Development of the Competency model

Performance appraisal should be based on the competencies identified for each specific positions and should measure performance (results obtained during the period) and potential (predicted competencies). An assessment center should ideally screen recommended candidates before formally inducting them into the succession pool. A list of potential competencies from a menu of competencies drawn from different private or public sources was created. The initial list of relevant KSA's after studying the relevant position description of role was elaborated. These are presented in Table III and IV respectively.

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KRA/MOP
No. of Product Input Forms raised
Hit rate of Quote Conversion
Achieving optimum profit margin
Customer Satisfaction Survey Index
Increase of Wallet Share
Migration of loss making products into profit making ones
No. of RFQs generated for new products / existing products from new customers / Existing customers identified
New RFQs generated as a result of the promotional activities

Table III shows Objective Evaluation against measurable results stated in Position Description

The list of managerial and technical competencies was evolved after considering the priorities of the samples analysed. They are presented in the Table VII

Descriptive evaluation form
Critical incidents/personal experiences while executing responsibilities
Challenges encountered
Reasons for not performing up to level desired
Areas of strength and improvement
Learning from training
Future goals and objectives on a timed basis 1/3/5 yrs

Table IV shows the areas examined for a qualitative analysis of competence

Table II and III present a structure for objective data, for which there can be a standard interpretation based on facts. However, Table IV refers to the descriptive evaluation form which requires qualitative data and interpretation of the same. The appraisee and the appraiser had to jointly fill the form. The appraisee first works on it and then the appraiser adds his/her observations and predictions for the appraisee. This data is again assessed by a reviewer.

As a further step in mapping the competencies, four to five top performers in each role (based on 2-3 performance appraisal data) were interviewed with intent to identify a list of competencies thought relevant to job performance. To identify the organization-related core competencies, a list of various competencies and behavioral indicators displayed by the top performers was created. An initial screening was then conducted to eliminate redundancy. This list was then presented to the Business Development Personnel and they were asked to list in order of priority. For instance the managerial competencies after screening when presented to one of the respondents yielded the results similar to that shown in Table V below.

Managerial competencies are the skills and attributes considered essential for staff with managerial or supervisory responsibilities and may vary across leadership levels					
Type	Class	Sl No	Competency	Tick whether applicable	Rank Order
Managing Self	Attribute	1	Individual character,values and ethics	Y	6
	Attribute	2	Commitment to learning	Y	5
	Skill	3	Communication skills	Y	1
	Attribute	4	Motivation	Y	4
	Attribute	5	Initiative		8
	Skill	6	Business / Personal Etiquette		9
	Attribute	7	Risk Taking		10
	Skill	8	Judgment & Decision making	Y	2
	Skill	9	Flexibility	Y	7
	Skill	10	Analytical thinking	Y	3
Managing Others	Attribute	1	Team work & co-operation	Y	1
	Skill	2	Persuasiveness		8
	Skill	3	Building Trust	Y	4
	Skill	4	Relationship / network building	Y	5
	Skill	5	Supervision		9
	Skill	6	Negotiation And Mediation		7
	Skill	7	Developing & empowering others	Y	2
	Skill	8	Management Control		10
	Skill	9	Impact and influence	Y	6
	Skill	10	Team leadership	Y	3
	Attribute	2	Business Awareness	Y	1
	Skill	3	Customer service orientation	Y	2
	Attribute	4	Accountability	Y	6
	Skill	5	Continual improvement	Y	4
	Skill	6	Information seeking		8
	Attribute	7	Quality consciousness		9
	Skill	8	Conflict & Crisis Management		10
	Attribute	9	Achievement orientation	Y	3
	Skill	10	Planning & Organizing	Y	5

Table V shows an example of a response to a checklist to arrive at a set of managerial competencies

Among managerial competencies, an attribute has a cognitive focus, while a skill has a behavioural focus. A "building-block" approach to creating competency profiles was used. This approach entails creating competency clusters such as "core" (required for all employees), leadership by level and functional/technical cluster for individual employees. This approach offers an excellent balance between simplicity and specificity since models for all employees can be "assembled" by adding building blocks from the three categories of competencies. Once a set of competencies had been identified as

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core, they were considered equally valid for all positions and hence were not to be determined again. Similarly the managerial competencies identified for a particular department was assumed to hold good for similar positions in another department also. But the technical competencies were assumed to vary across departments and across managerial levels too.

Based on the reverse engineering approach, various proficiency levels had to be spelt out for all the competencies in the directory. It was also felt essential to determine the degree to which these competencies are required in each type of position in the organization (bench mark levels). This assessment was made through interviews with incumbents of sample positions, using the Position Information Questionnaire (PIQ). Various roles/levels were found to require various degrees of the same competency. For example communication skill desired in junior management level is different from that required for the senior management level.

Based on the priorities of the personnel the most important competencies were identified under three main headings such as the core competencies, the managerial competencies and the technical competencies. The managerial competencies were further classified into three categories such as competencies related to managing self, managing others and managing work. Table VI shows an example of the competencies evolved based on the building block approach.

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Competency Types	Senior Manager in BD
Core competencies	Customer focus Quality conscious Continuous improvement
Managerial competen cies (Vary across leadership levels)	Mentoring Crisis management Business development
Functional/technical competencies (Vary across departments and leadership levels)	CRM Market analysis Negotiation

Table VI shows a sample set of competencies evolved through the building block Approach for senior manager- Business Development

The list of managerial and technical competencies was evolved after considering the priorities of the samples analysed. They are presented in the Table VII

Managerial competencies		
Sphere	Priority	Competencies
Managing self	1	Communication skills
	2	Commitment to learning
	3	Judgment & decision making
	4	Analytical thinking
	5	Initiative
Managing others	1	Flexibility
	2	Developing and Empowering Others
	3	Impact and Influence
	4	Team leadership
	5	Relationship and Network Building
Managing work	1	Business Awareness
	2	Planning & Organizing
	3	Creative Thinking
	4	Conflict & Crisis Management
	5	Information seeking

Technical competencies	Legend for Technical Competency
Brand Management Quality function deployment Industry & competitive analysis Market analysis Product expertise Costing Pricing & negotiations Product management Packaging Logistics management Sales analysis Planning and forecasting Performance review management Profitability Analysis Quality Systems Management	Has theoretical understanding (1) Can perform under guidance (2) Can perform independently (3) Can perform independently and troubleshoot (4) Can perform independently, troubleshoot, train, lead (5)

Table VII shows the list of managerial and technical competencies for the Business Development Manager

The behavioural indicators for each of the competencies were now developed. Since such a dictionary already existed for all the competencies, it was borrowed from reputed sources (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The Competency Dictionary developed for the organization was based on some sources dealing with Organisational core competencies comprising individual character, values and ethics, customer service orientation, team work and co-operation, organizational commitment, continual improvement and achievement orientation. The managerial competencies comprised of communication skills, commitment to learning, judgment and decision making, initiative, analytical thinking , developing and empowering others, impact and influence, team leadership, relationship and network building and flexibility. The Managing Work competence included Business Awareness, Planning and Organizing, Conflict and Crisis Management, Information Seeking, and Creative Thinking and Innovation. The behavioural indicators for different levels enable specificity in understanding levels of competence. Some examples are provided in table VIII.

The behavioural indicators for different levels enable specificity in understanding levels of competence.

COMPETENCY: INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER, VALUES AND ETHICS (INTEGRITY)				
Definition: Integrity is about acting in a way that is consistent with what one says (he or she "walks the talk"); that is, one's behaviour is consistent with one's values (values may Come from the organization, society, or personal moral codes).				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Acts Consistently, in the Workplace, according to Basic Values of Openness And Honesty.	Acts Consistent with Values and Beliefs.	Acts on Values When It Is Not Easy to Do So.	Acts on Values When Significant Cost or Risk Is Associated with Doing So.	
Expresses what he/she is thinking and feeling even when the message may not be especially welcome Shares information, insights, or comments about the work when it would be easier To refrain from being open about the situation.	Takes pride in being trustworthy Is honest in client relations. Serves all equally.	Publicly admits having made a mistake. Speaks out (diplomatically) when it may hurt a trusted relationship.	Makes sure there is full disclosure, mentioning the costs or drawbacks as well as the advantages of a deal Challenges powerful persons to act on espoused values.	

COMPETENCY: TEAM WORK & CO

Definition: Teamwork and Cooperation implies the intention to work cooperatively with others, to be part of a team, to work together, as opposed to working separately or competitively. Teamwork and Cooperation may only be considered when the subject is a member of a group of people functioning as a team, generally where he or she is not the leader (e.g., functional work groups, etc.). "Team" is broadly defined as any task or process oriE:nted group of individuals.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Cooperates	Expresses Positive Expectations of Team.	Solicits Inputs.	Encourages Others.	Works to Build Team Commitment And Spirit.
Supports team decisions, is a good team player, does his or her share of the work. Keeps other team members informed and up-to-date about what is happening in the group, i.e. individual actions, or influencing events Shares all relevant or useful information which might help the group to work Effectively, even if one is not required to share such information.	Expresses positive attitudes and expectations of others in terms of their abilities, Expected contributions, etc. Speaks of team members in positive terms, either to the team member directly or to a third party.	Genuinely values others' input and expertise. Wants all members of a group to contribute to a process Displays willingness to learn from others, including subordinates and peers. Solicits ideas and opinions to help form specific decisions or plans.	Publicly credits others who have performed well Encourages and empowers others, making them feel strong and important.	Acts to promote a friendly climate and a good working relationship regardless of Personal likes or dislikes. Builds good morale or cooperation within the team, including creating symbols of Group identity or other actions to build cohesiveness. Encourages or facilitates a beneficial resolution to conflict

COMPETENCY: COMMITMENT TO LEARNING
Definition: Commitment to Learning consists of recognizing personal strengths, development needs and evolving circumstances in the surrounding environment, and taking the necessary steps to improve current and future job performance.

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Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Participates in learning activities and learns from one's mistakes.	Reflects on performance.	Identifies new ways of doing things and learning plans	Anticipates future needs.	Pursues learning beyond the current job or identified need
Is a willing participant in planned learning activities. Learns from one's current mistakes.	Demonstrates enthusiasm and motivation to learn. Reflects, analyses and learns from self and other's past performance, both successes and mistakes.	Invests time/energy/effort on the job to learn new approaches and new ways of doing things. Creates plans for development, and executes them to the extent that he/she is able to. Demonstrates curiosity to further individual understanding beyond immediate Requirements.	Anticipates future needs of the organization and identifies. Seeks opportunities to learn new things for current and future needs in one's job. Proactively searches for new learning to enhance knowledge and skills.	Goes beyond the context of one's current job and challenges and modifies assumptions / perceptions regarding how to optimize personal and organizational Learning. Uses intellectual capital to improve organizational learning and performance, and acts appropriately.

Competency development activities such as coaching and mentoring were explored. In this mentors would be assigned to guide and assist the candidate with his/her development. Appropriate mentors within the organization can be identified based on their strengths that complement the weaknesses in succession candidates.

vi) Identification of talent and potential in Individuals

The current appraisal system in the organization did not adequately capture the position specific competencies. Thus a new format was designed which would assess an individual on competencies as well as performance. The newly designed performance appraisal format for the purpose of succession planning had a format in which the Competencies are first self assessed, followed by the appraiser and finally by the reviewer. For the purpose of training, inputs for competence level identification had to be taken through a 360-degree appraisal method wherein the feedback of the peers, the subordinates, and the superior's feedback are considered in addition to self-appraisal. The 360-degree appraisal form to get an overall feedback on all the prospective employees was also designed on the managerial and technical competencies identified.

vii) Designing the development plan for prospective individuals:

Competency development activities such as coaching and mentoring were explored. In this mentors would be assigned to guide and assist the candidate with his/her development. Appropriate mentors within the organization can be identified based on their strengths that complement the weaknesses in succession candidates. Executive Coaching focusing on one-on-

one advice and feedback for improving personal, team and organizational performance was also explored. Identifying smaller role in assignments or special projects at current level, active role (but not leader) within key assignments, opportunities to function at greater level of scope (than current position) and getting peer review and feedback on interpersonal skills during a review form important components of the Development plan.

In getting into those exercises, the bench mark level of competencies for each position needs to be identified first. This was found to be beyond the scope of this project as inputs from several personnel would be required to arrive at an optimum figure. Therefore, the system was structured in such a way that an individual's performance across competencies was compared against his weak areas in order to understand strengths and weaknesses. The proficiency level on any competency was to be compared across individuals to identify appropriate training interventions for the right individuals. This is a relative assessment procedure and is not on a strictly absolute note. The graphical display of competence level for one of the respondents for training need identification is presented in Fig 3.

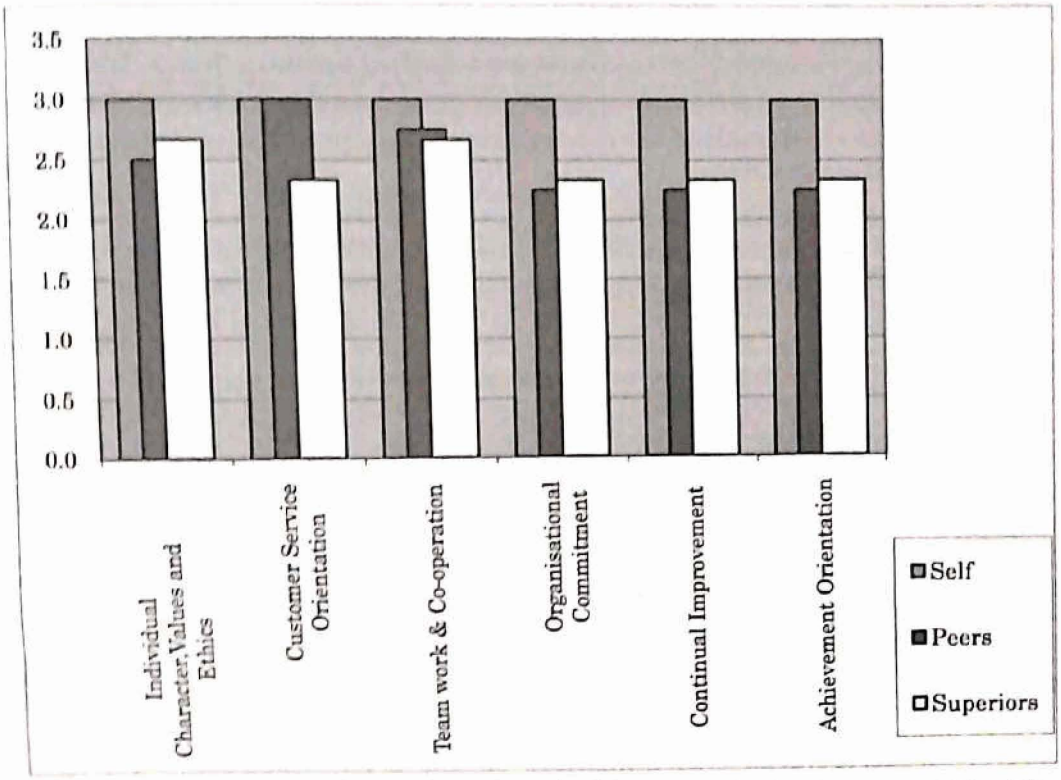


Fig 3 displays a graphical representation of a 360 degree feedback on competence for one candidate.

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The need is as perceived by self, peer and superior in six areas. The mean of the proficiency levels for the various competencies may be found out to know the need for a department/ organization wide development exercise. The competency levels and performance levels assessed through the performance appraisal mechanism and the 360-degree feedback could now be used to plot the individual on a development matrix (Georgia merit system, 2000) to decide on actions that need to be initiated for the respective individuals. The results of a few prospective employees (fictitious names used) on both competence and performance is shown below in Table IX.

	Competence			Performance			
Name	Average score	Score as a % Of max	Excellent	V. Good	Good	Average	Poor
Vinod	152	85	Y				
Shiva	122	68		Y			
Shyam	111	62		Y			
Bala	96	62		Y			
Balaji	86	55			Y		
Karthik	82	53				Y	
Christopher	75	48				Y	
Arun	77	50			Y		

Table IX shows an example of the data of prospective employees on competence as well as present performance

Based on this procedure, personnel were thus categorized as High potentials, who are the leaders for tomorrow and those identified for one or more promotions. The second category consisted of those suitable only at the current level i.e. growth within the level. The last category comprised of those unsuitable who will not continue to figure in the succession planning scheme.

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Training should address competency gaps of individuals. Correctly identifying the performance & potential of candidates and devising appropriate training schedules after due classification is to be done based on the need to map training needs to implementation of training in order to make the system effective. The Potential-Results grid used in this work (Georgia merit system, 2000) offers a systematic process for identifying appropriate training interventions. It is presented in Table X

Potential			
High	High competence	High potential Shiva Shyam	High potential Vinod
Moderate			High potential Balaji Arun
Low			Good performer Bala
Performance	ow L	Moderate	High

Table X shows an example of the plotting of the potential-Results grid to categorise the prospective successors based on the data from Table IX

viii) Evaluation and review of the plan

Many of the steps in the model appeared simple in the validation exercise carried out for the Business Development Department owing to its limited scope and size. However implementation across the organization was still thought to be a challenge and only after successful performance under such a situation, can the system be labeled effective. Benthal & Wellins (2006) observe that promotions are more successful when there is involvement of line management and the data collected from the candidates is objectively assessed. The system created has helped ensure this to some extent. The final step of the study was concerned with validating the proposed model. The Business Development Department was offered as the sample by the Company officials owing to its high importance within the Company. The normative model was now proposed to be put into practice. The last step of the model addressed the need for any review of the proposed plan. In order to check on the effectiveness of the succession planning system, the following criteria shown on Table XI were proposed to the top management.

Criteria for evaluating succession planning
Readiness to assume leadership position
Record of successful promotions
Match of succession planning to individual career plans
Satisfaction of the prospective successors to programme component
Individual's progression through their developmental experiences
The implementation of the succession planning program as against stated objectives
Performance of internal replacements according to levels required
Percentage of positions in the organization who are able to fill successfully
Speed of response to filling vacancies
Percentage of internal filling of vacancies
Organisational successes and failures attributed to succession planning
Contribution of Succession planning system to documentable organizational results
Bench strength of successors before and after implementation of succession planning

Table XI shows some criteria set forth to evaluate the effectiveness of the succession planning

Benthal & Wellins (2006) observe that promotions are more successful when there is involvement of line management and the data collected from the candidates is objectively assessed. The system created has helped ensure this to some extent.

Discussion of the data framework in succession planning –

In order to ensure that all the steps in the normative model for succession planning are effective, the data that supports the evidence to the progress of an individual has to be as comprehensive and as objective as possible. There are two principles for ensuring objectivity of data. One is specificity of data, which has to deal with the nature of the data itself. If the data are fact-based and quantitative, there cannot be variations in the interpretation of the facts. If the data is qualitative, then the details of enquiry will have to be converted to a measure as specific as possible with well-defined parameters. For example, to understand and assess behavioural competencies, the template for behavioural attributes that describes operationalisation in specific levels (Table VIII), was very helpful. The second principle is representativeness of the data that ensures the validity of the data. For example, the 360 degree feedback is one valid method in ensuring the identification and assimilation of data that is representative of all key stakeholders (Fig 3). The time dimension in terms of looking at past performance, present performance and assessment of future potential is yet another example. Based on the steps evolved for the model in this study, a set of areas have been identified that have to be focused while collecting and maintaining succession planning data integrating these two principles. They are presented in Table XII.

In order to ensure that all the steps in the normative model for succession planning are effective, the data that supports the evidence to the progress of an individual has to be as comprehensive and as objective as possible.

Areas of succession planning based on representativeness and specificity	Categories of data		
Time	Past	present	Future
Competencies	Organisational	Technical	Managerial
Preparation	Prospective candidate	Managers	Top Management
Data source	Prospective candidate	Managers	Peers /customers
Data validation	Prospective candidate	Managers	Top Management

Table XII presents the dimensions that need to be considered to ensure objectivity in the succession planning system

There are five important areas that need to be focused while collecting and maintaining data in the process. They are time, representing data of the past, present and future; competencies, related to organizational, managerial and technical areas; preparation by the top-management, the manager and the prospective candidate; data source-from customers/peers, managers and the employees themselves and the data validation to be done by the prospective candidate, managers and the top management. A systematic and objective approach to data with adequate validation will ensure both distributive and procedural justice which is important pillars of ensuring acceptance of such critical human resource development initiatives as in succession planning.

Conclusions and Recommendations-

Succession planning is an important and valuable exercise. It involves a specific methodology and a set of data that needs to collected and maintained. One of the most important decisions is regarding who takes the responsibility for the data. The prospective candidate himself/herself has to take onus of proving one's performance and potential. The manager is responsible for the collection of this set of data. The top management has to design systems in place for maintenance of this data. Proper systems in place will play an important role in a successful succession planning exercise. The two principles of specificity of data and representativeness of data and the five focus areas in the design of the system will ensure that all the three stake holders are adequately able to provide and maintain data.

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The top management has to design systems in place for maintenance of this data. Proper systems in place will play an important role in a successful succession planning exercise.

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