



# **PLANNING SUCCESSION**

A Case for Coaching & Mentoring

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7ruly visionary

organizations focus on building value chains that are resilient and robust enough to wade through

phases of disruptions within the business environment. It is not unusual to come across limited liability concerns, or what other jurisdiction may refer to as, corporations, operate for over a century, having evolved overtime in terms of scale, market focus and business model. Through it all, the core essence of many such organizations; the brand promise, remain intact, buried deep within the soul of its mission and core values. Evolving overtime and still remaining true to character has been described by many business thinkers and academic researchers, as one of the critical success factors required for enterprise sustainability. Succession planning is a key risk management tool for managing the uncertainties associated with changes; changes in the business model, executive teams, business environment and many more. Effective succession planning may even help to manage disruptions associated with force majeure circumstances that a business may encounter.

### Thinking Through

Succession planning is a broad area of practice and therefore has many components. In my experience as a management consultant, I have

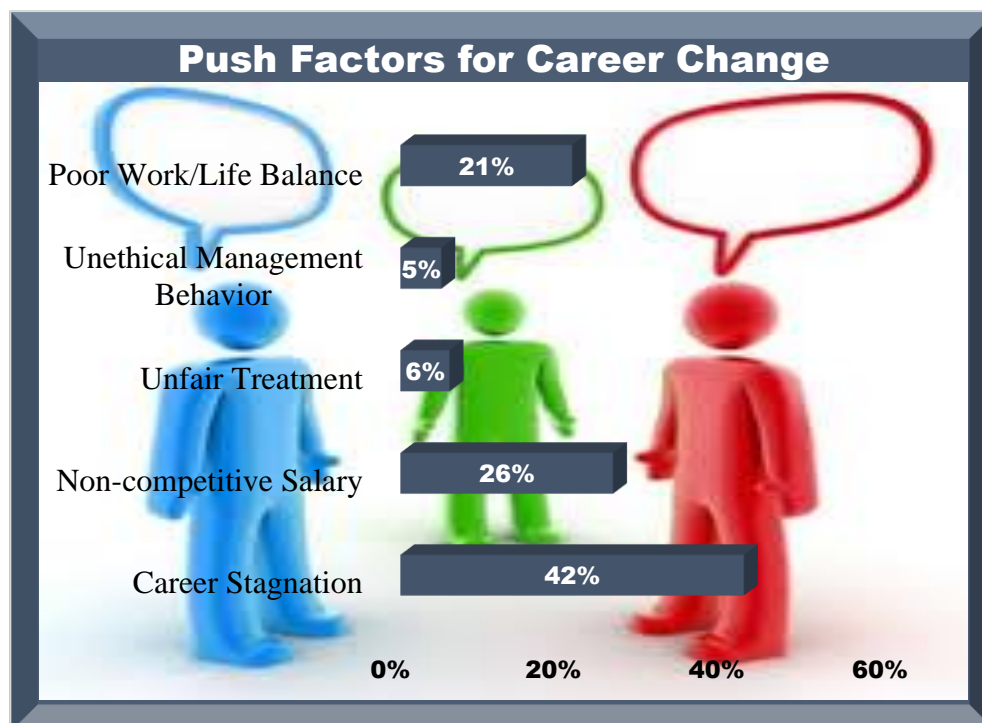
engaged management teams from across various sectors, usually within the SME category, who affirm their commitment to succession planning without the assurance of having systematic arrangements in place to manage succession risks. This has led me to develop a dual thesis on succession planning as a way to distinguish between growth-oriented companies and vulnerable enterprises. The former rely on formal systems while the latter have no clear systems and structures in that regard. The distinction is important because formal arrangements serve as proxy indicator for a company's readiness and cultural disposition to manage operational gaps borne out of poor talent scheduling, which to all intents and purposes, is succession planning at the operational level. Some business organizations may refer to the operational aspect as Business Continuity Planning (BCP). The differences in jargon notwithstanding, to the extent that unplanned disruptions to business operations may necessitate human



resource changes and role adjustments, then succession planning is the name of the game whether one calls it

succession planning or business continuity. The second reason why this distinction is important is that, return on investments in coaching and training programs can only be optimized within the broader context of a corporate succession policy. This is because, in and of itself, corporate cultures that uses succession policy frameworks to drive training programs contribute to general levels of employee motivation and engagement. The longer employees and management talents stay, the longer time horizon to derive value from their contribution.

“In my estimation, a hybrid model may serve the Ghanaian corporate sector well due to peculiar needs in the area of service quality and operational inefficiencies”



Source: LinkedIn Survey by Metis Decisions LLC

## Types and Levels

So, what is succession planning anyway, and what is coaching and/or mentoring got to do with it?

Succession planning is a process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key business leadership positions in the company. The Society for Human

Resource Management (SHRM) defines succession planning as “a means for an organization to ensure its continued effective performance through leadership continuity.”

A succession plan, simply put, is a component of good HR planning that acknowledges that key staff will not be with an organization indefinitely and it provides a plan and process for addressing the changes that will occur when they leave. Most succession planning focuses on addressing potential vacancy gaps in roles that may be critical to the organizations operations. This is referred to as the “core group” approach where emphasis is on building the leadership pipeline pool. A variant model entails a much broader focus on all roles within the organization whereby the planning process is decentralized to ensure uniformity and wider application. No matter which model guides an organization’s policy framework, the foundational principle to consider is the clarity on what constitutes risk factors to business continuity.

Typically, “core group” succession planning model is strategic in nature, in that the planning horizon is long-term. The “wide-scope” model however has both short and long-term horizons as basis for planning. In my estimation, a hybrid model may serve the Ghanaian corporate sector well due to peculiar needs in the area of service quality and operational efficiency in most of the companies I have consulted with. Having business continuity arrangements in customer-facing

functions would help limit impact of inefficiencies on customers. Issues such as poor employee leave management and absenteeism (legitimate ones) are examples of operational inefficiencies that may have long-term adverse impact on business performance.

A hybrid succession policy identifies and pools all human resource policies that governs how talent is scheduled. This document then provides a structured framework for implementing the succession plan over time.

Logically, a hybrid succession plan model would have two important goals:

1. To develop a pool of leadership talent in order to serve as a recruitment bastion for top executive roles.
2. To develop a robust regime of talent succession at the operating level so as to manage scheduling risk.

There are several factors typically found in good succession planning initiatives. These are not metrics that may be exactly measurable but could be aptly described as characteristic elements of the corporate culture.

- ✚ There is a strong collaboration between HR and the Executive team to develop a workable framework.





- ✚ Executive buy-in stems from clear understanding of the business risk in the absence of formal succession planning.
- ✚ Succession is linked to strategic planning and investment in training programs.
- ✚ There is a deliberate linkage between the organization's performance management system and leadership development. As a result, employee data and analysis are used to inform the process in terms of selection.

## Where the Rubber Meets the Road

So where does coaching and mentoring fit into all this? Not so fast. First, let's

There are various types of coaching:

- ✚ Personal/Life Coaching
- ✚ Business Coaching
- ✚ Executive Coaching
- ✚ Skills/Task-oriented Coaching
- ✚ Performance-based Career Coaching



Mentoring on the other hand is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge and social capital perceived by the recipient as relevant to work performance, career progression, or professional development. Mentoring entails informal communication, usually

take the concepts one after the other to ensure we are on the same page on definitions, contrasts and context for application.

Coaching, is a teaching, training or development process by which an individual is supported while achieving a specific personal or professional result or goal. The goal of coaching is to work with the employee to bridge performance gaps and improve the work of the employee, the team, and the department. Coaching offers the vehicle to accelerate employee development towards the achievement of individual and organizational effectiveness. At the core of coaching is building rapport, asking insightful questions and setting goals to correct performance lapses.

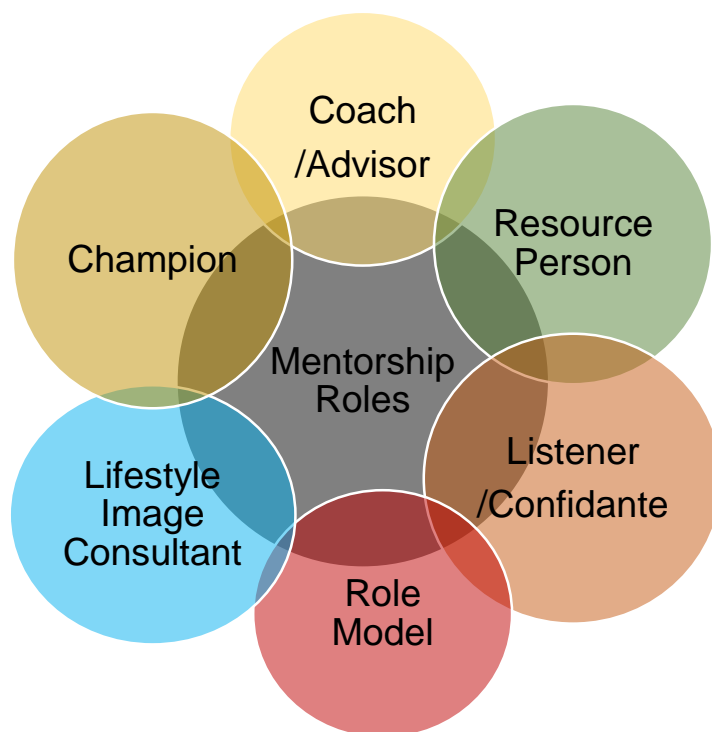
face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé).



Mentoring is ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time. It focuses on career and personal development, and agenda is set by the mentee, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare mentee for future roles.

The mentor may play varying roles throughout the relationship; strategist,

cheerleader, thinking partner and resource person. The guiding principle is to provide advice and support in order to develop the protégé's capacity for decision-making, leadership, strategic thinking and operational efficiency. So essentially, mentorship could even include coaching.



Even though coaching and mentoring may use the same skills and approach, coaching has a much shorter time horizon and often task-based while mentoring is a longer term relationship. Mentors focus on the person, their career and support for individual growth and maturity whereas the coach is job-oriented and performance oriented. The distinction is very important as it has implications for training program design

for various business situations. Feedback from training programs organized by Metis Decisions points to a certain convenience by business people in using these two concepts interchangeably. This basic error, unfortunately even affects HR practitioners who are expected to possess working knowledge of these tools.

There are various techniques, steps and principles to ensure effective coaching and mentoring but regrettably it is not the focus of this article.

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- ✓ Business Registration
- ✓ Start-up and Management Consulting
- ✓ Non-Executive Directorship services

Metis Decisions is a limited liability company registered in Ghana under the Company Act, 1963 (Act 179). We are a professional services company offering various consulting services. Contact us today to discuss your business needs.

Implementing a succession plan requires application of tools for skill and knowledge transfer in order to guarantee success. Ghanaian companies that are looking to go global needs to think carefully and act diligently on issues regarding scale and brand consistency across different geographical markets. Functional succession arrangement at the strategic level and business continuity plans at the operational level, have gone beyond the nice-to-have(s), to becoming essential requirements. It is imperative for management teams to begin thinking about these issues at their annual strategy sessions. Succession planning is one of the few corporate risk issues that waiting to “cross the bridge when you get there”, would be costly. Better to cross that bridge in your mind before you get there. Not only would it save your company valuable time but cost as well.

Metis Decisions LLC provides management consulting services on how to design effective succession plans in addition to our regular training modules that includes executive coaching and mentoring.

## **METIS DECISIONS LLC**

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