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AN EXPLORATION OF METHODS USED BY SELECT COMPANIES TO PLAN
FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF HIGHLY SKILLED EMPLOYEES IN NON-
EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

A Thesis in

Workforce Education and Development

by

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ABSTRACT

Defining a strategy to prepare for the anticipated changes in our workforce demographics is becoming a significant concern for organizations and their stakeholders. This study explores the methods private companies are employing to plan for the replacement of highly skilled employees in anticipation of the change in workforce demographics. Of special interest are non-executive positions that require specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities and are difficult to replace from the outside labor market.

This study seeks to answer the following four research questions.

- What methods do companies use to plan for replacing highly skilled employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- What methods do companies use to determine the scope of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- What types of data do companies collect as a part of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- What concerns do companies have regarding replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Data for this study were collected from 32 different organizations.

Answers to the four research questions were explored through interviews with ten different organizations. The organizations that were interviewed were diverse in size and represented several industries.

The results from this study are relevant to researchers as well as practitioners. The results are of particular importance to companies that depend on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of non-executive talent to succeed.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Workforce demographics in the United States are expected to change dramatically over the next 15 years. Specifically, there is an expected decline in the number of people in the 35-45 year old age group (Lockwood, 2006). An article published in *The Journal of Business Strategy* states that 61 million Americans will retire over the next 30 years (Rothwell, 2002); however, more than one-third (39 percent) of senior executives, polled in a recent survey, admitted that they lack plans for replacing employees in senior leadership positions (Pomeroy, 2004). DeLong references a dramatic example with the civilian workforce of the U.S. Defense Department. Of its 675,000 employees, 75 percent will be eligible for retirement by 2008 (DeLong, 2004). Further complicating the scenario of our changing workforce demographics is the projection by the Bureau of Labor Statistics that, by 2010, the number of jobs will outnumber the available workforce by 10 million (as cited in Rothwell, Jackson, Knight, & Lindholm, 2005).

Employers expect changes in workforce demographics to significantly impact their businesses. Recently, 239 learning executives in North America, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America were surveyed regarding the anticipated changes in workforce demographics. The respondents expressed significant concerns about changing workforce demographics. When asked about the degree to which these changes would effect their business, 43 percent

responded that these changes would have a significant effect and another 38 percent responded that it would have a moderate effect (Lesser & Rivera, 2006).

Foundations of Succession Planning

The goal of a succession planning process is to identify employees who will be able to fill key positions within the company (Huang, 2001). Historically, the focus of succession planning has been at the executive level. Common components of succession planning programs include: gaining support from top management, determining the company's needs, identifying selection criteria, deciding whether or not to inform employees, and evaluating the company's investment.

Leadership Support.

The key leaders who actively support an organization's succession planning program are critical to the program's success. Determining who will play an active role in the planning process is an important first step. A study by Fleischmann (2000) recommends that a team include the following members:

- A human resources analyst;
- A business analyst who was involved in the needs analysis;
- The manager or director of the succession management project;
- The highest-level manager available to represent the department of the position that is being evaluated.

This team will work closely with the company's leadership to determine which positions will be included in the succession planning process, the frequency of updates to the process, and guide the process on a daily basis.

Ensuring involvement of the appropriate staff in the succession planning process is critical to the program's success. It is crucial for top management to remain highly involved in and to actively support the process (Rothwell, 2005). The CEO should be personally involved in ensuring that promotion decisions are based on the previously-determined succession plans (S. Byham, Smith, & Paese, 2002). Top management's support of the succession plan should increase the likelihood that the plan will be referenced as succession events occur. In one study, a company's identified backups actually fill fewer than 30 percent of the open positions for which they were designated (S. Byham et al., 2002). This low percentage could be attributed to a lack of involvement and support by the appropriate leadership for the succession plan.

Determining the Company's Need.

Once a company has determined the people who will be involved in the key decisions for the succession plan and the scope of the program, the next step is conducting a gap analysis. The identified planning team should prepare a gap analysis for each key position and the current incumbent (Fleischmann, 2000). Many factors need to be considered when completing the gap analysis. Factors related to the current incumbent must be taken into account in this analysis. These factors may include: the projected number of years until the current incumbent retires, is promoted, or otherwise leaves the position; the level of satisfaction the current incumbent has with the position; the effectiveness of the current incumbent; and the likelihood that the position would remain if a succession event were to occur (Rothwell, 2005). The team must also consider

factors related to the position itself. Those factors may include: the work requirements of the current position, the location of the position in the company, and the future requirements of the position (Rothwell, 2005). The team then considers factors related to the organization, such as, the analysis of retirement projections, anticipated attrition based on past patterns, and the impact of the anticipated attritions and retirements on the organization (Hastings, 2004). This information is typically closely guarded, given its highly confidential nature (Orellano & Miller, 1997).

Based on the gap analysis, the succession planning team should prepare a comprehensive report detailing their findings. This report should be used to identify future staffing needs (Fleischmann, 2000). It is quite common for a smaller-sized firm to have a greater need for external talent since the firm will have a more limited talent pool from which to select successors (Lauterbach & Weisberg, 1996).

Identifying Criteria.

Another factor for success for the company's plan is the identified selection criteria. A recently published study in the *International Journal of Manpower* compared the sophistication of a company's plan for replacing key talent to their HR outcomes. The population for this study consisted of the 945 US-owned firms and the 1,562 Japanese-owned firms on file in the electronic data bank of the Council of Investment, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and the 1,500 local Taiwanese firms on file with *Commonwealth Magazine* data bank (Huang, 2001). From this population, 100 US-owned firms, 400 Taiwanese firms,

and 150 Japanese-owned firms were randomly selected (Huang, 2001). The survey instrument Huang (2001) used included ten items to collect data on the process the company employed to plan for replacing key leadership positions and five items to collect data on the HR outcomes. This instrument utilized a Likert-scale. Using a correlative analysis, this study identified that the less the selection of a successor depends on political criteria (personal relationships and network ties), the more favorable the HR performance outcome will be (Huang, 2001). For many companies, criteria includes gathering and analyzing feedback from peers, supervisors, and the potential successor's subordinates (Orellano & Miller, 1997).

Sharing Information with Successors.

The decision of whether or not to inform employees they are potential successors has been a topic of debate. Some companies do not tell the successors of their status out of fear that people who know they are in the pool will tell others who, in turn, will infer that they are not in the pool (S. Byham et al., 2002). Other companies make the decision not to tell successors out of fear that the job they have been slated for may not exist by the time the employee is prepared to assume that role (Guinn, 2000). One survey found that approximately 64 percent of high-performing companies decide to inform employees of their status (Wells, 2003).

Evaluating the Investment.

As with any significant project, it is important for the company to evaluate the investment it is making in its plan for replacing key talent. This may seem

discouraging at first when evaluating the amount of resources being devoted to planning for future staffing needs. One major U.S. company discovered that it was devoting 250,000 executive hours per year to its talent-planning process (S. Byham et al., 2002).

While an organization could anticipate an extensive initial investment of time and resources, the succession planning process will become a part of the culture and, therefore, costs should decrease (Fleischmann, 2000). Executives involved in the decision need to keep in mind the effect an unplanned succession event could have on the company. Having a successor who is well prepared with experience and abilities may mediate the effects of a succession event (Armstrong, Pecotich, & Mills, 1993). Additionally, having a system that focuses on skills and abilities that are difficult to find externally will help protect the company from a scarce labor market (*Hallmarks of Leadership Success*, 2003).

Efficient usage of time is another consideration when evaluating the cost of the process. Since much of the process can be integrated with the performance evaluation process, the only additional cost is the time of the business analysts that are involved and the project manager or director (Fleischmann, 2000). Ensuring that the talent planning process is complementary to the performance appraisal process will also help to enhance the outcome of the plan (Lam & Schaubroeck, 1998).

Common Methods of Planning to Replace Key Talent

Job Centered or Traditional Approach.

With the job-centered approach to succession planning, the focus is on identifying an individual who will fill each of the identified jobs. With this approach, once the needs analysis is completed, the next step is to identify a person by name who will be the successor for each position. While this is a very detailed process, there is an advantage to this approach in a large company. This approach allows the organization to develop an employee specifically for the designated position. A potential disadvantage to this approach for a large company is that the company may end up with entirely too many people identified as successors. Assuming that employees selected as successors are eager for promotion, the time to their next position may be lengthy if the current incumbent is not moving on. In addition, this approach can lead to little focus on skill development as much of the focus is concentrated on job placement (S. Byham et al., 2002). This approach may be well suited for a small company or a company that has decided to focus on just a few key positions.

Competency Development.

The competency model involves determining which managerial and professional staff exhibit the right skills and possess the potential to be developed in time to help the company achieve its business goals (Guinn, 2000). The competency model does not focus on filling one specific position. The focus is on the skill sets that are needed for the company to be successful in the future and developing individuals who demonstrate those skill sets.

For a company to utilize a competency model, there are several steps the company needs to complete. The first step is for the company is to identify the competencies needed to drive its strategic direction (Guinn, 2000). Selection of the competencies is a critical step that should be done with both the support and direct involvement of management. In addition to identifying the competencies, the company needs to agree on the definition of each competency. The competencies need to be customized with the specific skills and behaviors. These specific skills and behaviors are unique to the company and are related to the company's strategic plans (Guinn, 2000). A complete competency model is not just a listing of the competencies and their definitions. It also includes detailed descriptions of what a person needs to do to demonstrate those competencies (Guinn, 2000).

There are several benefits to utilizing the competency-based model. The first advantage is that competency models are linked to the people who do the work; therefore, competency models are more enduring than job descriptions (Rothwell, 2002). Another benefit to the competency model approach is that it moves a company's plans away from job titles and traditional job experience to focus on the skills and behaviors needed by the company (Guinn, 2000). This method also allows a large company to develop a few key individuals for anticipated staffing needs without developing a person for each and every position. For a small company, this may be more difficult since it may not have many positions that require similar skills. If each position requires a unique skill set, using a competency model may not be appropriate for the smaller company.

Acceleration Pools.

A third approach to succession planning is known as acceleration pools. This approach is similar in nature to the competency model. Rather than targeting one or two handpicked people for each executive position, an acceleration pool develops a group of high-potential candidates for executive jobs in general (S. Byham et al., 2002). Appropriate use of this approach can prevent having entirely too many successors, who may then become frustrated and disinterested.

In developing the acceleration pools, it may be appropriate for a company to have more than one pool. For example, an acceleration pool in a manufacturing organization might exist to fill top plant-management positions, while a pool of middle managers might be designated to fill a range of corporate positions (S. Byham et al., 2002).

Outcomes from the Plans

Developing the Successor.

After the company has established its plans for replacing key talent, preparing those identified as future successors is key to the success of the plan. According to one survey in 2003, 94 percent of 200 HR professionals said that their organization has not adequately prepared younger workers to step into leadership positions (Wells, 2003).

For a development plan to be effective, it must be tied to the specific developmental needs of the specific employee (Wellins & Byham, 2001). Once

the employee's developmental needs are identified, the company needs to identify the resources that are most appropriate for developing that employee.

Determining Accountability.

Determining who is accountable for developing a successor is an important final step in planning for future staffing needs. In Fleishman's (2000) article, he recommends that every manager should meet with each critical employee and person who is in a critical position. In these meetings, the manager would identify the value and potential of the person's work. These meetings could also be used to discuss specific activities for the employee to complete for skill development.

Another method to encourage supervisors to develop their associates is through compensation. An article in the *International Journal of Manpower* identified a high correlation between the extent to which department heads are evaluated on, and compensated for, their efforts to develop their subordinates and HR outcomes (Huang, 2001). Of the 166 firms completing the survey, 66.9 percent were manufacturing firms, 33.1 percent were service firms and their sizes were evenly distributed from under 300 employees to over 1,000 employees (Huang, 2001).

Another point of view is that the supervisor should not be solely held accountable for employee development. The high-potential employee must be held accountable for his/her own development in order to progress as a future leader (Guinn, 2000). Should the employer decide to hold the employee accountable for his/her own development, the employer can then monitor the

level of commitment the employee demonstrates to this development. The employer can then distinguish between employees who are committed to their own development and those who are not.

Regardless of where a company decides to assign the accountability, the company must be prepared to develop its successors into future leaders.

The Problem

A 2004 study found that 88 percent of CEOs believe that executive talent management issues are important to their boards, and 93 percent consider planning for replacing key talent moderately to highly important to the organization's success (Pomeroy, 2004). While many business leaders indicate planning for replacement of key talent is a priority, it is apparent that many companies lack appropriate plans to ensure sufficient talent over the upcoming years.

The lack of plans can be explained through a multitude of reasons. In a survey of family-owned businesses, 31.4 percent of companies that did not have a plan for replacing key talent, had no plan because they were not comfortable making the "necessary decisions." Another 14.4 percent had no plans because it was a "difficult topic to deal with" (Grove & Prince, 2004). Another survey identified that 45 percent of responding businesses stated that their ability to identify and develop leadership talent is limited by a lack of a clear approach to planning for the loss of key talent (Pomeroy, 2004). That study also found that 41 percent of responding businesses attributed their lack of plans to a lack of available talent (Pomeroy, 2004).

Further complicating this situation are the anticipated changes in workforce demographics. In 2012, the baby-boom cohort will be 48 to 66 (Toossi, 2004). A 1997 McKinsey study discovered that between 2000 and 2015, the number of 35-44 year olds will decline by 15 percent; the study also noted that there were no significant short-term counter-trends (Steeves & Ross-Denrocher, 2003).

Significance of the Study

As the baby boomer generation begins to retire from the workforce, those employees will be taking their knowledge and job skills with them. Companies must prepare now for the large number of retirements they will face in the upcoming decade. A company's future workforce has become a concern that boards of directors and investors are becoming increasingly more focused on (S. Byham et al., 2002).

A study found that there is a strong association between planning for the loss of key talent and subsequent profitability. Companies that had identified and trained a successor appeared less likely to suffer a period of financial difficulty while the new president became acquainted to the company (Trow, 1961).

A significant gap in the research was how companies are applying planning processes to key employees that are in non-executive positions. This research explores how private companies are planning to manage succession events for positions that require specific skills, knowledge, and abilities that are difficult to find in the labor market.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- R₁ What methods do companies use to plan for replacing highly skilled employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- R₂ What methods do companies use to determine the scope of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- R₃ What types of data do companies collect as a part of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- R₄ What concerns do companies have regarding replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Limitations

Given the qualitative nature of this study, the first limitation is that the findings cannot be generalized. The ten companies that were explored in detail are all members of the same well respected business research group. Results from a sample with a different professional emphasis could differ.

Definition of Terms

Individual Development Plan (IDP): The process of clarifying that developmental gap; internal development uses planned training, education,

development, and other means to close the gap and thereby meet succession planning needs (Rothwell, 2005, p.227).

Individual Development Program: A development program is the banner under which potential successors are developed in a systematic, and even visible, way. Development programs may also develop groups of people so as to create talent pools (Rothwell, 2005, p.251).

Non-Executive Position: A position within a company that is not considered to be at the executive level by the company.

Organizational Career Development: The process through which an organization evaluates their workforce in relationship to their strategic plans and constructs plans to address any identified gaps (Rothwell et al., 2005).

Replacement Charting: Replacement Charting is the process of preparing an organization chart to show possible replacements for each position (Rothwell, 2001, p.216).

Succession Plan: The product of the succession planning process. The plan depicts the key positions in the organization and individuals who might be suitable replacements for job incumbents as a result of changes such as retirements, dismissals, or sudden disabilities (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000, p.320).

Succession planning: The process a company uses to plan for the organization's need for people over time (Rothwell, 2005).

Successor: For the purposes of this paper, a successor is defined as one that follows, one that succeeds another (as in a position, title, office, or estate) ("Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law," 2000).

Technical Succession Planning: Any effort designed to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization, division, department, or work group by making provisions for distilling, preserving, maintaining, and communicating the fruits of the organization's institutional memory and unique experiences over time (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004, p.407).

Assumptions

There are several assumptions being made as a part of this research. The first assumption is that participants in this research provided honest responses to the questions asked. A second assumption being made as a part of this research is that the responses to the interview questions represent the process that is executed by the company.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the model of succession planning outlined by William Rothwell. In Rothwell's work, he outlines 15 characteristics for effective succession planning programs.

Top Management Participation and Support – “Their personal involvement – and even that of the corporate board – should motivate participants and ensure other members of the management team devote time and effort to the succession planning program” (Rothwell, 2005, p.56)

Needs-Driven with External Benchmarking – When leaders sense the need to address succession planning, the organization should look to other organizations' planning processes and make a comparison of best practices (Rothwell, 2005). “That (benchmarking visits) helped tailor the Kmart's SP&M

program to the unique company culture while simultaneously taking advantage of state-of-the-art approaches that could be usefully adapted from organizations with more mature programs” (Rothwell, 2001, p.53).

Focused Attention – “A systematic effort is focused on accelerating the development of individuals with verified advancement potential”(Rothwell, 2005, p.56).

Dedicated Responsibility – “If a goal deserves attention, someone must be held accountable for the consequences of it” (Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

Succession Planning and Management Extends to All Levels – “greatest emphasis is placed in some organizations at the lowest management levels where the most positions and people exist”(Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

A Systematic Approach – “continuing processes should be put into place to focus attention on succession planning” (Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

A Comparison of Present Performance and Future Potential – “organizations should possess some means by which to compare present job performance and future potential” (Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

Clarification of High Level Replacement Needs – “Organizational leaders should make the effort to determine the retirement plans of key officers” (Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

An Obligation to Identify and Prepare Successors – “Each executive should take responsibility, and be held accountable, for identifying and preparing successors” (Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

Specific Development Plans Are Established and Conducted – “individuals thought to have high potential participate in a planned development program” (Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

High Potentials Work While Developing – “The organization should not emphasize classroom or online training or off-the-job development to the exclusion of action learning or learning from experience” (Rothwell, 2005, p.57).

Developmental Programs Establish Familiarity with Who, What, When, Where, Why and How – “participants become much more knowledgeable about the corporate culture – who does what, when they do it, where business-related activities are performed, why they are worth doing, and how they are accomplished” (Rothwell, 2005, p.58).

Developmental Experiences Encourage Critical Questioning – “encourages creative thinking by top managers as well as by high-potential employees” (Rothwell, 2005, p.58).

Succession Planning Emphasizes Qualities Necessary to Surpass Movement to the Next Higher-Level Job – “they emphasize the building of competencies leading to advancement beyond the next job”(Rothwell, 2005, p.58).

Formal Mentoring Emphasized – “Mentoring and coaching have been the subject of growing attention in recent years as management writers have recognized that individual development is more heavily influenced by the on-the-job work environment than by off-the-job training, education, or developmental

experiences” (Rothwell, 2005, p.58). “Mentoring is a means by which to narrow the gap between what should be and what is” (Rothwell et al., 2005).

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the usage of formal planning techniques for replacing a company's non-executive employees; specifically those who possess knowledge, skills, or abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market. Additionally, this study will explore the relationship between the company's industry and the included in its formal succession planning process. Finally, the study will explore the methods the companies use to determine which positions to include in their formal succession plans and the concerns the companies have regarding the replacement of key talent.

The literature review covers formal succession planning and individual development related to succession planning. The succession planning material is a review of literature that covers general concepts of succession planning, methods of succession planning, identifying successors, and evaluating the effectiveness of the program. The individual development material is a review of literature on topics of individual development including methods used and accountability. Much of the literature review covers material focused on succession planning programs for leadership positions based on the limited amount of literature on succession planning for non-executive employees possessing specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Succession Planning

Background and Foundations

Succession planning is the means by which an organization prepares to replace valued employees (typically management and executive positions) that have vacated a position that is critically important to the success of the organization (Wilkerson, 2002). Succession planning supports the company's need for retaining employees and building the capabilities of its workforce (DeLong, 2004). Succession planning addresses both the recruitment of talent and the development of internal talent (Ibarra, 2007). One of the primary goals of succession planning is to identify those employees who will be able to fill higher level management positions in the business (Huang, 2001). Losing a key incumbent in any position can pose challenges to a company. Having a successor that is well prepared with relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities can mediate the effects of that succession event (Armstrong et al., 1993).

Building Bench Strength. To be successful, succession planners must devote considerable attention to designing the process, establishing commitment of top-level managers, ensuring credibility of planning staff, and effectively allocating resources (Huang, 2001). Ensuring the organization has people prepared to take on key roles when needed protects the organization from risks associated with recruiting externally to fill key positions (Anonymous, 2003). Boards as well as investors are realizing that a key to future profitability lies with a company's talent (S. Byham et al., 2002).

The value of conducting succession planning goes beyond having an employee prepared to move into another position in case a succession event occurs. Succession planning also helps solidify the future of the company from leadership and financial perspectives. According to an article by Ram Charan, 55 percent of external CEOs who left an organization in 2003 were forced to resign, the percentage for internal CEOs who left an organization and were forced to resign was only 34 percent (Charan, 2005). This statistic supports the need for internal plans to address succession events.

Financial Impact. There are studies that support the financial impact succession planning has on organizations. One study found a strong association between planning for succession and subsequent profitability: companies that had identified a successor and had trained that successor appeared much less likely to suffer a financial impact while the new incumbent became acquainted (Trow, 1961). A study published in *Managerial and Decision Economics* had similar findings. Bailey and Helfat conducted a study with 36 external successors. They defined an external successor as anyone who became CEO within two years of joining the company. Then the participants were classified into one of three categories based on their experience. The categories they used were: (1) he/she possessed only generic skills, (2) he/she possessed generic plus related industry skills, and (3) he/she possessed generic plus related-industry plus industry-specific skills. These firms were then compared against a control group that was comprised of firms with internal successors. The study found that companies who resorted to an external successor without industry

experience had a higher level of variance in performance than companies who had an internal successor (Bailey & Helfat, 2003). This study supports the suggestion that companies that formally identify their leadership bench strength may have a Wall Street advantage (S. Byham et al., 2002).

An additional benefit of succession planning is the message it sends to an organization's current employees. A strong succession plan can give employees a sense of hope and aspiration for their own career (Boltz Chapman, 2006). This could lead to a reduction in the costs associated with turnover.

General Concepts

There are several concepts that the various approaches to succession planning have in common. This section of the literature review will cover the following: common concepts of succession planning, a review of replacement charting, a review of competency based succession planning, and a review of succession planning based on talent pools.

Leadership Support. Establishing support from executives is critical to the success of the plan (Rothwell, 2005). It is crucial that top management is involved and actively support the process (Rothwell, 2005). The CEO should be personally involved in ensuring that promotion decisions are based on the previously-determined succession plans (S. Byham et al., 2002). Having top management's support for the plan will increase the likelihood that the succession plans are referenced as positions become available. One study found that a company's designated backups actually fill fewer than 30 percent of the open positions for which they were slotted (S. Byham et al., 2002). This low

percentage could be attributed to a lack of appropriate management support of the succession plan.

After the company's executives have endorsed the succession planning program, the company then needs to determine who will be involved in the decisions regarding succession planning and the positions that will be discussed. A study by Fleishmann (2000) recommended that a team for succession planning include the following members:

- A human resources analyst;
- A business analyst who was involved in the needs analysis;
- The manager or director of the succession management project;
- The highest-level manager available to represent the department of the position that is being evaluated.

Ensuring that the right people are involved in the process is critical to the success of the process.

Identifying Criteria. Another factor for success with succession planning is the criteria that are identified. A study recently published in the International Journal of Manpower compared the sophistication of a company's succession planning process to their HR outcomes. The population for this study's survey included the 945 US-owned firms and the 1,562 Japanese-owned firms on file in the electronic data bank of the Council of Investment, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and 1,500 local Taiwanese firms on file with *Commonwealth Magazine* data bank (Huang, 2001). From this population, 100 US-owned firms, 400 Taiwanese firms, and 150 Japanese-owned firms were randomly selected

(Huang, 2001). The survey instrument Huang (2001) used included ten items to collect data on the succession planning processes of the company and five items to collect data on the HR outcomes. This instrument utilized a Likert-scale. Through a correlative analysis, this study identified that the less selection for succession depends on political criteria (personal relationships and network ties), the more favorable the HR performance outcome will be (Huang, 2001). For many companies, criteria includes gathering and analyzing feedback from peers, feedback from supervisors, and feedback from the incumbent's subordinates (Orellano & Miller, 1997). Criteria used will vary based on the method of succession planning the company has decided to use.

Sharing Information with Successors. Some companies decide not to inform successors out of fear that people who know they are in the pool will tell others, who in turn, will figure out that they are not in the pool (S. Byham et al., 2002). Other companies make the decision not to tell successors out of fear that the job they have been identified for may not exist by the time the employee is prepared to assume that role (Guinn, 2000). One survey found that approximately 64 percent of high performing companies decide to inform employees of their status (Wells, 2003). Another study completed during the same year found that 63 percent of companies will not inform a successor of their status (*Hallmarks of Leadership Success*, 2003).

Evaluating the Investment. As with any significant project, it is important that a company evaluate the investment that it is making in its succession plan. It may seem discouraging at first when evaluating the amount of resources being

devoted to succession planning. One major U.S. company reported that it was devoting 250,000 executive hours a year to their talent planning process (S. Byham et al., 2002).

While the initial investment of time and resources may be extensive, it should also be considered that the process will become a part of the culture and costs should decrease over time (Fleischmann, 2000). The executives involved in the decision must consider the impact an unplanned succession event could have on the company. Having a successor that is well prepared with the necessary experience and abilities may mediate the effects of a succession event (Armstrong et al., 1993). Additionally, having a succession management system that focuses on skills and abilities that are difficult to find externally will help protect the company from a scarce labor market (Hallmarks of Leadership Success, 2003).

Efficient use of time is another consideration when evaluating the cost of the planning program. Since much of the process could be done as a part of the performance evaluation process, the only additional cost is the time of the business analyst(s) and the project manager or director (Fleischmann, 2000). Ensuring that the succession planning process is complementary to the performance appraisal process will also help to enhance the outcome of the plan (Lam & Schaubroeck, 1998). Further review of evaluating the success of the plan will be explored later in this literature review.

Analyzing the Organization. A good starting point for an organization is to gain a firm understanding of the organization's current talent and future talent

needs. An inaccurate assessment of the organization's talent could be extremely detrimental to the organization (Berchelman, 2005). The team conducting the succession planning process should fully consider all factors impacting talent. Attrition is a key factor to be considered. The organization needs to have an understanding of its attrition patterns. Some factors for review include: current number of employees, the turnover rate of the organization, average employee tenure, involuntary separation rate, and external factors projected to impact attrition (Hastings, 2004).

Methods of Planning for Replacing Key Talent

There are three prevalent methods for planning for replacement of key talent. The first method that will be explored is the more simplistic method referred to as replacement charting, job centered, or traditional approach. Replacement charting is the most basic form where a company identifies a person or people to replace people in key positions. The second method that will be explored is competency based planning. This method involves identifying key competencies that will be the foundation for the company's succession plan. With the competency based method, it is not the actual positions that are the focus of the plan; the competencies are the primary focus. The third method is known as acceleration pools. This approach is similar in nature to the competency model. Rather than targeting one or two handpicked people for each executive position, an acceleration pool develops a group of high potential candidates for executive jobs in general (S. Byham et al., 2002). Using this approach properly can

prevent having entirely too many successors and having those successors becoming frustrated and disinterested.

In developing the acceleration pools, it may be appropriate for a company to have more than one. For example, an acceleration pool in a manufacturing organization might exist to fill top plant-management positions, while a pool of middle managers might be designated to fill a range of corporate positions (S. Byham et al., 2002).

Traditional Method (Replacement Charting).

The Traditional Method or Replacement Charting refers to a process by which a company reviews its key leadership positions and identifies a successor for those positions. This method is simplistic in that the primary focus is on the positions being discussed, the present incumbents in those roles, and potential successors for those roles (S. Byham et al., 2002). The goals of replacement charting include:

1. Identifying the key management positions in the organization.
2. Identification of future openings in those key positions.
3. Identifying the managers or employees that can fit into those positions (Orellano & Miller, 1997).

The process for beginning replacement charting involves a meeting with the key decision makers in the company (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000). A template should be utilized to capture the key topics for discussion including the position(s) being discussed, candidate(s) for that position, and some of the

developmental areas the candidate may have. It may also be helpful to capture when the candidate will be prepared to assume the position being discussed.

A critical decision for the company's leadership is determining which positions to include in the planning process. It is important that a company's executives are in agreement when making this decision. A company could decide to have a very narrow focus on their succession plans and include a few key positions or to expand their focus across the organization. While a company can choose to have a very narrow focus or a very broad focus, many organizations limit their focus to executive and upper management positions. In determining the scope, the organization should consider the impact the organization's increased dependence on professional knowledge, complex technical knowledge, and specialized skills and abilities (DeLong, 2004).

A study completed in 2003 by the corporate executive board found that 93 percent of company's include all positions beyond a certain level, 56 percent include all high potential employees and only 13 percent include all people or positions that are difficult to find in the outside labor market (*Hallmarks of Leadership Success*, 2003).

Technical Succession Planning. "Technical Succession Planning" is a concept that is explored in an article in *Public Personnel Management*. The article addresses the importance of tacit knowledge in completing government missions. The article explored a process utilized at PennDOT that focused on knowledge sharing of those individuals that possessed specific technical

knowledge (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). Their article suggests that Technical Succession Planning is based on the following roadmap:

- Making a commitment based on the organization's need.
- Determining the processes that are critical to the organization's success.
- Clarify who is instrumental in facilitating the specialized processes.
- Clearly define how those work processes are facilitated by those that possess the knowledge.
- Consider methods to maintain the information that has been defined by the subject matter experts.
- Assess knowledge gaps and the strategy the organization is using to address the gaps on an on-going basis.

Penn Dot's approach to technical succession planning is through a process they titled Position Analysis Workbook (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004). The process involves having highly skilled workers participate in a brainstorming process designed to transfer knowledge (Rothwell & Poduch, 2004).

Gap Analysis. Once a company has determined who will be involved in the key decisions for the plan and what positions will be discussed, the next step is for the company to evaluate its staffing needs. The team should prepare a gap analysis of each key position and the current incumbent in that position (Fleischmann, 2000).

There are many factors that need to be considered when evaluating the current incumbent. Those factors include: the projected number of years until the

incumbent retires, is promoted or otherwise leaves the position; the level of satisfaction the current incumbent has with the position; the effectiveness of the current incumbent; and the likelihood that the position would remain if a succession event were to occur (Rothwell, 2005). The team then considers factors related to the organization such as the retirement projections, anticipated attrition based on past patterns, and the impact the anticipated attritions and retirements will have on the organization (Hastings, 2004). Given the nature of this information, this is a secretive process that top management will not openly discuss (Orellano & Miller, 1997).

The team should prepare a detailed report on the gap analysis. The report detailing their findings should be used to identify the future staffing needs (Fleischmann, 2000). It is quite common for a smaller-sized firm to have a greater need for external talent since the firm will have a more limited talent pool from which to select successors (Lauterbach & Weisberg, 1996).

The traditional approach to succession planning is a simplistic method for planning to replace employees whose skills and abilities are critical to the success of the company. Using this method the company reviews their organization charts for a given area and determines, position by position, who the successors would be for its current incumbents. One drawback to this method is that there is usually little focus on developing the skills of the identified successor; most of the focus is concentrated on job placement (S. Byham et al., 2002).

Competency Model.

Utilizing the competency model moves the company's plans away from job titles and traditional job experience. In this model the focus is on the job skills and behaviors necessary to achieve superior business results. The competency model involves determining which managerial and professional staff exhibit the right skills and possess the potential of advancing their career in a direction that supports the company's business needs (Guinn, 2000). The competency model does not focus on the filling of one specific position. The focus is on the skill sets that are needed for the company to be successful in the future and developing individuals to demonstrate those skill sets.

Defining Competencies. The first step in utilizing a competency model is to define the competencies needed to drive the company's in its strategic direction (Guinn, 2000). Defining the competencies should start with identifying key skills and abilities that are necessary for advancement in the company. A company may decide to look at the following (S. Byham et al., 2002):

- Interpersonal Skills – Behaviors associated with interacting with others.
- Leadership Skills – Behaviors associated with leading others.
- Business Management Skills – Behaviors associated with the business or technical aspects of an employee's role,
- Personal Attributes – Stable individual attributes.

A complete competency model is not just a listing of the competencies and their definitions. It should also include a detailed description of what a person needs to do to effectively demonstrate those competencies (Guinn, 2000).

Measuring Competencies. In addition to defining clear competencies, it is important to define how the competencies will be evaluated. Many organizations use an easy to develop Likert scale. In a Likert scale the organization creates a ranking system such as one through five or Outstanding through Unacceptable (S. Byham et al., 2002). The scale that the organization agrees upon is then used to rate the performance of the company's associates.

Another method for evaluating competencies is through a behaviorally anchored rating scale. A behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS) is considered to be just as reliable as the Likert scale approach (S. Byham et al., 2002). An advantage to using the BARS approach to measure competencies is that using rating scales that are tailor-made to the company's situation enables the organization to observe and assess relevant characteristics (Caird, 1992).

Competency Model Benefits. There are many benefits to utilizing a formal planning process based on the competency model. The first advantage is that competency models are linked to the people who do the work, and are therefore more enduring than the job descriptions (Rothwell, 2002). While this approach requires more orchestration than the replacement charting method, this method allows a company to develop a pool of high potential candidates versus one or two hand selected people for each executive position (S. Byham et al., 2002). Utilizing a competency model moves the company's plans away from job titles

and traditional job experience and focuses on the skills and behaviors needed by the company (Guinn, 2000). When a company identifies and communicates the qualities needed for advancement, the communication of those qualities may reduce turnover (Wells, 2003). Another benefit of a competency based model is that an individual with the right competencies may be working in a different functional area than expected (Guinn, 2000).

Acceleration Pools.

With the acceleration pool process, an organization develops executive talent through groups of high-potential candidates who are tracked by the senior management team (W. Byham, 2002). The objective of this approach is to assign talent pool members to a variety of positions within the company in an effort to gain broad exposure. Participants in the pool can be assigned to participate in development activities such as mentoring or university sponsored development (W. Byham, 2002).

The focus of the acceleration pool may vary. A larger organization may have the need for more acceleration pools than a smaller organization. A large organization may determine that it is necessary to have an acceleration pool at different levels or in different divisions of the organization (W. Byham, 2002).

There are advantages and disadvantages to the acceleration pool approach. With a talent pool, the focus of development is on preparing the employee for advancement in the organization and not for a specific position. This provides more potential opportunities for the members of the talent pool. An additional benefit of the talent pool approach is that when an organization has a

deep pool of internal candidates, they are increasing their chance of finding the right candidate to serve the organization (Charan, 2005). A potential disadvantage is that the members of the talent pool are not being developed for a specific position and may lack the skills to fill a role that becomes available.

Methods of Identifying Successors

Once a company has identified the model their plans will follow, they need to define how they will select the successors that will be included in those plans. Sources for identifying a successor may include: a manager's recommendation, past performance reviews, and talent reviews. For some companies, identifying a successor involves gathering and analyzing feedback from peers, feedback from supervisors, and feedback from the candidate's subordinates (Orellano & Miller, 1997).

Criteria for selecting successors vary by company. A study from the Corporate Leadership Council suggested focusing on nine qualities for selecting successors based on their leadership ability (*Hallmarks of Leadership Success*, 2003):

1. Honesty and Integrity.
2. Ability to recognize and reward achievement.
3. Commitment to diversity.
4. Ability to identify and articulate long-term vision for the future.
5. Alignment of skills with future business strategy.
6. Ability to allocate resources across competing priorities.
7. Ability to clearly communication expectations.

8. Quality of relationships with other senior executives.
9. Interpersonal skills.

Building Workforce Capability

In addition to identifying the positions that require succession plans and the people that are going to be successors, a solid succession plan should also address the developmental needs of the successors. As a succession event occurs, the challenge for an organization is to not only have a person to fill the position, but to have that person fully contribute in the same ways as the former incumbent.

A recent study explored the approaches companies are taking to transition knowledge from their maturing workforce. There were 239 companies that participated in this study. The study found that 60 percent of the companies reported utilizing mentoring to transition knowledge, 46 reported utilizing document repositories, 30 percent reported facilitating classes lead by mature workers, 20 percent reported utilizing communities of practice, and another 29 percent reported embedding information from existing workers into their learning programs (Lesser & Rivera, 2006).

Transitioning Knowledge

Planning for the departure of key people in an organization requires careful planning. Each person brings unique skills and abilities to a role and to an organization. Plans to replace an incumbent should include not only a successor, but a plan for the current incumbent to share their knowledge before they depart.

Archiving Information. A plan to transition job skills should include methods to archive information from the current incumbent. DeLong suggests several approaches to archiving information including videotaping interviews, storytelling, communities of practice, mentoring, and training (2004). Several organizations have begun videotaping interviews with incumbents before they depart. Conducting videotaped interviews allows the organization to retain an archive of knowledge from employees for future reference (DeLong, 2004). Another approach to retaining knowledge is called storytelling (DeLong, 2004). Story telling frequently involves small group settings where the current incumbent describes situations and projects in an effort to transfer tacit knowledge to other employees. The message shared in these sessions can be videotaped or transcribed for future reference.

Disseminating Information. Activities to disseminate information to current employees should be included in the strategy for transitioning knowledge. DeLong (2004) suggests several tactics for disseminating information including training, mentoring, and communities of practice. Training can be used to disseminate information through engaging veteran professionals in the development of the training materials (DeLong, 2004). Mentoring has many functions within an organization. In the right setting, mentoring can be used strategically to transfer both knowledge and skills in one on one relationships (DeLong, 2004). Communities of practice can be applied through networking groups or team assignments (DeLong, 2004).

Individual Development

In 2003, DBM, a Human Resource consulting firm located in New York, conducted an informal poll of 200 HR professionals. From their survey, they identified that 94 percent of the 200 HR professionals responded that their organization has not adequately prepared younger workers to step into leadership positions (Wells, 2003). This is a concerning static when compared to the estimated 61 million American workers expected to retire over the next thirty years (Rothwell, 2002). Additionally, in a recent survey, 88 percent of CEOs indicated that executive talent management issues are important to their boards, and 93 percent consider formal plans to replace key talent moderately to highly important to the organization's success (Pomeroy, 2004).

There are a few factors that must be considered when determining the type of individual development that should be tied to the planning program for a company. First, for a development plan to be effective, it must be tied to the specific developmental needs of that employee (Wellins & Byham, 2001). That makes it even more important that the company's plan for replacing key talent is closely tied to the performance appraisal process. Ensuring that the company's planning process for replacing key talent is complementary to the performance appraisal process will also help to enhance the outcome of the plan (Lam & Schaubroeck, 1998).

Another important factor for consideration is the needs of the individual employee. When determining the type of development to be offered to an

individual, it is important to consider the individual's learning style (Wellins & Byham, 2001).

Methods of Individual Development.

There are several types of individual development a company may choose to utilize for the developmental needs identified through their planning process. A special report published in HR magazine suggests the following approaches be used to build a talent pipeline: creating a motivational climate, utilizing job shadowing, multi-rater feedback tools, and utilizing external coaches (Lockwood, 2006). Additional approaches include on-the-job experiences, mentoring, and training/executive education.

On-The-Job Experiences. On-the-job experiences are job requirements that allow high potential individuals to gain valuable expertise in building alliances, utilizing technology, leading change, gaining global experience, etc. (Guinn, 2000). These experiences can come in several forms. Developmental assignments can either be done concurrently with the employee's job or as stand alone job assignment (Yukl, 2002). What has not been adequately researched is the amount of time an employee should spend in a developmental assignment to gain the desired skills and experiences (Yukl, 2002). In determining if an on-the-job assignment will be an effective development tool, there are some questions that should be asked. It should be determined if the assignment will provide one or more challenges that the employee will need to function in the position that they being prepared for (S. Byham et al., 2002)? Another question that should be discussed is whether or not the assignment will provide insight into the

employee's specific personality traits that could be potential derailing attributes in another position (S. Byham et al., 2002)? One more question that should be discussed prior to assigning an individual to an on-the-job experience is whether the assignment will provide adequate exposure to potential long-term mentors or talented professionals who have unique skills or knowledge to share (S. Byham et al., 2002)?

Mentoring. Mentoring is a developmental process where a more experienced employee helps an employee who has less experience (Yukl, 2002). Mentoring can be used for a variety of skills and should not be used just for leadership skills. Mentoring relationships can either be formal or informal. A study completed by Raymond Noe examined development programs that were administered in nine different locations. The study examined characteristics of mentoring relationships in the effort to draw a conclusion on the function of the relationship (Noe, 1988). The participants included 139 educators and 43 mentors. The study used an exploratory factor analysis that looked at 29 mentoring attributes. The results of the factor analysis indicated that mentors do provide two functions, a career function and a psychological function.

Training. Training plays an important role in helping individuals master competencies and gain more knowledge of the company (S. Byham et al., 2002). Training and executive education programs that teach leadership skills can come in many forms from short workshops lasting a few hours to comprehensive programs that last for a year or more and cover a wide range of skills (Yukl, 2002). Training can be delivered through a variety of different methods. Some

of those methods include classroom training, MBA programs, public seminars, as well as courses developed specifically for the organization (S. Byham et al., 2002).

Coaching. A coach is another common form of individual development. A coach can be defined as a catalyst or facilitator of individual development (S. Byham et al., 2002). Those that serve as coaches are often seen as business partners whose expertise offer tangible guidance to those that they work with (S. Byham et al., 2002). This type of development is typically utilized for someone who is a high-level executive (Yukl, 2002).

Accountability for Individual Development

Determining the accountability for the employee's development is an important step in ensuring the plans get fully executed. The high-potential employee must be held accountable for his/her own development in order to progress as a future leader (Guinn, 2000). An article in the International Journal of Manpower identified that the extent to which department heads are evaluated on and compensated for their efforts to develop their subordinates shows the highest correlation with HR outcomes (Huang, 2001).

Evaluation of the Processes

Given the investment a company makes in their planning process of for the replacement of employees that are critical to their success, monitoring the effectiveness of the process is important. One study found that a company's designated successors actually fill fewer than 30 percent of the open positions for which they were slotted (S. Byham et al., 2002). This may not be solely

attributed to lack of leadership support. According to Marc Effron, a global leader of the leadership consulting group at Hewitt Associates, another trap companies can find themselves in is over designing the process (Wells, 2003). Keeping the process as aligned with current programs and as simple to administer will help minimize the additional resources needed to facilitate the program.

Metrics for Success.

According to Rothwell (2002), few best practice firms determine a return; instead they use a more informal process. When a position becomes available, is there a qualified internal candidate? If the answer to that is yes, the program would be considered effective and if the answer to that is no, then the program would not be considered effective (Rothwell, 2002). While few firms establish a true return on their program, there are methods that could be utilized to monitor the effectiveness of a company's plans to replace important talent.

Rothwell (2005, p.293) suggests that one approach to conducting this analysis would be to modify Kirkpatrick's hierarchy of training evaluation. Under this methodology, the first level of evaluation would be customer satisfaction (Rothwell, 2005). Rothwell (2005, p.294) suggests several questions for measuring customer satisfaction:

- How satisfied are the chief customers with the succession planning and management planning process for the replacement of talent?
- How satisfied are its customers with each program component-such as job descriptions, competency models, performance appraisal

processes, individual potential assessment processes, individual development forms, and individual development activities?

- How well does planning process match up to individual career plans?
- How do employees perceive the process used to replace talent?

The next level in evaluation suggested by Rothwell (2005, p.294) is Kirpatrick's Level 2 (learning level), which would related to program progress.

Questions Rothwell (2005, p.294) suggests for level 2 include:

- How well is each part of the program working compared to stated program objectives?
- How well are individuals progressing through their developmental experiences in preparation for future advancement into key positions?

Rothwell (2005, p.294) then suggests applying Kirpatrick's Level 3 evaluation (behavior level) to measure the level of effective placement with the following questions:

- What percentage of vacancies in key positions is the organization able to fill quickly?
- How quickly is the organization able to fill vacancies in key positions?
- What percentage of vacancies in key positions is the organization able to fill successfully (that is without avoidable turnover in the first two years of the position)?
- What savings, if any, can be demonstrated from not filling key positions for which alternative, and more innovative, approaches were used to achieve results?

Finally, Rothwell (2005, p.296) suggests using Kirkpatrick's fourth level (results) would be applied to measure the organizational results through answering questions such as:

- How does the program support the organization's results?
- What successes or failures in organizational strategic plans, if any, can be attributed to the planning process for replacing key talent?

Another method of evaluating the success of the process would be to create a report of key indicators. These key indicators should be related to outcomes the company desires from the planning process for the replacement of key talent. Some potential indicators suggested by Orellano and Miller (1997) include:

- Number of high potential employees.
- Percentage of high potential employees to the total exempt workforce.
- Number of new high potential employees added to the list since the last review.
- Number downgraded from the last review.
- Average age and years of service of high potential employees.
- Average number of physical moves per year.
- Similar statistics for women and minorities.
- Number of key positions for which internal replacements do not exist.

Whether a company selects a score card or a survey method of evaluation, the evaluation needs to be conducted periodically to determine the

success of the program. It is recommended that the evaluation be completed on an annual basis for evaluation (Orellano & Miller, 1997).

Summary

While company executives continue to state that talent management is a very high priority to their company, there are still a significant number of companies that do not conduct formal planning for replacing key talent. The lack of plans can be explained through a multitude of reasons. In a survey of family owned businesses it was identified that 31.4 percent of companies that did not have a plan, had no plan because they were not comfortable making the “necessary decisions” and another 14.4 percent had no plans because it was a “difficult topic to deal with” (Grove & Prince, 2004). Other companies place more emphasis on the need for leadership and talent. They believe that need for talent justifies the time and effort spent on a well-documented and well-executed plan (Hergenrather, 1993). Regardless of the reason, the lack of formal planning for replacing key talent may become a critical issue for many companies by the year 2012 when the baby boomer generation reaches 48 – 66 years of age and prepares to retire (Toossi, 2004). This considered, the fact that 76 percent of companies are not conducting formal planning for positions that require specialized skills and abilities and 83 percent of companies are not conducting planning for positions that are hard to replace from the external labor market is quite concerning (*Hallmarks of Leadership Success*, 2003).

Although there is a significant amount of research available on the topic of executive or managerial succession planning, research has not been done on the

planning processes private companies are utilizing to plan for replacing people in non executive positions. This research study seeks to explore the methods used by private companies that utilize formal planning processes for replacing employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the processes private companies use to plan for the replacement of highly skilled employees in non-executive positions. The positions of special interest are those requiring employees with specific skills that are difficult to find in the external labor market. These positions typically require specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The Problem

In a recent survey, 93 percent of CEOs consider planning for the replacement of key talent moderately to highly important to the organization's success (Pomeroy, 2004). While many business leaders indicate that planning for the replacement of employees is a priority, it is apparent that many lack appropriate plans to ensure their company has sufficient talent to fulfill their needs over the upcoming years.

The lack of plans can be explained through a multitude of reasons. A survey of family owned businesses reported that 31.4 percent of companies lacked plans because they were not comfortable making the "necessary decisions" and another 14.4 percent lacked plans because "the topic was difficult to deal with" (Grove & Prince, 2004). Another survey reported that 45 percent of its participants cited their ability to identify and develop leadership talent was limited by a lack of a clear approach for replacing key talent (Pomeroy, 2004). That study also found that 41 percent attributed their lack of plans to the lack of available talent (Pomeroy, 2004).

Further complicating the need to plan for replacing talent in the organization is the projected change in the U.S. workforce demographics. In 2012, the baby-boom cohort will be 48 to 66 years old (Toossi, 2004). The aging of the baby-boomers is projected to have a significant impact on the demographics of our nation's workforce. A 1997 McKinsey study discovered that between the years of 2000 and 2015 the people aged 35-44 years old will decline by 15 percent; there were no significant countertrends apparent (Steeves & Ross-Denrocher, 2003).

Employers are expecting that the change in workforce demographics will have a significant impact on their business. A recent study on changing demographics surveyed 239 learning executives in North America, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. The respondents to the survey showed a significant concern about the changing workforce demographics. When asked about the degree to which the change in workforce demographics will impact their business, 43 percent responded that it would cause a significant impact and another 38 percent responded that it would be a moderate impact (Lesser & Rivera, 2006).

From the literature review it was determined that there is very little published research on formal planning processes for replacing highly skilled non-executive employees. Given the upcoming changes in workforce demographics, research is needed to explore the use of planning methods for replacing highly skilled employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are critical to the company's future success.

Research Questions

This study explores the processes that companies use to replace highly skilled, non-executive employees. Of special interest are processes focused on employees that possess specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the external labor market. The goal is to answer the following four questions based on the data collected from the companies that are the subjects of this research study:

- R₁ What methods do companies use to plan for replacing highly skilled employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- R₂ What methods do companies use to determine the scope of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- R₃ What types of data do companies collect as a part of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- R₄ What concerns do companies have regarding replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Overview of the Research Process

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methods that were used in this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research design. A discussion of the data analysis follows.

A qualitative case study was selected as the research method for this study. A qualitative research design was selected based on the limited amount of information that was available on the topic of succession planning for non-executive positions. A case study was selected due to the finite number of companies that are applying a formal planning process for replacing people in non-executive positions (Merriam, 1998).

The process for data collection was modeled after a study completed by Richard Hergenrather in 1993. His study explored planning methods for the replacement of people in executive-level positions. Hergenrather explored processes and methods at 26 different companies using a structured interview. While the sample size in this study is smaller due to the limited number of companies reporting that they have formal planning processes for the replacement of people in non-executive positions, the data collection process is modeled after Hergenrather's approach.

Research Sites.

Data were collected from ten separate companies. The positions that are the focus of this study are non-executive positions that require specific knowledge, skills, or abilities that are difficult to find in the external labor market.

Sampling Method.

In 2003, a well respected business research group conducted a study that explored development and succession planning at 276 companies. The succession planning component of that research was primarily focused on executive succession planning programs. The survey touched briefly on non-executive succession planning with an inquiry on the inclusion of people or positions that are hard to find in the external labor market.

According to the findings from that study, only 12.8 percent of companies included non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market in their succession planning. The specific companies that had responded that they included non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market in their succession plans were not available. Since the specific companies were not identified in the study conducted by the business research group, all members of that group that met the criteria for this study received an invitation to participate.

Pilot Study.

The pilot site for this research is also a member of the business research group described previously. The pilot was selected based on location, accessibility, and willingness to participate. At the onset of the pilot research, the participant received a welcome letter (Appendix A), email questionnaire (Appendix B), and informed consent form (Appendix G). An invitation to a phone interview (Appendix C) was sent to the participant upon receipt of their email

questionnaire. Included in the invitation to the phone interview was a copy of the questions that would be discussed during the interview (Appendix D).

After the data collected from the pilot were analyzed and the process for the pilot was reviewed, several modifications to the interview guide were completed. The questions from the initial interview guide were revised to be more specific and several questions were eliminated. Additionally, the questions from the email questionnaire and the phone interview guide were merged together to form the new interview guide (Appendix H).

After the revisions based on the pilot study were completed, invitations were sent out to the primary study participants. Since the specific survey responses were not available from the business research group's study, all members of the business research group that reported experience in Human Resources, Succession Planning, or Talent Management received an email (Appendix E). This email (Appendix E) asked them about the use of formal planning for the replacement of people in non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the external labor market. To participate in this research study, participants were asked to verify that they met the following four criteria:

1. Hands on facilitation of the company's planning process for replacing non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market.
2. Responsibility for the final decision on the positions that will be a part of the company's planning program.
3. Knowledge of the usage of the planned successors.

4. Knowledge of the performance and retention of the identified successors.

Respondents to the invitation to the phone interview then received an email thanking them for their interest in the study and requesting potential dates and times for a phone discussion (Appendix F). The informed consent form (Appendix G) and the interview questions (Appendix H) were included in that email. A matrix aligning the interview questions to the research questions was completed. This matrix is included as Appendix J.

Methods for Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from a semi-structured interview conducted over the phone or through email if a phone conference call was not feasible. Data pertaining to the company itself were collected from the company's web site and through the company's SEC filings using a template (Appendix I). This information was then confirmed either through the phone interview or through email with the participant.

Interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data source for this research. A semi-structured interview is one where there is a combination of structured and unstructured attributes (Merriam, 1998). A highly structured interview is one where the interview itself follows a strict order of predetermined questions. A highly structured interview can be considered an oral form of a survey in that the specific wording of the questions is predetermined (Merriam, 1998). An unstructured interview is one where there are open-ended questions and the

questions do not follow a specific order. The wording of the questions may also vary in an unstructured interview. This option was selected since a predetermined list of questions will be developed, but as the conversation progresses, it may be important to deviate from the predetermined list. This method also allowed the flexibility to conduct the interview in a conversational manner.

The interview guide (Appendix H) contains a variety of specific questions as well as open-ended questions. The nature of the data being collected required both specific data and additional detail that can be collected through open-ended questions.

The questions on the phone interview guide were sequenced in such a way that the initial questions were more specific, general knowledge of the company's processes. The questions that followed gradually solicited information that was more sensitive in nature.

During the interview, a digital voice recorder was used to record the conversation and notes were taken. The recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Then the data were coded and sorted into categories for analysis.

The method of gathering data was selected due to the nature of the information being discussed. Often, companies guard their succession planning process. The respondents may have been less likely to provide the desired detail through a survey instrument than through an interview process (Hergenrather, 1993). In an effort to increase participation in the study, the

respondent's names or company's names are not disclosed in the results. A brief description of the size and industry of the participant's company is noted in the results.

Throughout the interview timeline additional invitations were sent to members of the business research group that met the preliminary criteria to participate. Additional participants were invited until all members of the business research group that met the preliminary criteria were contacted. Follow up emails were sent to members of the business research group that had not responded until a point of saturation was reached with the collected data. Saturation of the interview data became apparent after six of the interviews were completed. The remaining four interviews that were conducted contained very similar data to the first six interviews.

Expert Panel.

A team of experts who have experience in research design and are familiar with this content area reviewed the research plan, including the semi-structured interview guide, prior to its use.

Methods of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis that was used was guided by grounded theory. This process involves a constant comparative analysis of data collected (Patton, 2002). This method was selected since the interviews that were conducted were best represented through the analysis of the categories of data that emerged and the common themes that were identified.

Categorizing the Data.

To effectively analyze the data that was collected, category construction was utilized. Category construction involves reviewing the data that has been collected and comparing each item to the others that have been collected looking for similarities between the two (Merriam, 1998). Through this process, categories were formed with data that shares similar themes or related to a similar step in the process. Through the category construction process, the collected data from the company was analyzed in detail and sorted into categories. The categories were constructed to best represent the processes used by each of the companies. These categories were also used to clarify steps that are completed as a part of the formal planning process at the companies. Data were assigned to the various categories through a detailed review of the transcribed interviews and coding of processes, systems, and attributes that emerged as common across the interviews.

Coding the Data.

The data collected from the participants in this study was first analyzed through open coding. The data from the interviews were reviewed for similar characteristics. After the open coding was completed on the data, these codes were then compared through axial coding. The codes or characteristics were compared throughout all of the interview data to identify common characteristics and strategies.

Naming the Categories.

Once the data had been analyzed, sorted into different categories, and coded, the next step was to name the categories. Names for the categories can come from a number of sources including the researcher, the participants, or sources outside of the study (Merriam, 1998). The categories were named in a way that made the part of the process represented by that category very clear to readers of the study.

After the categories were identified and named, the data were further analyzed and documented using quotes from the interviews. The quotes that were sorted by categories were utilized to report on the planning processes used by each company. The steps of the process were outlined in a sequential manner to clarify the order of the events as well as the dependant nature of some of the event in the sequence.

In addition to documenting the processes and sequence of events at each company, there was a constant comparative analysis on the succession planning categories of the participating companies. The constant comparative analysis involved comparing each company's planning process to the other companies' processes. The findings highlight the components that the participants' programs had in common. The findings also highlight measures of effectiveness that were gathered that relate to the common practices. In addition to formal measures of effectiveness, informal comments relating to the effectiveness of the common practices are included.

Validity, Reliability, and Objectivity

One obstacle to achieving credibility with qualitative research is the notion that the researcher has arrived at their findings through predispositions and biases (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002, p.553), an approach to overcoming this obstacle is to clearly report that the approach used involved a “systematic search for alternative themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations”.

Validity.

According to Creswell, there are eight strategies to enhance validity of the findings: 1) Triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build themes. 2) Use member-checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions for themes back to participants requesting feedback on accuracy. 3) Use rich, detailed, descriptions to convey the findings to give the readers an element of shared experiences. 4) Clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study. 5) Present negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes. 6) Spend prolonged time in the field. 7) Use peer debriefing to increase the accuracy of the account. 8) Use an external auditor (Cresswell, 2003, p.196).

This study used two systematic methods to enhance the validity of the findings. These two systematic methods include negative cases and analysis triangulation.

Negative Cases.

Using the approach of negative cases involves extensively considering the cases that do not fit within the identified pattern (Patton, 2002). As themes and patterns were identified, those cases that did not fit within the pattern were explored to gain an understanding of the circumstances that surround the case in an effort to lend additional support to the theme identified. In the event that additional information was needed to better understand the case that does not fit within the theme, the participant in the study was contacted by phone or email for additional information. In this study there were two cases that did not fit within the patterns that were forming. These cases were further explored through additional analysis of the interview data from the case that did not fit the pattern and the cases that did fit the pattern to better understand the differences.

Analysis Triangulation.

The application of analysis triangulation involves analyzing the data collected through the use of multiple analysts to determine if the analysts agreed on the findings.

Analysis triangulation was used in this study through gaining an additional perspective on the coding of the data and the analysis of emerging themes. This was done through working with another graduate student who is also trained in qualitative research. The other graduate student coded 15 percent of the interview data. From the other student's coding, I compared the coding I had completed to ensure that there were similar themes identified in both analyses of the data. Where there were discrepancies in the coding, the other researcher

and I reviewed the coding and further discussed the differences. Additionally, I worked with my academic advisor, another two faculty members from the College of Education, and a faculty member from the College of Agricultural Sciences, all of whom are well trained in data analysis.

The use of the analysis triangulation and the negative cases were selected to increase the validity of the findings from the study through gaining additional perspectives on the data and the analysis. Additionally the use of negative cases helped to better explain the situations that did not match the findings.

Reliability.

In examining the reliability of a qualitative research study, one of the primary concerns is the ability to reproduce the study with similar results. Strauss and Corbin further define the concept of reproducibility as a scenario where given the same theoretical perspective, same rules for data collection and analysis, and similar set of conditions; another researcher would be able to come up with either the same or a similar theoretical explanation about the phenomenon under investigation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.266-267). To improve the reliability of this study I used detailed descriptions to convey the research process and analysis that lead to the findings to clarify the methods in the event that another researcher would be interested in reproducing the study.

Objectivity.

In qualitative research, objectivity refers to a willingness to listen and to “give a voice” to respondents, regardless if they are individuals or organizations

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998). There are several techniques that enhance the objectivity of the research. The first technique is to think comparatively by comparing incident to incident in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). While this does not eliminate challenges with remaining objective, it does help to keep the researcher grounded in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through the analysis of the data collected, a constant comparison method was used to analyze the interview data and documents. This technique was selected in an effort to remain objective in the analysis.

A final approach in maintaining objectivity in a study is to follow the research process concisely (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This involves both having a detailed protocol to follow and the actual execution of the protocol. The research methods used in this study are described in great detail, and I followed them very closely throughout the research process. The processes used for this study were also reviewed with an expert panel to ensure compliance with the outlined methodology.

Chapter 4

STUDY RESULTS

Chapter 4 highlights the results of this research. There are three sections within this chapter. The first section provides a brief review of the study; the second section provides an overview of the participants; the third section contains a summary of the findings for each of the four research questions.

Review of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the planning processes private companies use to plan for the replacement of highly skilled employees in non-executive positions. The positions that were of special interest were those positions that are difficult to replace with people from the external labor market. These positions typically require a high level of skill, specialized training and specific, job-related experience.

There are four research questions:

- R₁ What methods do companies use to plan for replacing highly skilled employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

- R₂ What methods do companies use to determine the scope of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

- R₃ What types of data do companies collect as a part of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?
- R₄ What concerns do companies have regarding replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Data were collected through interviews with ten Human Resource Professionals from various industries. These interviews were conducted over the phone and through email. The pilot was conducted on December 10, 2005, and additional data were collected from November 6, 2006 through November 29, 2006.

The research findings are presented in the following sections. Direct citations are included in the findings. In an effort to protect the confidentiality of the participants' names and companies, data referencing specific names or titles were replaced with xx.

Profile of the Participants.

Characteristics of the Sample. The participants that were selected for this research study were identified as subject matter experts in succession planning and/or HR Planning based on their participation in a well respected business research group. This group is comprised of leaders from various companies and industries. This research group had published a research study on succession planning which measured the usage of succession planning for executive positions. In this research, a brief reference was made to succession planning for highly skilled employees outside the executive ranks. The companies that

participated in this earlier research study were invited to participate in this study. Additionally, other members of the research group were invited to participate in this study.

The participants that responded to the invitation for this study were asked to verify that they met the following four criteria:

1. Hands on facilitation of the company's planning process for replacing non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market.
2. Responsibility for the final decision on the positions that will be a part of the company's planning program.
3. Knowledge of the usage of the planned successors.
4. Knowledge of the performance and retention of the identified successors.

Response Rate. There were 486 invitations sent out to the identified companies. From the 486 invitations, there were 32 responses to the invitation. Of the 32 respondents, fourteen declined based on criteria. Another 18 accepted the invitation and confirmed that they met the criteria. From the initial 18 volunteers for the study, ten followed through and participated either through a phone interview or through email correspondence. Table 1 summarizes the participation rate.

Table 1

Study Participation Rate

	Number	Percent
Number of invitations sent	486	100.00
Responses to the invitation	32	6.58
Declined the invitation to the study based on criteria	14	
Accepted the invitation to the study and confirmed their company met the criteria	18	
Participated in the study through a phone interview or email	10	

Industries Represented. Given the nature of the leadership networking group from which the participants were selected, there was a diverse representation of industries among the study respondents. The 32 respondents are represented by industry type in Table 2.

Table 2

Industries of All Respondents

Industry	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Consumer Products	2	6.26
Distribution	1	3.13
Engineering	1	3.13
Financial Services	4	12.50
Foodservice	1	3.13
Health Products and Services	2	6.25
Insurance	4	12.50
Manufacturing	3	9.38
Marketing	1	3.13
Retail	4	12.50
Technology	2	6.25
Telecommunications	3	9.38
Transportation	1	3.13
Utilities	3	9.38
Total	32	100.00

Industries of the respondents that indicated they did have a planning process for the replacement of highly skilled employees are represented in Table

3.

Table 3

Industries Represented by Companies with Formal Plans

Industry	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Consumer Products	1	5.56
Distribution	1	5.56
Engineering	1	5.56
Financial Services	1	5.56
Foodservice	1	5.56
Health Products and Services	1	5.56
Insurance	2	11.11
Manufacturing	1	5.56
Marketing	1	5.56
Retail	1	5.56
Technology	2	11.11
Telecommunications	2	11.11
Transportation	1	5.56
Utilities	2	11.11
Total	18	100.00

From the 18 respondents that indicated they had formal plans in place, ten were able to complete the full interview process. Those ten respondents are represented by industry type in Table 4.

Table 4

Industries Represented by Companies Completing the Full Interview Process

Industry	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Consumer Products	1	10.00
Distribution	1	10.00
Engineering	1	10.00
Health Products and Services	1	10.00
Insurance	1	10.00
Manufacturing	1	10.00
Retail	1	10.00
Technology	1	10.00
Telecommunications	1	10.00
Utilities	1	10.00
Total	10	100.00

The 14 respondents that declined based on criteria are represented by industry type in Table 5.

Table 5

Industries Represented by Companies Declining Based on Criteria

Industry	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Consumer Products	1	7.14
Financial Services	3	21.43
Health Products and Services	1	7.14
Insurance	2	14.29
Manufacturing	2	14.29
Retail	3	21.43
Telecommunications	1	7.14
Utilities	1	7.14
Total	14	100.00

Company Size. Additional research was completed to confirm the size of the participating companies. Both the sales volume and number of employees were confirmed through each company's SEC filings as referenced on hoovers.com. The organizations that responded to the invitation were diverse in terms of the number of associates the company employed. The companies ranged in size from 260 associates to 240,000 associates. Table 6 outlines the size of the responding companies.

Table 6

Company Size Based on Number of Employees

Range	All Respondents		Accepted Based on Criteria		Completed Full Interview Process		Declined Based on Criteria	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
< 10,000	12	37.50	6	50.00	3	30.00	6	50.00
10, 000 > 40,000	13	40.63	6	46.15	5	50.00	6	46.15
> 40,000	7	21.88	5	71.43	2	20.00	2	28.57
Total	32	100.00	18	56.25	10	31.25	14	43.75

Note. Number of employees referenced above are based on the respondent's 2005 SEC filings as reported on Hoovers.com

The organizations that responded to the invitation were also diverse in terms of their volume of annual sales. Respondents ranged in volume from \$80 million to \$81 billion in annual sales. Table 7 outlines the size of the responding companies in terms of annual sales.

Table 7

Company Size Based on 2005 Annual Sales¹

Range (In Millions)	All Respondents		Accepted Based on Criteria		Completed Full Interview Process		Declined Based on Criteria	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
< \$1,000	5	15.63	3	60.00	1	20.00	2	40.00
\$1,000 > \$5,000	14	43.75	8	57.14	6	42.86	6	42.86
\$5,000 > \$20,000	9	28.13	5	55.56	2	22.22	4	44.44
> \$20,000	4	12.50	2	50.00	1	25.00	2	50.00
	32	100.00	18	56.25	10	31.25	14	43.75

Note. Annual revenues referenced above are based on the respondent's 2005 SEC filings as reported on Hoovers.com

Research Findings

Findings for Research Question 1: What methods do companies use to plan for replacing highly skilled employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Questions one, four, five, and seven in the interview guide (Appendix H) were designed to explore the practices the companies had in place to plan to replace people in positions requiring specific knowledge or skills.

Focusing Attention on Replacing Talent. All of the participants in the interviews reported that planning for the replacement of key talent is a focal point for their organization. Additionally, the participants reported that their organization has committed time and resources to the replacement of key talent. Two approaches emerged when participants were asked to describe the method their company uses to plan for the replacement of talent that is hard to find in the outside labor market. One approach was to extend the company's executive succession planning to include other positions that were defined as business critical. The other approach that emerged was the development of a separate and distinct process for planning for succession events in positions that require specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. Both of the approaches shared common attributes. Those attributes are described in Table 8 and are described further in the text following the table.

Table 8. Summary of common attributes described by the participants.

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Percentage of Participants</i>
Leadership Support	The involvement of the company's leadership in the planning for the replacement of highly skilled workers.	70
Expanding the Scope of Executive Succession Planning	The practice of including the organization's highly skilled workers and positions requiring highly skilled workers in their executive succession planning process.	60
Clear Accountability	The measure the organization has in place to ensure the plans that emerge from the succession planning process are executed.	50
Frequent Revisions to the Process	The practice(s) the organization has adopted to update the process to ensure it has a tangible outcome for the business and that it is inclusive of all key people and positions.	50
Talent Acquisition	Methodology the organization uses to fulfill talent needs that they are unable to fill with their internal resources.	50
Developing Talent Pools	An approach by which an organization develops a number of people to fulfill similar talent needs.	40
Rotational Assignments	An approach to individual development where the employee is assigned to positions in different areas of the business to develop an understanding of that area.	40
Defined Metrics	The statistics, data or other measurable criteria the organization uses to determine the progress their plans are achieving.	40
Engaging a Mentor	The process of using seasoned members of the organization's workforce to work either one on one or in small groups with newer members of the workforce in an effort to develop specific skills.	30

Leadership Support. Seven participants (70 percent) described the important role leadership support plays in their process. The leader's involvement was described as a key attribute for the success of several planning programs. One participant stated that they believe the leader's support to be the most important part of their company's planning process:

Having ultimately everyone know that the Chairman looks at this and it's not just an initiative that HR is driving. It's an initiative the Chairman has asked HR to drive. I think that's probably the most important thing. (Participant 3)

Another participant similarly described the role that leadership support plays in their company's process:

The executive team communicates with the directors and to the management team. Having that top-level commitment ensures that the process and the initiative will have sustainable growth beyond the first year. (Participant 6)

In addition to having leadership support, the importance of having leadership play a key role surfaced as well. One participant described the roles their company's leadership plays in their process:

For Operations, the Regional Vice President, and in some cases the Executive Vice President of Operations, the Director of Operations, folks from Associate Relations and Management Development and Training are all part of the process. The roles differ. You have the Regional Vice President, who is more of an administrator, just taking it all in and providing direction. The director of operations takes a more active role in speaking about their folks, and the HR roles are more of a support role in the process. (Participant 8)

Another participant shared the role their Chairman plays in the process through leading a Chairman's review at the conclusion of their process:

The chairman's review is when our chairman comes and looks at the very top levels in the organization. To get to the top levels, we start lower in the organization and we roll all of that information up. Then we're able to

share it with a chairman. (Participant 3)

Expanding the Scope for Executive Succession Planning. The first approach that emerged was expanding the scope of the company's executive succession planning process. This strategy emerged from six participants (60 percent). One participant described how their organization was beginning to implement their executive succession planning process a few levels down in their organization:

There are currently two levels, one at the executive level. There's a group of people that are looking at executive positions and doing some planned staffing for long-range growth. Though, a couple of clicks down in the non-executive realm, we are beginning to pull groups together to implement that same model. At that level it is more in the development phases. (Participant 4)

Another participant described their process:

The chairman's review is when our chairman comes and looks at the very top levels in the organization. To get to the top levels, we start lower in the organization and we roll all of that information up. Then we're able to share it with a chairman. (Participant 3)

The companies that used this approach evaluated their future talent needs that were beyond the executive ranks. Then they either added specific non-executive positions to their existing process; or they extended their current process down into the organization until all key positions were covered by the process.

Participants that described a strong relationship between their executive planning process and their process for highly skilled positions were asked to describe that process. Four participants (40 percent) described a clearly defined talent planning process that their organization conducts. One participant

described their methodology for their planning process, which they called an organization and talent process:

Every year, we have a formal, what we call, “organization and talent process.” As a part of that formal process, we ask the organization (each department) to identify key positions. Those are positions below the executive level, which are really critical to that department's ability to meet its goals and objectives. A part of this formalized process is to create these specific succession pools for those key positions. (Participant 3)

Another organization described a talent planning process where it conducts a full review of their key positions three times each year called a Human Resource Planning Session (HRP). The participant described how they focus their planning throughout the organization:

We have our Human Resources Planning Process. The process targets individuals and identifies gaps in learning plans for individuals. The process also maps out career paths for individuals up to the operations manager position. There are similar HR planning processes that exist throughout the organization. We just had one for sales and merchandising, which is a very similar process. (Participant 8)

Another participant described a similar approach:

When we conduct Talent Reviews we grid employees based on their performance, knowledge, skills and abilities. Based upon their ranking of knowledge, skills, ability, and performance, HR will put them on a grid. Then, each manager will talk about their own employees. When we get together and have a talent review meeting, through discussion we calibrate the managers. Sometimes you will have a manager that is a tough grader and another that is an easy grader. We have each manager talk about why they have rated their employees the way that they did, and other managers can challenge that. We will identify high potentials, poor performers, and those employees that are well placed by using this grid. (Participant 7)

Separate Process for Highly Skilled People and Positions. The second approach that emerged was defining a separate strategy and planning process for highly skilled positions. Five participants (50 percent) reported that they had

a separate planning process which focused specifically on building talent pipelines for highly skilled positions. These organizations utilized the separate process to ensure adequate focus on these positions. Three participants with a specific process for highly skilled positions also included these positions in their executive succession planning process. A participant described the structure of their talent review process for their key positions:

We grid employees based on their performance, knowledge, skills, and abilities. Based upon their ranking of their knowledge, skills, ability, and performance, HR will put them on a grid. Then, each manager will talk about their own employees. When we get together and have a talent review meeting, through discussion we calibrate the managers. (Participant 7)

A second participant described a very similar approach:

The supervisors of the functional area would prepare comments along with documents or templates prior to the meeting. Then during the meeting, we will speak to each supervisor regarding their store manager or category manager in regards to any gaps or developmental needs that may exist for the associate. We also discuss the next potential career position for the associate to develop a pool of candidates for a potential next step. (Participant 8)

One of the participants described how their organization was considering specific positions as well as pools of talent to fulfill their talent needs:

In addition to identifying these key positions, we do two things. We do positional succession planning as well as succession pools (where the pools are broader in nature). (Participant 3)

Clear Accountability. A common theme emerging from five of the participants (50 percent) was a clear and concise method for ensuring the plans that were developed from their process were acted upon. Two participants (20 percent) described an action planning component of their planning process to

ensure accountability. One study participant shared how an action plan is integrated into their planning process:

In the coming year, the process will generate an action plan that will be reviewed quarterly with the leadership team of a business unit and then again at the yearly talent review meeting. (Participant 1)

A second organization shared a similar approach through the use of individual development plans:

We have individual development plans that the individuals create. These are employee driven, but the supervisors are also responsible. (Participant 5)

Another participant shared how their plans are reviewed periodically, which leads to a measure of accountability:

There's accountability in the sense that there are three sessions a year. We come back to the table three times a year and there is kind of indirect accountability in regards to what you're talking about the second and third time. In most cases, the regional vice president may hold an individual accountable if nothing has changed from one session to another. There is some accountability around the Individual Development Plan that is developed for the individuals. (Participant 8)

In two organizations (20 percent), the organization completes a talent review process and then the head of the functional area reviews the results and status of the plans with the chairman of the organization. This method creates an atmosphere of accountability through the meeting with the chairman of the company. The head of the functional area feels a sense of urgency around being well prepared for the meeting with the chairman and also needs to demonstrate progress with the actions developed through the planning process.

Now in terms of creating their plan, I would say that they are very accountable. The process takes place over a couple of months. I would say that they have an inherent interest in doing it, because at the end of

the planning process, each business unit officer has a meeting with the chairman of our corporation. The officer wants to be as prepared as possible for that meeting. (Participant 3)

An additional participant commented:

So the accountability, if I recommend someone is ready to move on for promotion or expanded responsibility based on their achievements and competencies, I don't want to get egg on my face. (Participant 6)

Frequent Revisions to the Process. As a part of the interview process the participants were asked about making changes to the process. Five participants (50 percent) described a method for updating their organization's planning process. One participant described how he works to revise the process based on the feedback of those that participate:

I've been doing this for about four or five years. Every year, I enhance something based on feedback. I'm not afraid to take the feedback to improve the process and implement the changes the following year. (Participant 6)

After discussing the revisions further, the participant elaborated on the impact considering feedback on the process has:

When you implement the feedback towards improvement, people say: you know what, the organization is listening, and this is the process and tool for me. (Participant 6)

Another participant described how revising their approach is an on-going process:

It is a combination of feedback we got from the session regarding what things went well, what things didn't go well. Maybe the outcome wasn't as applicable as we thought it might be. Also, it's important, what is happening in our business and how that changes the process? So, what is it that makes sense to do for the business based on where the business is now? This year we had just announced a merger prior to starting our succession planning process. So we made some changes to the way we did things this year based on that. (Participant 3)

Another participant described a similar approach:

The incumbent and the process are reviewed on an annual basis. And we continue to make changes as needed. For instance, California just passed a new ballot initiative pertaining to infrastructure work. That has a huge impact on us and a lot of people on the list may be sent over to California. We also look at changing market conditions. We have to constantly look at changing market conditions, staffing needs, and resource loading. These are the things that need to be looked at on ongoing basis. (Participant 5)

Talent Acquisition. When the participants were asked about their strategy for recruiting talent into these positions, there were several diverse strategies that emerged. Five participants (50 percent) described a defined strategy for talent acquisition. Five (50 percent) of the participants reported using a structured internship or apprentice program to create a talent pipeline. This theme emerged from companies that were highly dependant on employees with a specific skill sets such as engineers. One study participant commented:

We started out about six or seven years ago with the first year of our internship program. We started our college recruiting program in our nuclear division to get new hires to learn from our trained groups before they retire. (Participant 1)

Another participant shared a similar approach:

We have also created an internship program. In the internship program, we hire college interns over the summer. For those individuals that we like and want to stay with the organization; we will offer them potential employment upon graduation. (Participant 7)

Another participant shared that the leadership in their organization was expressing an interest in making a significant commitment to their internship program.

He (our Regional Vice President) wants 100 interns this year, and he wants to focus on the conversion rate of our interns. This is huge for science and engineering firms. (Participant 5)

An additional participant shared how they utilize an apprentice program to build the bench strength for a key position in their organization that is very difficult to recruit for:

What we have done is we've created an apprentice program. We have 17 apprentices in the program right now. The apprentices go through an 18-month training program. These individuals go through the 18-month program and as positions become available, either through the promotion of a current employee or through attrition, those individuals will be the pool into that position. (Participant 7)

Organizations that reported using the structured internship programs also reported that the retention of the interns after college graduation was very important to the overall process. One participated shared:

Our goal is to hire the interns into full-time opportunities. Out of the 75 to 100 interns we have every summer; we make about 70 percent of them a full-time offer to join the company. We make those offers in November for the students that graduate in the upcoming May. All those interns that were with us last year, we're making most of them offers now (November). (Participant 1)

During this interview, I had the opportunity to further discuss the company's commitment to their internship program. The participant shared the extensive commitment their organization has to the program. The participant described the details of their involvement with the schools they recruit from for their internship program:

It starts off with us going to their career fairs every fall, about 35 career fairs this fall. Then we invite the candidates back here. We bring them all together to show them what xx is all about. We usually interview about 125 candidates, those that are selected come back to work in a 10-week program. (Participant 1)

During the discussion on the organization's commitment to the program, I questioned the participant further on the success of the program and the return on the company's investment that has been realized from this program. The participant went on to share:

We have been lucky in that 75 percent of our engineering hires have been through college hires. Because we don't have a lot of attrition, and a lot of our management is promoted from within our company, unless it is very strategic where we need someone from the outside, someone that's new to our company, the company is very good about promoting from within. I think last year we hired 180 engineers in our nuclear division and around 125 of them were college grads. We just had about 55 experienced folks that we needed to bring on board. (Participant 1)

Another participant shared a similar level of commitment to their organization's internship program. The participant described how their program was becoming a component of their needs assessment practices and the added focus their organization was placing on their internship program:

We are looking at how many of what positions are needed by when and building plans of what needs to be acquired by when. We have our college relations program, which is really being cranked up a notch. We are adding staff. This was once a very decentralized process, now we are centralizing it. We are having regional accountabilities, but a centralized approach to the program. (Participant 5)

An additional benefit of utilizing an internship program is that it provides the company with an opportunity to review each candidate's performance prior to extending a job offer to the candidates. One participant shared their interest in the internship program as a screening tool for hiring:

It is also a way that we are testing these interns to see if we might possibly pick them for a job offer. (Participant 1)

Another participant described how their internship program includes opportunities for the intern to contribute to the organization much like a full-time employee:

The program is very active. They spend eight months in each rotation. We have an internship component to that as well. Their active employees, they go in and make active contributions during that time. (Participant 3)

One participant described a strong focus on utilizing cross-training to build a talent pool within their organization:

We are starting to build in, I don't want to say redundancy, but multiple people are getting crossed trained. I think that helps, but there are always those very unique positions. For example, we have a person who processes commission for our sales people. It is not exactly a payroll position; it is not exactly an accounting position. I mean are there other companies out there that have commission sales people, yes, but do they have one particular person designated to do that? I don't know. I think part of it is that we are trying to be crossed functional. We are trying to address the worst-case scenario. (Participant 9)

Additional recruitment strategies were explored as well. Several participants shared strategies that included internal and external recruitment.

One participant described how they seek candidates that are internal employees or recent college grads:

We recruit both internally and externally for these (apprentice) positions. We also recruit college graduates for this position, as well as people in the industry with less than five years experience. (Participant 7)

Another organization shared their approach for recruiting internally:

We do have a process called our career development framework. It takes people from where they are to the next level in the organization. Basically, what happens is it provides them with everything they need to know to get to the next level. What type of online courses they need to take, what types of experience they need in terms of projects they need to have. (Participant 5)

Organizations that included external talent as a part of their strategy explored extensive opportunities to recruit skilled talent. Participants described the approaches they utilized to attract candidates with strong technical backgrounds. Approaches included tactics such as focusing on military hires, mature workers, and part-time workers. A participant shared the following details of their external talent acquisition strategy:

My focus is on military hires, early talent, mature workforce issues, and foreign-born workers. The mature workforce will work for benefits more than for money as costs continue to skyrocket out of control. We have tried to do understand what internal programs can attract the mature workforce to work, even if it is only part-time. (Participant 5)

Another participant shared a strategy that contained a similar variety of tactics for recruiting external talent with experience.

If we hire experience, there are a number of avenues to locate talent: conferences, trade sector meetings, special interest groups, user groups, search firms, technical clubs, and employee referral programs. (Participant 10)

Twenty percent (two participants) of the participants described a talent acquisition strategy with a strong focus on improving diversity within the organization. One participant described their focus on diversity:

That program really tries to expand the funnel and expand the talent that we have at that level that has some good diversity in the business units. As a part of our succession planning, each officer does have staffing

targets at the senior levels, director and above levels. Those requirements are 50 percent female placements and 25 percent diversity placements. That is specific to the actual placement, however, not specific to the actual planning. One could extrapolate from that, in order to meet that goal, for that to come out of the funnel, you have to have more in the funnel. (Participant 3)

Another participant shared their organization has a similar focus:

And in our industry diversity is a challenge as well. We select the schools strategically to help us build a diverse workforce as well. All schools selected have good engineering programs. (Participant 1)

In another situation, the employer was challenged to find an applicant pool for a crucial operations position. The participant described how their organization worked with local technical schools to create a feeder pool for their operations division which was not highly sought after by four-year college graduates:

Operations needs to be maintained 24 seven. This is a challenge because not a lot of college grads want to go into this. We have gone back to the schools and we have connected with the tech schools and gotten together with them to help develop programs. We have been lucky that the two-year schools around our plants are willing to work on a program for us for with whatever we need. (Participant 2)

Another participant spoke to the strategy their company uses when they are unable to locate a candidate for a position. The participant described how they source talent through outsourcing:

If not, we may outsource or use other companies to deliver the service. Weigh alternatives, determine global location, assess talent availability, then do a make versus buy or rent a decision. (Participant 10)

Developing Talent Pipelines. Several participants described maintaining a focus on developing talent pipelines. These talent pipelines consist of groups of people with the potential to fill non-executive positions requiring specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. Four participants (40 percent) indicated that

developing a talent pipeline is a priority for their organization. One participant described the role experiential learning plays in their development process:

One key thing is the individual development planning. This includes experiential learning. It's not just about classroom learning. It's also about preparing those high potential associates to work in cross-functional teams. (Participant 6)

Another participant described the role development planning plays in their talent planning process:

One goal is to identify a talent pool for key positions and to identify a development plan for folks to get into the talent pool. (Participant 8)

A third participant described an apprentice program that is used to create a talent pipeline:

These individuals (apprentices) go through the 18 month program and as positions become available, either through the promotion of a current employee or through attrition, those individuals will be the pool into that position. (Participant 7)

Rotational Assignments. Four participants (40 percent) shared how their organizations used rotational assignments as a part of their strategic plans for replacing highly skilled talent. One participant shared how their organization utilizes a graduate school recruitment program to bring on new talent and train them in several key areas of their business through a series of rotational assignments:

To increase the number of high potential managers we have, we actually go out and recruit MBAs in their second year. They actually participate; they are full-time employees from the date they are hired. They participate in a two-year rotational program that allows them to rotate through three of our organizational groups. That program really tries to expand the funnel and expand the talent that we have at that level that has some good diversity in the business units. They can then bring that knowledge that to the business group that they eventually land in. (Participant 3)

Another participant described how their organization utilized rotational assignments to increase the breadth of knowledge for their senior-level employees:

We also do rotational assignments. This is for senior-level individuals, but if we have people that are potential senior-level, what we will do is rotate them into different areas of the business, so they have a good understanding of the total organization. (Participant 7)

Defined Metrics. Having a measurement for success was described as a focal point by four participants (40 percent). When considering measures for success, there were a few common metrics used by the participants. One participant shared how their organization categorizes their metrics for success that are aligned to their organization's strategy:

There are definite measurables that tie back to the organization's strategy. They would probably fall under a number of pillars: people, engagement levels, retention levels, and quality. There are dozens of quality measures, especially with health-care moving to pay for performance. Finance, you have a unique budget to make. Mission is one of our pillars. Are we doing what we say we do in supporting and serving the folks where we said we are going to be? And then growth, what is it that we're expected to do over the period of time and what does your market share look like? While minding all of these other pillars, each one, not independent, but with metrics in all of them. The measures would be different by geographic location with the exception of some of the quality measures, which are federally mandated. (Participant 4)

Two participants (20 percent) described using metrics related to their turnover and promotions. One participant described the following:

On an annual basis, we have a matrix to measure turnover and promotions. From each one of the categories whether it be EEO, affirmative action, high potential versus non-high potential. (Participant 6)

Another described a similar approach:

As a part of our succession planning, each officer does have staffing targets at the senior levels, director and above levels. Those requirements are 50 percent female placements and 25 percent diversity placements. That is specific to the actual placement, however, not specific to the actual planning. (Participant 3)

Two participants (20 percent) described metrics related to the employees that are in the pipeline to fill the highly skilled positions the planning process is focused on:

We look at the number of people in the pipeline, the quality of the individuals we have in the pipeline, and focus on the retention of these individuals. (Participant 7)

Another participant described a similar focus:

A few metrics include: is the person successful in their role, are they performing at the requisite levels; do we have somebody in the pipeline, and are we working the plan; and third, are we achieving the business outcomes whether that be finance service or quality. (Participant 4)

Two participants (20 percent) described metrics that were related to the employee's success after they were placed in their targeted position. One participant shared:

After they are deployed, we monitor their profit generation. We see how much revenue they're generating for the organization and the profitability of that revenue. (Participant 7)

Another described a similar approach:

A few metrics include: is the person successful in their role, are they performing at the requisite levels; do we have somebody in the pipeline, are we working the plan; and, third, are we achieving the business outcomes whether that be finance service or quality? (Participant 4)

Engaging a Mentor. Three participants (30 percent) reported the use of a formal mentoring process as a part of their strategy for developing successors for positions requiring highly skilled employees. The common strategy with the

mentor involved assigning a mentor to each potential successor. These organizations utilized the mentors to transfer knowledge to their protégé, oversee the protégé's development to ensure they are developing the right skill sets, and providing feedback on their protégé's performance. One participant described how mentors are used to develop their interns:

The interns will work on a project with the team. The entire environment is very team oriented, whether it's HR, technology, accounting, or finance. Most positions in our company are team oriented. What we use is a mentoring program. So when a new college grad comes in, they will be put on the team, say for example, an electrical engineer, they might work on our electrical instrumentation and control team in our nuclear facility. They would handle all the electrical engineering from the nuclear plant. They might focus on one specific area of electrical. That team is about 25 people. But one person will be assigned as a mentor for that new engineer. It really takes an engineer about a year to really get up to speed to be successful in our working environment. We really count on them (the mentors) working with the team and that team building the person for their success. (Participant 1)

Another participant described a similar approach with their apprentice program:

If we have them go on a sales trip for technical or marketing support, the mentor may say that this person is not doing well in this particular part of the program or may not exhibiting the right level of skill. They may be asked to work on a specific area of the business at some point and their performance improvement will be monitored and reported back. (Participant 7)

Findings for Research Question 2: What methods do companies use to determine the scope of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Questions one, two, and three in the interview guide (Appendix H) were designed to explore the methods the participants use to determine which highly skilled positions will be included in their planning process. There were several

themes that emerged as participants shared how their organization determined which positions to include in its planning process. The themes that emerged are summarized in Table 9 and described in further detail in the text following the table.

Table 9. Summary of strategies used to determine the scope for the company's planning process.

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Description</i>
Factoring Internal Impact	Considering the impact an unplanned succession event would have specific to a given position.
Determination by Human Resources	Organizations that depended on Human Resources to determine which positions would be the focus of their succession planning practices.
Collaborative Process	The use of input from several areas of the business to determine the scope of the company's succession planning process.
Expansion by Level	The practice where the organization expanded their succession planning for executive positions down into the organization until the organization was certain that all key positions were covered.

Factoring Internal Impact. Five of the organizations (50 percent) described a process where the organization reviews the positions that are business critical and includes those specific positions in its planning process. One participant described how their organization reviewed positions that are revenue generating and included them in its process:

So that's how we have focused in terms of our key positions. One, what is the business impact of not having people in that position, how much revenue are they generating, and can we go out into the marketplace and recruit them? (Participant 7)

Another participant described their method of assessing mission critical positions as well as ones that are specific to the services their organization provides:

It (the position) would be included. For example, if there is something, mission-critical to the organization's success below the executives. They would look at service lines and look at what we have compared to what we need. These are the positions that necessary to ensure that we can serve that population for this service line. (Participant 4)

Another organization described a similar approach:

XX is using a critical position process. With the company strategy in mind, the business unit leader and human resource business partner identify positions that are critical to the execution of the company strategy. (Participant 1)

A fourth participant described their organization's method of surveying departments to determine which key positions should be included in their planning process:

Every year, we have a formal, what we call, "organization and talent process." As a part of that formal process, we ask the organization (each department) to identify key positions. Those are positions below the executive level, which are really critical to that department's ability to meet its goals and objectives. A part of this formalized process is to create these specific succession pools for those key positions. (Participant 3)

A fifth participant described how their organization weighs replacing positions versus outsourcing the function:

Is the skill core to our business? If not we may outsource or use other companies to deliver the service. Weigh alternatives, determine global location, assess talent availability, then do a make versus buy or rent a decision. (Participant 9)

Determination by Human Resources. Participants were also asked what people are included in the decision making process for determining which

positions to include in the planning process. Three participants (30 percent) described how the Human Resources function drives the positions that are included in their planning process. One participant described:

That's definitely recognized within HR that there are areas that are underutilized. It could be diversity, it could be age diversity. And in many areas they (HR and the area) work together to find out what these areas are. (Participant 2)

A second participant described a similar approach:

We base it on market data, turnover rate. We also look at our high potential list. We have a list of people who are considered to be high potentials. (Participant 5)

The third participant described the following:

It is our Organization Design group. Part of it is identifying those critical positions. They are asking managers about, "What if?" It is a great question. They are taking a look at that now before something happens. (Participant 10)

Collaborative Practice. Three participants (30 percent) described a collaborative process for determining which positions should be included in their planning process. One participant described how they involve a large number of people in their decision making process. Decisions in their organization were made collaboratively as well as at the executive level:

Regarding talent, we really focus on aligning talent to the strategic initiatives of the organization. We will assess what skills we need in order to be effective in specific roles. Sometimes it's a business need for example with the xx, we were finding that we were promoting xx because they had good, strong business knowledge of the organization. What we were finding is that if we did not have people readily available to assume open or newly created positions, there was a detrimental effect on the organization for the length of time these positions were remaining unstaffed. (Participant 7)

Another participant described a similar process where their decision is made with the departments that will be impacted:

Each year we have this formalized process. A part of this formalized process is to have to department specify what its key positions are and create these specific succession pools for those key positions.
(Participant 3)

One participant described how their Human Resources department partners with the business leaders to decide which positions should be included:

XX is using a critical position process. With the company strategy in mind, the business unit leader and human resource business partner identify positions that are critical to the execution of the company strategy.
(Participant 1)

Expansion by level. Two (20 percent) of the participants described how their organization expanded its succession planning process. These companies expanded their processes by function to cover the key positions within the company. One participant described the following approach:

We actually go by function to assess the succession planning. So we go beyond the SVP, VP, director level, then we go to the next level, which is the manager level, then we talk about what is driving the business. Is it product management, is it information systems, is it product marketing? So when we go to the functional area, and we go to the next level of succession, we look at the most critical area we need to address business needs. (Participant 6)

Another participant described how their process continued to grow and how the growth was halted before the process became unmanageable:

I believe the operations side, which is where it originated; it was just salaried members of management. It was where the greatest need was and where the career paths were defined. For the HR planning process in the corporate office, it is all associates. It goes from a grade nine salaried associate. I guess we could get into MD planning process, which is just down to grade 13 but the processes are very similar it's just a matter of meeting to draw the line somewhere or it is too large and unmanageable.
(Participant 8)

Findings for Research Question 3: What types of data do companies collect as a part of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Question six in the interview guide (Appendix H) was designed to explore the types of data companies collect during their planning process for replacing highly skilled employees. When asked about the types of data their organization collects as a part of their planning process, the participants described many types of data. The types of data discussed during the planning process are summarized in Table 10 and are described in further detail in the text following the table.

Table 10. Summary of data used by companies for their planning process.

<i>Data</i>	<i>Description</i>
Organization or Department Level	Information pertaining to the organization as a whole or to a specific department. Companies included some of the following data: demographics, skill inventories, high potential statistics, retirement eligibility, anticipated turnover, and number of positions filled.
Incumbent Specific Data	Information specific to the individual employees that is reviewed during the planning process. Companies included some of the following data: past performance, education, experience, knowledge, skills, abilities, career profiles, development plans, development needs, strengths, weaknesses, home address, current location, current position, potential future positions, and flight risk.
Job Related Data	Job or position related data that was included in the companies processes included: skills required to do the jobs in the pool and knowledge and skills to do a specific job.

Organization or Department Level Data. Four participants (40 percent) discussed reviewing data at the organizational level. One participant described how their process involves reviewing departmental teams as a whole:

We don't track the team members. Most of our charts and graphs are of the team all together. So the management team has a snapshot of the team. Let's say we have a leader of our electrical engineering group at one of our plants. He would have some numbers of some of folks in his area. Say for example, eligibility for retirement or underutilized areas in the group. It's more of a listing out of everyone on there, but more of managing the team to see where the team is. All of our management is challenged to think five-years down the road for their planning. (Participant 2)

A second participant also described looking at aggregate data:

We just looked at our demographic data. In five years, one third of our workforce will be 60 years old. That is why we have such a huge focus on getting college students in and having them fast-tracked to be project managers in three to five years. (Participant 5)

Additional data that was described during the interviews pertained to the number of positions that were filled and the strength of the pipeline for filling those critical positions. One participant described the following data:

How many in the organization have filled the critical positions, how many have a pipeline within the critical positions, how many high potentials are within the departments, and within the organization? (Participant 6)

Another participant described similar data with the addition of diversity:

Yes, diversity, the number of external hires, what the key positions are around the different business groups. Our org and talent process also results in to some being entered into one of our high potential programs. These programs ultimately become some of the development plans for senior managers and directors. We take a look at some of the data that comes out of that to understand to. We are nominating into those programs and ensure we still have a feeder pool for those. (Participant 3)

Incumbent Specific Data. Four participants (40 percent) described how their organizations review data pertaining to the individual current incumbents and potential future incumbents in those key positions. One participant described the following data their organization reviews as a part of their planning process:

They look at motivational fit, the person being perceived as fitting the organization's culture. The other would be current and past performance. Also, things like requisite education and experience. (Participant 4)

A second participant described a similar approach with additional details in relation to the types of data that are discussed:

When we conduct talent reviews, we grid employees based on their performance, knowledge, skills, and abilities. Based upon their ranking of their knowledge skills and ability and performance, HR will put them on a grid. Then, each manager will talk about their own employees. When we get together and have a talent review meeting, through discussion we calibrate the managers. Sometimes you will have a manager that is a tough grader and another that is an easy grader. We have each manager talk about why they have rated their employees the way that they did, and other managers can challenge that. We will identify high potentials, poor performers, and those employees that are well placed by using this grid. (Participant 7)

A third participant described a similar approach and similar data as the second participant described:

There would be the incumbents' performance ratings, career profiles, development plans, development needs, strengths, weaknesses, home address, current location, current position, potential future positions, experience, and I think that's everything. (Participant 8)

Another participant described that their organization reviewed flight risk as well:

One of the things that you want to do is to evaluate what the flight risk might be with individuals so you can make changes to your problematic element to not lose people in the first place. (Participant 5)

Job Related Data. Two of the participants (20 percent) described how their organizations' review information pertaining to the positions that are considered to be key to the organization and are difficult to fill from the outside labor market. The first participant stated:

We are using a job profile template that highlights the job knowledge, skills, and education. Once they are identified, candidates are reviewed and scored against these criteria. (Participant 1)

A second participant shared a similar process:

We look at the skills required to do the jobs in the pool as well as a position specific one that look at the knowledge and skills to do that specific job. (Participant 3)

Findings for Research Question 4: What concerns do companies have regarding replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

This topic was explored periodically during the interview. Data supporting this question was gathered primarily during discussions on questions one, two, five, and seven. Due to the length of the discussion, this topic was only explored thoroughly with three of the participants. There were several themes that emerged from the participants' responses when they were asked about the concerns they had regarding replacing highly skilled talent. The themes that emerged are summarized in Table 11 and are described in further detail in the text following the table.

Table 11. Summary of Concerns Reported by Participants.

Concerns	Description
Impact of Lean Staffing	Necessary changes in staffing due to productivity requirements or budget constraints may be impacting the organization's ability to develop successors.
Transferring Knowledge of Current Workforce	Concern based on the amount of time required to fully transition the knowledge, skills, and abilities from seasoned employees to their successors.

Impact of Lean Staffing. Participants described a general concern on the ability to fully develop successors to take on additional responsibilities. Two participants (20 percent) articulated a concern that lean staffing may be having an impact on their organization's ability to develop successors. The first participant described the following concern:

The concern I would have is that the organization is lean, therefore there's not a lot of overlap of responsibilities, and therefore it's difficult for someone to develop a successor. It's tough to give someone additional work that is developmental when they already have a full plate. Therefore when the opening exists, an individual may not be ready. Or he or she may not be as ready as he or she could have been because he or she hasn't had the chance to develop his or her skills. (Participant 8)

Another participant shared a very similar scenario in their organization:

A few years back, we went through some lean financial times. And so, we ran a lot of risk, if we had people that got hit by a bus or won the lottery, we were in a lot of trouble. (Participant 9)

Transferring Knowledge from the Current Workforce. An additional concern that arose related to an aging workforce and how to transfer knowledge from the existing workers to the new recruits before the existing workers retire. One participant shared their concern about the number of people that will be eligible to retire over the next five years:

The challenge, and the challenge a lot of company's have, is that we are not used to a lot of attrition. Our nuclear side is about 6,000 employees. About 50% of them are eligible to retire in the next five years. About six or seven years ago we started to realize our baby boomers are getting a lot older and the company will need to replace the talent. (Participant 2)

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

This chapter will recap the findings from the interviews conducted as a part of this research, outline limitations to this study, and provide recommendations for further research.

Review of the Study

The focus of this research was to gain an understanding of the processes used by companies to plan for the replacement of people in non-executive positions. Of special interest are positions that require a high degree of specialized skill, training, or knowledge. Several common attributes were identified through the interviews that were conducted with the ten participants in this study.

Results from this study are of particular importance to companies that depend on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of non-executive talent. Companies dependent on highly skilled workers are anticipating an increase in attrition over the next decade due to the changing workforce demographics.

The research questions this study sought to answer are:

- R₁ What methods do companies use to plan for replacing highly skilled employees that possess knowledge, skills, and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

- R₂ What methods do companies use to determine the scope of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge,

skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

R₃ What types of data do companies collect as a part of their planning process for replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

R₄ What concerns do companies have regarding replacing people that possess knowledge, skills and abilities that are difficult to find in the outside labor market?

Data were collected through interviews with ten Human Resource Professionals from various industries. These interviews were conducted over the phone and through email.

Common Attributes

From the interviews, several common attributes were identified. Many of the common attributes that were identified shared common themes with literature on executive or managerial succession planning. Of particular interest from the common attributes are the relationships between the participants' executive succession planning programs and their succession planning programs for highly skilled workers.

Clarify a Strategy. The foundation for a company's plan for replacing highly skilled talent is its strategy. This study identified two primary strategic alternatives to succession planning for non-executive positions. The first alternative is to extend the company's executive succession planning process to include the positions that are essential to the company's success. This supports

Rothwell's (2005) recommendation that succession planning programs do not need to be strictly focused on executive succession planning, as the focus has been for many companies, but the focus can be expanded to all positions or all critical positions. Adding these critical positions to the company's executive succession planning process ensures appropriate focus is given to all positions that are critical for the company to succeed, whether they are executive positions or non-executive positions requiring specialized knowledge, skills, or experience. A benefit to this approach is that all planning and discussions pertaining to succession are completed in the same fashion. A potential drawback to this approach is that the discussion and planning around the executive positions may dominate the process leaving insufficient time or focus for non-executive positions.

The second alternative is to create a separate planning process for non-executive positions and tailor its structure to the needs of the business as they pertain to key non-executive talent. Taking this approach allows the company to measure results on non-executive planning separately. It also enables the company to create the program specifically based on the unique needs of its non-executive talent. This approach could be highly effective in an organization that is dependant on specific technical skills, long-term customer relationships, or specialized knowledge. Given that there may be a separate and distinct career path for those with specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities, the separate program allows the organization to focus specifically on the leadership career ladder and the specialized career ladder at separate times. An important

attribute of a succession planning program that is separate from the leadership succession planning program is support from the company's leadership and dedication of appropriate resources to sustain the program.

The approaches that were dedicated specifically to the non-executive positions shared some similarities to the competency based model. Many times competencies are centered around leadership principles that the organization needs from executives. While participants in the study did not use the term "competency model" in describing their process, they did describe processes for determining the specialized skills, knowledge, and abilities that are needed to drive the business.

A third alternative is to create a blend of the two strategies. Under this recommendation, the organization would conduct their executive and non-executive succession planning processes separately. At the conclusion of both planning processes, a formal review of the outcomes of each process could be reviewed simultaneously with the company's leadership. With a blended approach, both executive and non-executive plans can be tailored to the specific needs of the positions being discussed. Additionally, the organization benefits through the final review of the process outcomes. Several of the participants described how their separate processes roll up into an overview of overall review of succession planning and talent development for the organization.

Another consideration for the organization is whether it will focus on individual positions or competencies. The individual replacement approach enables the company to focus its development efforts on an individual person

identified as a successor (S. Byham et al., 2002). This also takes into account an individual's needs as successors are identified for each incumbent (S. Byham et al., 2002). This approach appears to be the best approach in a smaller organization since there may be insufficient headcount from which to build a talent pool.

A competency approach is better suited to multi-incumbent positions as it enables the company to develop a pipeline of successors for positions that require a specific skill set. The competency approach offers an advantage over the individual position focus for large companies as it enables the organization to tailor the number of people in the pipeline as it sees fit. Utilizing a competency based model also enables the company to group several individual positions with similar requirements into the same pipeline. Doing so can enable the company to gain efficiency with recruitment and development efforts.

It was not surprising to find that the source of talent for many of these positions are external talent pipelines given that many of the positions this research focused on are entry level. Several of the organizations interviewed were dependant on participants from internship or apprentice programs to fulfill their staffing needs. Two participants worked closely with colleges, universities, and technical training programs to build a talent pipeline in their labor market.

The need for clarifying the organization's strategy supports the work of Huang (2001) where he discusses the importance of the process design, credibility of the team involved in the planning staff, and the effective allocation of resources in executive succession programs. It also supports the work done by

William Rothwell (2005) on developing a mission for the succession planning program. The concept of defining entirely separate and unique succession planning programs for leadership career ladders and for highly specialized non-executive positions is unique to these participants.

It is very important to dedicate sufficient attention to initiating the strategy for a company's planning process for positions that require specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. The decisions made as a part of the design process will have a direct impact on the amount of resources the organization dedicates to the process and having sufficient resources is imperative to the sustainability of the program.

Determining Scope. Three strategies for determining the scope of the succession planning process for positions requiring specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities emerged from the interviews with the participants. The three strategies include: having the scope determined by Human Resources; having the scope determined by the organization's leadership; and having the scope determined through a collective decision making process.

While there are arguments for all three approaches, the collective decision-making allows the organization to consider a wider scope of alternatives and relates to approaches used for managerial succession planning (S. Byham et al., 2002, ; Huang, 2001, ; Rothwell, 2005). Determining the scope of the succession planning process is a critical step for the organization as the company must weigh the program's scope with the cost of maintaining the program. The participants described alternatives for defining their scope ranging

from making the decision by function, identifying the few key positions, and limiting their efforts to those few key positions. In situations where there are limited resources to invest in the program, it may be best to focus the company's efforts on the few key positions.

Define Key Metrics for Success. In addition to defining the positions that should be included in the company's process and the goals of the process, the company needs to define the key metrics for measurement. Metrics that were identified as relevant to succession planning for non-executive positions included:

- The number of people in the pipeline to fill positions
- Diversity statistics
- Anticipated turnover
- Time to fill positions
- Number of internal/external hires.

These metrics should be reviewed routinely to ensure the process is achieving maximum results. These findings are in alignment with the work by Rothwell (2005), Byham (2002), and Orellano and Miller (1997). Several metrics recommended for managerial succession planning did not surface during the interviews with the participants in this study. Those metrics that did not surface included the number of employees downgraded from the last review and the percentage of high potential to the total exempt workforce. This may be attributed to the types of questions that were asked during the interviews.

Engage Leadership. The findings support the need to have leadership support and engaged in decisions and discussions around succession. Having the key leaders of the organization drive the succession planning for non-executive positions helps to ensure the organization values the process and is committed to the success of the program. The organization may make the determination to have a Human Resources Department or Succession Planning Department facilitate the program; however, it should be clear to the organization that the program is being driven by its leadership. This reinforces that regardless of the focus of a succession planning process, it is a matter that should have the support of the company's leadership and that the organization's Human Resource department is a good resource to engage in the process.

Maintain Focus on Internal Talent. Engaging all functional areas of the business to review talent aids the organization in ensuring they effectively utilize their current incumbents before reaching to the external market. Reviewing internal talent also helps with building a pipeline of employees with experience in multiple areas of the business. An added benefit of recruiting from within is the clear assessment of the employee's skills and abilities before the employment decision is made. Having a clear assessment of a candidate's skills and abilities prior to a hiring decision is also one benefit of utilizing an internship program versus a college graduate recruitment program.

Similar to previous work from Byham (2002), Guinn (2000), Rothwell (Rothwell, 2005, ; 2000), and Yukl (2002), rotational assignments surfaced as a valuable resource. It was clear from interviews with the participants that the use

of rotation assignments was believed to be a cost effective method for development. Rotation assignments provide the incumbent with an opportunity to advancement their career while the organization benefits from having a cross-trained workforce. An added benefit that surfaced through the interviews was the relationships that are built during a rotation assignment. This can be significant in situations where the incumbent's success is dependant on the strength of their relationships with clients, business partners, or other areas of the business.

Address Time to Competence.

Several of the participants in this study were challenged by the length of time it took for their new hires to conquer their learning curve. Several common approaches to address this challenge emerged from the interviews with those participants.

Internship Programs. The first approach that emerged to address time to competence is the use of a structured internship program. The use of a structured internship program can shift some of a new employee's development timeline to before they are formally hired into the position. An effectively designed internship program can enable the participants in the program to learn some of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job during their internship.

Mentoring Programs. The use of a structured Mentoring Program is another approach that emerged for reducing the time to competence. Organizations using a structured mentoring program used the program to provide one on one coaching from an experienced professional. The mentor also serves

as a resource for the company to monitor the new employee's progress in transitioning into their new job.

Apprentice Programs. Apprentice programs also emerged as an approach for reducing time to competence. In the apprentice program, the company structures a period of time where the participant works in various roles to gain skills, knowledge, and competence in the position. In one example, the apprentices participate in an 18-month program. During their participation in the program, they work side by side with several successful incumbents in the position they are training for. The participants gradually take on additional responsibility while being guided and directed by their mentor. Then, as positions became available within the organization, the apprentices are used to fill the openings. In this particular example, the company was able to significantly reduce the amount of time it took for their new incumbents to generate revenue through the use of the apprentice program.

Monitor the Marketplace.

In Rothwell's (2005) work on succession planning he discussed assessing the external market as a part of the organization's plans for talent. Two organizations (20 percent) that were interviewed as a part of this study shared that they are routinely impacted by external factors such as legislation, enrollment changes at colleges and universities, and changes in the stock market. Maintaining a focus on all aspects of a company's environment is a critical part of the organization's plans for talent. Including an assessment of any external events that may impact the organization or their workforce is a key

component the succession planning process. Assessing the outside labor market could be seen as even more critical for large-scale plans for highly skilled employees given the scope and potential impact.

Create a Pipeline for the Talent Pool.

Being proactive in planning for a company's staffing needs can help create an external pool of talent where there may not have been one before (S. Byham et al., 2002). Three participants (30 percent) described highly technical positions they included in their succession planning. Talent to fill these technical positions was not available in the external market due to the complexity of the skills required and the high demand for those skills. These organizations partnered with local colleges and universities to build internship and apprentice programs. These programs did require an extensive commitment from the organization ranging from working closely with the college or university on the curriculum that is required for these positions to an extensive period of nonproductive employment during a person's internship or apprentice program.

While these initiatives were time consuming and costly, the outcome was favorable for all three organizations. The one participant described a position where the company was not able to hire a sufficient number of engineers to fulfill the needs of their growing business. Through their internship program they were able to bring on as many as 75 new engineers each spring, fulfilling approximately 60 percent of their staffing needs.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Implementing a Planning Process. Based on the findings from this study there are several things to consider when implementing a planning process for highly skilled employees. Much like managerial succession planning, starting with support from the company's executive leadership should be the first stage of the implementation plan. Having the organization's leadership drive the succession planning process for highly skilled employees will enhance the likelihood that the company's program will succeed. The leadership support will also assist in ensuring the program will have a long-term impact on the organization. This supports the work by both Rothwell (2005) and Byham (2002) who recommend that the company's leadership be actively engaged in the company's succession planning processes. One could predict that if such a large scale project lacks leadership support, the project will not be sustained over a long period of time as other priorities act upon the business's resources.

Reaching Beyond the Organization. Regardless of the strategy a company chooses, being proactive is a critical aspect of the planning process. Several organizations participating in this study described planning processes that were developing people for key positions several years in advance of having a need. These organizations were working collaboratively with colleges and universities in their areas to recruit talent, design internship programs, and even design curriculum for courses that would aid in the development of a talent pipeline.

Keeping the Process Simple. The complexity of the planning process is another factor that impacts the long-term success of the program. Upon determining the scope and objectives for the company's program, subject matter experts need to engage and consider the complexity of the program. Developing and implementing a program that is complicated in nature could have a negative effect on the program's impact. One participant stressed how having a program that is complicated could lead to the program's participants completing the process with a check mark approach instead of finding value in the process and actively contributing to the success of the program. Organizations should consider conducting a focus group to seek feedback from those that will be participating in the process. The feedback from the group can be used to gauge the organization's reaction to the program.

Building a Pipeline. A well-defined planning process for highly skilled employees should include methods for recruiting talent to the organization. Many of the participants cited identifying successors with a sufficient skill level to take over for someone exiting the organization as a challenge. The number of people projected to retire over the next five to ten years was especially concerning to the participants. Given the concerns on the number of people that will be eligible to retire in the very near future, the size of the pipeline is imperative. Using a talent pipeline can be compared to the talent pool approached discussed in Byham's work (2002). Byham's talent pools have a stronger focus on internal development where the talent pipelines have more of an external focus which

could be explained by the different level in the organization that this study focused on.

Seeking Diverse Opportunities for Recruitment. Given the staffing needs many companies and industries will face in the near future, having a diversified recruitment strategy is very important. Several of the participants in this study reported utilizing internship programs or apprentice programs to recruit talent and ease the transition of young talent into the organization. A structured internship program can have several benefits to the organization. First, the internship program provides the organization an opportunity to assess the performance of the participants prior to extending a job offer. Second, a well designed program provides the intern with time to work with the seasoned professionals in the organization. The time to work with the seasoned workforce can reduce a new employee's learning curve.

Other participants shared creative avenues for creating a talent pipeline to fulfill their staffing needs. One participant shared how they are assessing their benefits packages in an effort to use them as a recruiting tool for retirees seeking part-time employment. Another participant shared a strategy their company is using to recruit military hires. The company has begun building relationships with various organizations to advertise their career opportunities to those that are planning their transition from the military.

The use of professional emphasis groups was shared as a different avenue for recruitment by one participant. That organization encourages employees to participate in strategic professional emphasis groups. The

employees are encouraged to build relationships through their participation in the group. Those relationships can lead to potential candidates for the company to recruit.

Limitations of the Findings

The data collected for this research study were collected from a limited number of participants due to the finite number of companies reporting that they used a formal planning process for replacing highly skilled people in non-executive positions. The information presented in this study is based on those that participated in the study and should not be generalized to a larger scope.

The participants in the study reported the information based on their knowledge and experience with their company's succession planning for highly-skilled employees. Others may have differing experiences or recollections of the organizations succession planning process for highly skilled employees.

An additional limitation to this study is that all of the participants were members of the same well-respected business research group. Groups with a different focus, geographic reach, or membership population may generate different results.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings from this study there are several recommendations for additional research. The recommendations are as follows:

- Conduct an exploration of the effectiveness of internship programs for building talent pools in engineering.

- Conduct a comparative study of executive succession planning and technical succession planning in engineering firms.
- Conduct an exploration of strategies used for relationship management during succession events in the service industry.
- Replicate this study with a specific focus on a specific field such as sales, engineering, or information technology.
- Replicate this study through a professional networking group with a broader focus than leadership issues.

Conclusion

This research study provides a foundation for future research on succession planning for employees that possess specialized skills, knowledge, and abilities. Based on the literature review and interaction with participants in this study, succession planning for highly skilled employees is a strategic concern for many organizations and will continue to grow in use over the next few years.

Defining an executable succession plan for highly skilled employees requires a clearly stated scope, well-defined metrics for the outcomes, and diverse sources for filling the organization's talent pipeline. Several of the participants clearly described staffing needs that were above and beyond what they would be able to fill with their internal candidates. A concept that surfaced through several interviews was hiring candidates with some of the right skills and

using an internship or apprentice program to develop the remaining skills after the candidate is hired.

Many of the participants described large-scale investments that their organization makes in their succession plans for employees with specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. These organizations invest heavily in their workforce based on the business need their organization has in the area of talent. This investment is one that may enable them to outperform their competitors as the workforce demographics change in our country.

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APPENDIX A

Pilot Welcome Letter

To: Participant's Name
From: Jennifer Heinzen Krueger
Re: Research on Planning for the Replacement of Hard to Fill Positions

(Name),

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study on replacing hard to fill positions. I wanted to provide you with additional details on the study.

I have included a short questionnaire for you to complete regarding your company's human resource planning process. I would appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire within two weeks.

Once I have received your completed questionnaire, I will send you a copy of the questions for our phone interview. That interview will be approximately forty-five minutes in length. In an effort to accurately capture the information provided during the interviews, I will be tape recording our conversation during the interview. After the interview, I will transcribe our discussion. Once the interview is transcribed, I will provide you a copy of the interview documentation for your review. This documentation will include your responses to the email questionnaire and the transcription of our phone interview.

After you have had the opportunity to review the documentation, the data will be analyzed through a comparison to nine other interviews on this topic in an effort to identify themes within the practices that are discussed during the interview. These themes will be discussed in the findings from this research. Once the analysis has been completed, I will forward to you a copy of that information as well as an executive summary of the findings. The findings from the study may be published, but at no time would your name or your company's name be disclosed.

I look forward to learning more about your organization's human resource planning practices and appreciate your time. Please reach out to me with two dates in the month of November when you would be available for a forty-five minute phone interview. Please include a number where you could be reached at that time as well.

Please feel free to contact me (Jennifer Heinzen Krueger at xxxxxx@xxx.xxx) with any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

APPENDIX B

Pilot Email Interview Questionnaire

1. What industry does your company operates in?
2. What is your role with the company as it relates to succession planning?
3. How many employees work for your company?
4. Does your company have a formal planning process for replacing non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market?
5. Do you have more than one planning process for the replacement of key talent? (e.g., for various divisions, positions.)
6. For what levels (or titles) of the organization is the plan designed?
 - a. How many non-executive positions are included in your company's plans?
7. How much time does the planning process require and for which executives?
 - a. Please describe the time commitment of others involved.
8. Are there any outside people, groups, or organizations that have influence over the company's plans for replacing non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market? If so, in what way does the outside party influence your company's planning process?

APPENDIX C

Pilot Information on Phone Interview

To: Participant's Name
From: XX
Re: Research on Succession Planning for Hard to Fill Positions

(Name),

Thank you for your responses to the email questionnaire. I wanted to provide you with additional details on the next steps for this study.

First, I have included a list of the questions are being used for our phone interview. I would appreciate it if you would review the questions ahead of time and be prepared with responses to the questions. I would be happy to provide additional details should you have any questions or concerns regarding the questions.

Second, in an effort to accurately capture the information provided during the interviews I will be tape recording our conversation during the interview. After the interview, I will transcribe our discussion. Once the interview is transcribed I will provide you a copy of the interview documentation for your review. This documentation will include you're your responses to the email questionnaire and the transcription of our phone interview.

After you have had the opportunity to review the documentation, the data will be analyzed through a comparison to nine other interviews on this topic in an effort to identify themes within the practices that are discussed during the interview. These themes will be discussed in the findings from this research. Once the analysis has been completed, I will forward to you a copy of that information as well as an executive summary of the findings. The findings from the study may be published, but at no time would your name or your company's name be disclosed.

I look forward to learning more about your organization's succession planning practices and appreciate your time. Please reach out to me with two dates in the month of November when you would be available for a two-hour phone interview. Please include a number where you could be reached at that time as well.

Please feel free to contact me (Jennifer Heinzen Krueger at xxxxxx@xxx.xxx.) with any questions or concerns.

Thank you,
Jen

APPENDIX D

Pilot Phone Interview

1. I understand that your company operates in _____ industry.
Does that pose any unique challenges that impact your succession planning?
2. How would you describe the overall strategy of your company's succession plan? What are the key objectives of the plan?
3. Has the succession plan met the expectations for which it was designed? Please explain.
4. How was the plan developed and who was responsible for its development?
5. Is there a relationship between your succession plan and the company's overall strategic plan?
(For example, if the strategic plan changes, does the succession plan change as well?)
6. In our email correspondence you had noted that your company's succession plans extend to _____ level of the organization, how was that scope decided?
 - a. Have there been times when your company has decided to add positions to the succession plans?
 - b. What was the process for adding those positions?
 - c. Does this happen often?

7. You had noted that your company has more than one succession plan.
Are the plans documented in similar ways? Please describe how they vary. (Only asked if email interview question 4 is affirmative.)
8. What is the communication process for obtaining support from those who are responsible for its implementation?
 - a. Are there any control methods to ensure the plan is being effectively executed?
9. Are those involved in the succession plan fully committed to the plan?
Please explain.
10. Are your company's development plans linked to your succession plans? Please explain the relationship.
 - a. Is that true for all levels?
11. In your opinion, what are some of the key factors that make a successor successful at your company?
12. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being high, rate how well the succession plan has done in selecting internal candidates. Please explain.
 - a. Has your succession plan provided a sufficient number of qualified internal candidates?
13. What are some of the best aspects about your company's succession plan?
14. What are some of the least effective components of your company's succession plan?
15. Has the succession plan ever not functioned as it was designed to do?

16. Were the extenuating circumstances which precluded the succession plan from being followed? Please describe the circumstances?
17. Is there a particular level (or positions) in the organization where these exceptions to the succession plan tend to occur more often? If yes, what are those positions or levels? What are the influential factors in those circumstances?
18. How are exceptions to the succession plan handled? Describe the process that follows.
19. As a percentage of the time, how often is an internal candidate, who has been targeted as the successor for a position, ultimately not selected for the position?
20. Have there been occasions when the company has had to go outside of the organization to recruit people?
 - a. How often?
 - b. For what types of positions?
21. If the company did go outside, how was the position eventually filled?
22. Has your succession plan helped management anticipate any extenuating circumstances which may require your company to look outside the organization?
23. How frequently is the succession plan reviewed and revised?
 - a. Who is a part of the process?
 - b. To what extent is the plan reviewed?

24. In your judgment, could your succession plan be improved?

a. How?

b. Why?

25. Are there any questions you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX E

Study Invitation

To: Participant's Name

From: Jennifer Heinzen Krueger

Re: Research on Planning for the Replacement of Hard to Fill Positions

Would it interest you to know how other companies are preparing to replace the people that possess key knowledge and skills that the success of the company depends on? The replacement of key non-executive talent is the focus of my doctoral dissertation research at Penn State University. As a part of my doctoral dissertation research I am studying the processes companies are using to plan for the replacement of non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market. As a part of my research I am interviewing human resource professionals in an effort to gather information on the practices companies have in place to plan for replacing people in those challenging positions.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. You were selected as a potential participant based on your special experience and expertise in human resources. The requirements for volunteering are:

1. Your organization completes a formal planning process for replacing non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market.
2. You are involved in the facilitation of the company's planning process for replacing non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market.
3. You are involved in the final decision on the positions that will be a part of the company's planning program.
4. You possess knowledge of the usage of the planned successors.
5. You possess knowledge of the performance and retention of the identified successors.
6. You are willing to participate in a short phone or email interview regarding your experiences in planning for replacement of non-executive positions that are difficult to fill from the outside labor market.

Benefits to those who participate in the study include:

A free copy of the findings from the study.

Additional discussion with the researcher regarding your individual questions or concerns on this topic.

If you are willing to participate in this research project, please reply to Jennifer Heinzen Krueger at xxxxxx@xxx.xxx or call at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Please note that given the nature of this topic, at no time would your name or the name of your company be disclosed.

Thank you for considering this request,
Jennifer Heinzen Krueger

APPENDIX F

Study Welcome Letter

To: Participant's Name

From: Jennifer Heinzen Krueger

Re: Research on Planning for the Replacement of Hard to Fill Positions

(Name),

Thank you for your interest in my study. I wanted to touch base regarding our next steps. I have attached a copy of my research questions for your review. I have also included a copy of a Penn State Informed Consent Form, which confirms the use of the information collected during my study.

We could discuss the questions live or via email. Please let me know which would be easier for you.

Thank you once again for your interest in my research.

Regards,
Jen

Attachments:
Informed Consent Form
Research Questions

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: An Exploration of Methods Used to Plan for
Replacing Talent in Non-Executive Positions

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Heinzen Krueger

Other Investigator(s):

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this interview is to determine the methods used to Plan for Replacing Talent in Non-Executive Positions
2. Procedures to be followed: First, you will be asked to respond to several interview questions regarding the formal replacement planning process in place at your company that is used for non-executive positions that are considered to be difficult to fill from the outside labor market. Second, as a follow up to the survey questions, you will be asked to participate in a 30 – 45 minute phone interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to review the transcription of the interview and confirm that the data collected is accurate. The audio tapes used for recording the discussion will be stored in a locked file cabinet for 18 months and will be destroyed after the 18 months. The principal researcher and research assistant will be the only people with access to the tapes during the 18 months.
3. Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
4. Benefits:
 - a. You might learn more about your company by participating in this study. You may have the opportunity to reflect upon interventions you were involved with in the past and how they could be improved.
 - b. This study may reinforce the importance of your role in the organization.
 - c. You will receive an executive summary regarding the findings from the study.
5. Duration: It will take 10-15 minutes to complete the interview.
6. Statement of Confidentiality: Only the person in charge will know your identity. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be written. Direct quotes from the interview may be used, but company names and the names of people will be omitted. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.
7. Right to Ask Questions: You can ask questions about the research. The person in charge will answer your questions. Contact Jen Heinzen Krueger at (XXX)XXX-XXX with questions. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Judith Kolb at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Penn State's Office for Research Protections at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.
8. Compensation: There is no monetary compensation associated with participation in this research.
9. Voluntary Participation: You do not have to participate in this research. You can end your participation at any time by telling the person in charge. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Participant Signature
The informed consent procedure has been followed.

Date

Investigator Signature

Date

APPENDIX H

Interview Questions

1. In many companies, the knowledge and skill of several specific non-executive people or positions greatly contribute to the company's success. Losing an incumbent that is heavily depended upon could have a significant negative impact on the company since it may be very difficult to find a person with similar skills in the outside labor market. Planning for the replacement of key talent is one approach to ensuring continued success of the company. Please describe the method(s) used by your company for planning to replace a person that is in a position that requires specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market.
 - a. Please describe any formal metrics associated with those goal/objectives.
2. What method does your company use to determine which positions will be included in the process you just described (Question 1)?
3. Please describe the method for making changes to the process you described (Question 1)? How frequently does that occur?
4. Do exceptions to the planning process you described occur often? Under what circumstances?
5. Please describe how your company holds individuals accountable for executing the plans.
6. Please describe the types of data that are collected as a part of the process your company utilizes to plan for replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market?
7. Are there other tactics beside the planning process we have discussed that are used to prepare for replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge and skills? Could you describe those tactics?

APPENDIX I

Company Data Collection Template

Participant's name:

Participant's email:

Participant's company:

1. What industry does the company operates in?
2. How many employees work for the company?
3. What is the 2005 annual revenue of the company?
4. What is the reported one year sales growth reported in 2005?
5. Is there a union present at the company?

APPENDIX J

Research Question Matrix

R ₁ What methods do companies use to plan for replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market?	R ₂ What methods do companies use to determine which positions will be included in their process for planning to replace positions that require specific knowledge and skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market?	R ₃ What types of data do companies collect as a part of the process they utilize to plan for replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market?	R ₄ What concerns do companies have regarding replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market?
<p>1. In many companies, the knowledge and skill of several specific non-executive people or positions greatly contribute to the company's success. Losing an incumbent that is heavily depended upon could have a significant negative impact on the company since it may be very difficult to find a person with similar skills in the outside labor market. Planning for the replacement of key talent is one approach to ensuring continued success of the company. Please describe the method(s) used by your company for planning to replace a person that is in a position that requires specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market.</p>	<p>2. What method does your company use to determine which positions will be included in the process you just described (Question 1)?</p>	<p>6. Please describe the types of data that are collected as a part of the process your company utilizes to plan for replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market?</p>	<p>1. In many companies, the knowledge and skill of several specific non-executive people or positions greatly contribute to the company's success. Losing an incumbent that is heavily depended upon could have a significant negative impact on the company since it may be very difficult to find a person with similar skills in the outside labor market. Planning for the replacement of key talent is one approach to ensuring continued success of the company. Please describe the method(s) used by your company for planning to replace a person that is in a position that requires specific knowledge or skill that is difficult to find in the outside labor market.</p>
<p>1 a. Please describe the goals/objectives for this process. Please describe any formal metrics associated with those goal/objectives.</p>	<p>3. Please describe the method for making changes to the process you described (Question 1)? How frequently does that occur?</p>		<p>2. What method does your company use to determine which positions will be included in the process you just described (Question 1)?</p>
<p>4. Do exceptions to the planning process you described occur often? Under what circumstances?</p>			<p>5. Please describe how your company holds individuals accountable for executing the plans.</p>
<p>5. Please describe how your company holds individuals accountable for executing the plans.</p>			<p>7. Are there other tactics beside the planning process we have discussed that are used to prepare for replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge and skills? Could you describe those tactics.</p>
<p>7. Are there other tactics beside the planning process we have discussed that are used to prepare for replacing people that are in positions that require specific knowledge and skills? Could you describe those tactics.</p>			

Vita

Jennifer H. Krueger, SPHRjlh607@psu.edujhein267@comcast.net**CURRENT AFFILIATIONS**

Manager of Management Development and Training for Giant Food Stores, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Employed by Giant Food Stores since 1998.

Doctoral Candidate, Workforce Education and Development at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania.

EDUCATION**The Pennsylvania State University**

Ph.D. Candidate, Workforce Education/Training and Development

Dissertation (in-progress): "An Exploration of Methods Used to Plan for Replacing Talent in Non- Executive Positions"

Monmouth University

MBA, Business Administration

BS, Business Administration/Management

CERTIFICATIONS

- Senior Professional in Human Resources
- Benchmarks 360 Feedback Instrument Certified
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator Qualified
- Certified Facilitator for Developmental Dimensions International
- Certified Facilitator for Franklin Covey "What Matters Most"

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Diversity Awareness Training, Instructed at Giant Food Stores
- Interviewing and Selection, Instructed at Giant Food Stores
- High Performance Supervision, Instructed at Giant Food Stores
- What Matters Most, A Franklin Covey Program, Instructed at Ahold USA, Giant Food Stores and Tops Markets
- Performance Management, Instructed at Giant Food Stores