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4TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Building Your Talent Pipeline



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A GROUND-BREAKING PUBLICATION

As Japan's first and only bilingual HR magazine, *The HR Agenda* offers an incredibly unique platform. By sourcing material written in both English and Japanese, funding translation and encouraging bilingual submissions from contributors, we offer a genuinely two-way exchange. For a century and a half Japan has been translating Western knowledge into Japanese. We create a forum where Japanese voices can also be heard in international circles. Our aim is to understand both sides of the coin; all facets of an issue. We want to encourage collegiality through open-minded and sincere dialogue amongst our readers in Japan and overseas, and amongst HR professionals, researchers, and key opinion leaders throughout the world.

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To facilitate the exchange of up-to-date and relevant knowledge, information and resources affecting and influencing human resources (HR) professionals in Japan, and to become a bridge between Japanese and non-Japanese HR management systems so that we can facilitate the exchange of information and HR best practices, standards, and HR body of knowledge.

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Succession planning is so critical, but too often, so overlooked.

One of the greatest challenges I faced in this issue in my role as editor-in-chief was sourcing good-quality articles that addressed the theme of succession planning. I reached out to a number of different potential contributors, but each time I was met with the same response: *I'm sorry – but that's not really my area of expertise*. So I thought about that, and realized that this was a very telling comment, and the very reason why we decided to feature this theme, actually.

The stark contrast between this topic and the one from the [April-June issue](#) on coaching and mentoring is probably best illustrated in the large number of coaches and coaching organizations that exist to advance the trade and to assist companies and their staff in optimizing their business. Yet, when it comes to succession planning... Not so much. Regardless of which country you live and work in, companies have long struggled with, and continue to struggle with, effective succession planning.

Undeterred by this dearth of resources out there, we still managed to get our hands on some wonderful articles that might help change how your organization looks at succession planning, and perhaps you too may be inspired to give it some thought and revolutionize your HR department.

We were particularly glad to bring in Bryan Krinzman, a human capital strategies pro at U.S.-based Helios HR, to explain the difference between succession planning and replacement planning, and to provide some very practical, actionable advice for implementing the right plan.

Then, as a companion piece to this, *The HR Agenda* brought their A-game to center field with an exposé of some of the world's most proficient succession planners: professional sports teams. No other multi-billion dollar industry has as high a staff turnover as the world of team sports. Players, managers, coaches and executives routinely move between teams, and from position to position in seasonal chess matches, all in an attempt to assemble an optimal team that will win the championship. Nowhere else is the execution of quality succession plans as critical as it is here. We have examined case studies from a broad cross-section of sports, including American football, NBA basketball and international rugby to glean some of the top tips for helping ensure a winning team well into a company's future.

The overarching theme is relatively simple though, and should come as no surprise to anyone. The term is "bench strength" and John Mariotti, CEO and president of The Enterprise Group, emphasizes its importance in business as much as in sports. It's important that the quality of the players on the bench is comparable to the ones on the field of play. Otherwise, even something as common and simple as a sprained ankle could have the potential to derail not just the game, but an entire season.

Likening it to the business world, he asks the question: "When a key person defects to a competitor, falls ill, or worse yet, dies suddenly, the entire company could be in distress or at risk. Certainly someone should have considered

this possibility and done some advance planning on building up some 'bench strength.' But has anyone?" Clearly, this is a very good question for any HR department to consider, alongside the one asked by ex-McDonald's CEO, Jim Skinner. But for that you'll need to read the article.

Also in this issue, we have chosen to include an interesting angle on what could be seen as a form of succession planning. For the most part, when we talk about this theme, we are dealing with individuals within a company, and those who will replace them when they are gone. But when it comes to global companies moving talent as part of various exchange programs and reciprocity deals, a succession plan must involve not only the people themselves, but also the future of the exchange program. While expatriate staff assignments have become commonplace, when staff are forced to return to their home countries before their terms are up companies lose money. Not only is HR left scrambling to fill in key roles that have suddenly been left empty, the value of having such programs may be brought into question.

Ron Pilzeno, author, university lecturer and president emeritus of SHRM, shares his insight on how cultural factors affect early expat return rates, and why Japanese firms are among the most successful in the world when it comes to completing overseas assignments. By understanding some of the psychology behind successful expat placements companies can take steps to mitigate early returns before they happen, and also get a better handle on how to make their succession plan cover these contingencies.

Finally, just to whet your appetite for some great HR stories yet to come, here is a sneak preview of what you'll see in our next issue. Some of the *HR Agenda* editorial staff traveled to Las Vegas to attend the annual [SHRM conference](#). Just like last year, you can catch some of the action with video updates that were shot live on location, through the [JHRS Youtube channel](#). But most importantly, the November 2015 - February 2016 issue will feature some of the highlights from this massive event. Until then though, we hope you enjoy this anniversary issue of *The HR Agenda*!

On behalf of everyone at *The HR Agenda*, have a wonderful summer, and see you in fall! ☺



Atley Jonas joined *The HR Agenda* team as editor in chief, in 2014. He has a Master's in business administration, and spent 11 years living and working in Japan. He actively writes and edits for a number of U.S. and global business publications, while also pursuing several entrepreneurial ventures.



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The HR Agenda Marks Anniversary, Moves Forward With Changes

Jun Kabigting, MBA/MS/HRMP
Chief Community Officer, The Japan HR Society (JHRS)
Originally written in English



Japan's first bilingual HR magazine makes changes in effort to better meet the needs of its readers and continue to fulfill its mission.

This issue marks the fourth-year anniversary of *The HR Agenda* magazine. We are truly thankful to the many people and organizations who helped transform a vision of publishing Japan's first and only bilingual HR-focused magazine into reality.

We wish to thank first of all, our advertisers and institutional partners for helping *The HR Agenda* get off the ground. Second, our contributors and subject-matter experts (local and foreign) for sharing their thoughts and ideas, which really help the magazine fulfill its primary mission. Third, our dedicated, committed and professional editorial and creative/design team who labor day-in and day-out to produce a truly world-class HR publication. And last but not least, to all of our JHRS members and magazine readers, who remain our inspiration

for continuing what we do on the pages of *The HR Agenda*.

In the past 4 years, we have published articles that covered not only those related to the basic HR value chain of recruitment, retention and release, but also other advanced HR practices and thought leadership in the areas of diversity and inclusion, talent mobility, governance and ethics, etc. We have also become a preferred media partner for both domestic and international HR-related conferences or events which has given *The HR Agenda* undisputed recognition as Japan's premier HR media partner.

However, *The HR Agenda* is still a work-in-progress and will continue to evolve in its nature and operations to better meet the needs of its readers while fulfilling its stated mission.

Hence, we would like to take this opportunity to let you know of the following changes that will be made with *The HR Agenda*:

- Effective from this issue, *The HR Agenda* will become a trimestral publication (i.e., three times a year) with the following publication dates: July-October, November-February and March-June. This change is being made in order to maximize the allocation of our rather limited resources and to provide a longer “shelf life” for our advertisers and supporters.
- Subject to available financial resources from advertising and subscription fees, the anniversary issue (July-October) will continue to be a print and digital version while the remaining issues will continue to be digital-only versions.
- In terms of article submissions, we will give priority consideration to those articles written in both English and Japanese to help save on translation costs. Note, however, that potential contributors can still submit articles either in English or Japanese and will solely be published in their original language of submission if they meet our editorial standards.
- Regular features of the magazine such as Publisher’s Message, Editor’s Note, Editorial, and Feature Story will continue to be published in both English and Japanese.
- In the near future, digital-only and out-of-print issues of the magazine may be ordered on-demand with a minimum order of one copy. We are currently negotiating with a service provider to make this happen and will make an announcement once this is finalized.
- We will also be reviewing our current AppStore and GooglePlay magazine apps in order to increase sales of the digital versions of *The HR Agenda*.

- As needed, we may also implement other changes in the format, delivery and pricing of *The HR Agenda* in order to ensure its survival without compromising our high editorial standards.

If you have other suggestions or changes that you would like to see at *The HR Agenda*, just let me know at jun@jhrs.org and help us improve to serve your HR reading needs better.

Again, on behalf of the editorial team and the entire JHRS community, thank you for supporting *The HR Agenda* and we are truly indebted to your continued patronage and support. Enjoy reading our four-year anniversary issue! ☺



Jun Kabigting is managing director of HR Central K.K. and an adjunct professor with Temple University Japan Campus and GLOBIS University. He has more than 20 years of experience across the entire HR value chain, most of them Japan-focused. He passionately believes in advancing the HR agenda in Japan through continuing HR education, knowledge sharing and use of HR best practices.

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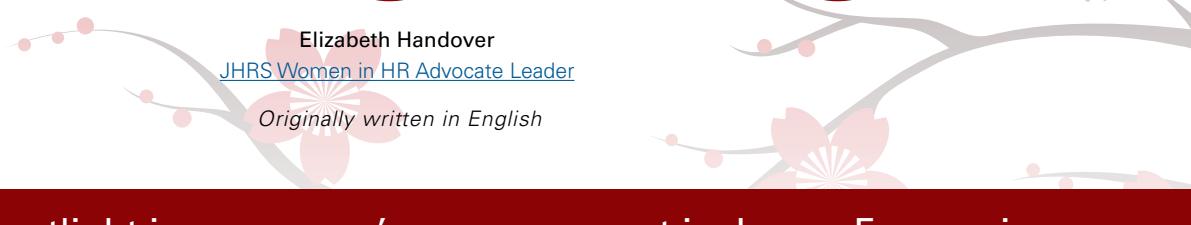
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Realizing Change



Elizabeth Handover

[JHRS Women in HR Advocate Leader](#)

Originally written in English

This year the spotlight is on women's empowerment in Japan. Four major women's conferences are being held in 2015.

[The Japan WIN Conference, April 9-10, 2015](#) kicked off a series of conferences addressing the changing role of women in the economy.

The International Conference for Women in Business, the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) Women in Business Summit, and the World Assembly for Women in Tokyo will all be held later this year.

The title for the Japan WIN Conference, "Realizing Change," was reinforced by speakers sharing initiatives already happening in their organizations.

Akira Matsumoto, chairman of the board and CEO of Calbee, told WIN conference attendees that "diversity is not a cost but a long-term investment," proving it with figures that show Calbee's strong capital growth and stock prices at a 5-year high. His company's board of directors now includes five external members, including two non-Japanese directors and one female director.

Success also grows from the ground up with a practical and realistic approach to increasing women's leadership numbers through a three-step process: understanding, agreement and implementation strategy, according to Matsumoto. He noted that gaining agree-

ment takes a long time and requires effort and patience but that once that is in place, implementation becomes easy.

President and CEO of Ikea Japan Peter List set the bar even higher. "Ikea diversity and inclusion is an integrated part of our business. It fits into our humanistic philosophy. Equality is a human right and we give equal pay for equal work."

Of Ikea's Japan-wide staff of 3,000 workers, 99 percent are full time with 64 percent female employees. Forty-three percent of all managers are women and the company will soon reach its 50 percent target. Other successes include onsite day-care facilities, paternity leave, elder-care leave policies, and a take-up of 80-90 percent vacation leave in the company.

Leanne Cutts is Mondelez International's Asia Pacific president for gum, candy and beverages. Cutts balances a drive for top-tier financial performance with making the company a great place to work, underpinning her core belief that everyone should be happy at their job.

To reach her target of 40 percent female managers and 30 percent directors, she focuses on "setting clear goals and targets,





being open and inclusive, communicating transparently, reinforcing values and policies publicly and backing these with action.” She runs mentoring circles for men and women, invites them to talk at town hall meetings, and has targeted one-on-one plans to support the growth of talented individuals.

Her thoughts on successful leadership: “Manage your energy, not your time. Be ‘present’ as often as possible. You don’t build a legacy by taking a comfortable job!”

Yumiko Murakami, head of OECD Tokyo Centre, showed data revealing that Japan has a continuing huge salary gap for working women with children. On the positive side, Japanese women’s skills are the highest in the world, providing a tremendous talent pool for Japan’s economy.

Jesper Koll, head of Japan equity and research & chief Japan strategist at JP Morgan Securities, stressed that research and development are Japan’s greatest strengths.

“The country invests in the future and relentlessly pursues innovation.” On demographics, “Japan is in a sweet spot. For the first time, labor is scarce. More and more young people will become full-time employees.” He foresees that “Japan will be the only advanced country to have a new middle class.”

A number of dynamic Japanese women presenters spoke out with passion about their beliefs and their commitment and determination to change the status quo.

The youngest was Hikari Igarashi, a Sacred Heart University student, graduate of the Tomodachi MetLife Women’s Leadership Pro-

gram, and winner of the Hague Talks Speech Contest. She spoke of her personal journey to independent thought, her future vision and commitment to action.

Rui Matsukawa, director of the Gender Mainstreaming Division, from the Foreign Policy Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave her parents credit in encouraging her to excel, which she said sustains her as she juggles her career and life as a working mother.

Wrapping up the sessions was Seiko Noda, well-known member of the House of Representatives. In a rousing no-holds-barred speech she addressed the need for more female politicians, the value of female voters, her experiences as a mother and her solid commitment to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s 2020 goals.

Then, when the talks were over, a reception followed, where the WIN Award was presented to Rui Matsukawa in recognition of her achievements in furthering gender balance in Japan.

[The ACCJ WIB Summit](#) will be held June 27; the International Conference for Women in Business is July 26. [The World Assembly for Women in Tokyo](#) takes place Aug. 28-29. □



Elizabeth Handover is president of Intrapersona K.K. and a Lumina Learning partner for Asia. She is co-chair of the ACCJ Women in Business Committee, co-founder of the Women’s Leadership Development Centre and special adviser to the Global WIN Conference.





Nomadic Thinking in Tokyo: Mapping Territories, Breaking Taboos in Leadership

Emmanuel Mankura

The HR Agenda
Originally written in English

Seminar speaker illustrates how modern business transformation can be inspired by 15,000-year-old nomadic principles.



Anthony Willoughby

"Some people asked me about my academic background," Anthony Willoughby said. "So I say I learned it all when I was a little boy, through this: 'Stone Age Man in Britain,' a book that all schoolchildren in Britain start with."

Willoughby, founding partner of Mammoth Hunters, was the featured speaker at a seminar titled: "Think Global, Think Nomad! Heading Towards Business Transformation Through Territory Mapping."

Willoughby used the illustrations in a classic, British schoolbook to show the parallels between Stone Age culture and business culture today. "Business is: do you know the animal, do you have the weapons, do you have the skills?" he said, showing a page featuring the tools that prehistoric men and women used.

"We need to be doing business in new areas with huge opportunities. But we're not allowed to go there because senior managers are hugging each other and never giving us directions." This time, to illustrate his statement, he showed a drawing that borrowed its style from cave paintings, with stick figures hugging in a circle.

The prehistoric human's feeling of being stuck and yearning to see greener pastures is a feeling that is too familiar for many people navigating the



business world today. Willoughby said that when he encountered that problem some time ago, his solution was to move. He travelled the world and found his answers in Kenya, by learning from the Maasai, a renowned tribe of herders and warriors.

Claiming a Leadership Position

Maasai elder Emmanuel Mankura also shared his life story and the story of his tribe's centuries-old way of life during the seminar, as a way of offering a new perspective for participants to map out their personal and business paths. He started his story by stating his place in the world. "This is my territory. This is where I was born. This is my home," he said, showing a picture of him standing nobly in front of his family hut.

As a young boy, Mankura was given the task of taking care of the cattle of his family and the entire community, which taught him respect and responsibility. When he grew up, he was circumcised and was initiated into the life of a warrior, which taught him courage. As a warrior, he underwent harsh training in order to be strong enough to raid other tribes, protect the community and guard their territory from the enemy.

After several years, he laid down his warrior spear in exchange for the stick of wisdom: he transitioned to the role of an elder. "After learning about responsibility (as cattle herder), courage (as warrior), we will now learn about wisdom."

While Mankura takes prides in the centuries-old traditions of the community, he is an instigator of change. "Ladies and gentlemen, life is changing. Life of the past is not the life where we are now and it's not the life of the future... The challenges keep on changing, so to face these changes we have to break many taboos," he said.

"Taboos are beliefs that we had which no longer makes sense," he said. One example he gave was when the Maasai resisted the "new ways" such as the educational system brought over by the British when they colonized and occupied Kenya. "The Maasai now," he said, "continue to be marginalized because they had very few representatives in the government, mainly because most are still uneducated in the mainstream system."

Another tradition that Mankura is trying to break is the treatment of women in their society. He wanted the practice of female circumcision to end, but the ceremony is still so deeply rooted in the culture that a child of an uncircumcised mother is automatically treated as an outcast. Mankura, on the other hand, sees women in their tribe in a different light: "The woman takes care of the children, cooks food and builds the home. She has a very important role but she is not credited for what she does."

Learning From Metaphors

Unlike conventional seminars with a structured, classroom-like setting, attending the "Think Global, Think Nomad!" seminar was like sitting around a campfire and listening to stories. And as with most great stories, the audience was allowed to discover for themselves the metaphors and insights that they could take away and apply to their own situations.

In this seminar, the lessons of being nomadic and breaking taboos offered a framework for navigating the challenges of today's workplace. It proved how the leadership principles of respect, responsibility, courage and wisdom were universal as well as personal. ☐

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Learning From the Pros

Atley Jonas
Editor in Chief, *The HR Agenda*
Originally written in English



When it comes to succession planning, it pays for the business world to take a page from the sporting world's playbook.

If there is one thing that industry analysts can agree on, it's that most companies are terrible at choosing new leaders to fill important, top-level positions within their organizations.

In a 2013 white paper, Aon Hewitt revealed the results of its [Top Companies for Leaders study](#), in which they found that while 100 percent of global companies had a formal succession plan in place, only 53 percent to 88 percent felt confident in their ability to choose a well-qualified, competent CEO to lead them.

Perhaps the reason for this perceived shortfall is the fact that CEOs (and other C-suite executives, for that matter) tend not to change over that often – at least not in an ideal setting. A high-churn rate among senior staff is usually the symptom of a far more serious problem and it can mean that the company is in deep trouble.

But what if the pains and tribulations of succession planning were, ironically, due to that very factor? What if unsuccessful succession planning were due to a lack of proficiency in doing it? What if it were a lack of practice? If practice makes perfect, as they say, then wouldn't it make sense to practice succession planning in the same way that people become experts in their respective fields? Through a lot of practice?

An interesting case study to consider might be McDonald's. A global, corporate juggernaut by any measure, it would be inaccurate to say they are a company in distress. Yet, in the 2000s, they went through four CEOs in a single year! Was this due to a failure in their succession plan? Far from it. Their plan was in fact, so solid, that it allowed the smooth seamless transition from one CEO to another, four times over, without so much as skipping a beat.

As an item of note, this sudden rash of CEO turnovers was due to the untimely death and serious illness of their

respective leaders, rather than inadequacy or lack of confidence from the board members. A great quote from retired McDonald's CEO Jim Skinner, was one that he used quite frequently among his staff. He would always say, "Give me the names of two people who could succeed you."

Practice Makes Perfect

While it would be unconscionable (not to mention morbid) to wish for the rapid demise of a company's executives just to get more practice in effective succession planning, there is something to be said about learning through practice. The trick is to learn from companies that regularly (and even frequently) turn over key players on their teams and who have become so proficient at it you could say that they've become specialists. In fact, there is an entire industry in which succession planning is a matter of daily course, and companies' very survival is contingent upon frequent use of their succession plans. These are professional, major league sports team franchises.

Regardless of the sport, any sports team must be greater than the sum of its players. Otherwise put, when Michael Jordan retires, David Beckham gets bought by another team, or Suzuki Ichiro asks for a trade, the franchise cannot simply just quit, nor can it afford to scramble and limp through the next season until a suitable replacement is found. It needs to keep selling tickets, filling stadium seats, and satisfying the high demands of its shareholders.

Professional sports teams have gotten succession planning down to an art, so that even when their big money-makers, their star players leave for whatever reason, the bottom line is affected as little as possible, and the franchise continues to succeed with or without any one individual player, coach or manager. Given that most teams have learned to

thrive in such a high-churn world, it's clear that having and executing succession plans is something they have mastered. Indeed, what lessons can be learned from the pros?

Learning From the Big Leagues

America's National Football League (NFL) means big bucks. It's no surprise that teams must know how to handle the loss of key players that could mean the difference between making the playoffs and winning the Super Bowl, or finishing at the bottom of their division. A succession planning expert at Axiom Consulting Partners, Aaron Sorenson, agrees that NFL teams make a great benchmark and lead the way in successful succession planning. One of his recommendations involves avoiding a common pitfall, which is to fill gaps with people who look, sound and act like their predecessors.

In 2012, the Indianapolis Colts let go of Peyton Manning, one of the best quarterbacks in the business. (They also replaced veteran coach Jim Caldwell, and a number of other important players). But instead of looking for a Manning clone, they instead focused on signing a new member who showed raw talent and leadership potential. They found it in Andrew Luck, who helped the team make the playoffs for three successive seasons, while winning two divisional titles as well. **Lesson: don't focus on having a specific person or personality. Focus rather on raw talent and leadership potential.**

According to Fred Crans, writing for Optime Supply Chain, one of the most successful succession planners in sports history was National Basketball Association's Arnold "Red" Auerbach, coach of the Boston Celtics. Even though a large part of the team's success from 1957 to 1966 was star center William "Bill" Felton Russell, Auerbach had a stacked roster of other names to back him up, including outside shooting guru Bill Sharman, Bob Cousy in the frontcourt, rebound specialist "Jungle Jim" Loscutoff, and master point scorer Frank Ramsey, when the chips were down. Yet, Auerbach knew that players' careers were painfully short. For each of these key players, he had recruited a number of junior players to follow in each man's footsteps, ensuring a decade of solid, high-level performance.

A second example of a similar concept at play is that of the Welsh national rugby team. For the past several years, head coach Warren Gatland has been ensuring a steady stream of players in line for any given position that will need to be filled in the future. His succession plan called for having a minimum of four players at any given time who could take over for any one of the players currently on the first-choice team. The result of this plan was evident, as Wales has once again qualified for the 2015 World Cup, like they did in 2011, and for that matter, every World Cup tournament since 1987.

Lesson: Don't just focus on one key player. Identify all the stars on the team, and ensure that each of them has at least one understudy, or more.

A study conducted by W. Glenn Rowe and Debra Rankin in Ivey Business Journal, examined how leadership changes affected the performance of hockey teams in the NHL. They examined a variety of factors, including everything from previous seasons' results, whether team managers were retained or changed between seasons, and the number of star players on each team. While many of their results were mixed, one common theme that seemed to unify their findings was that timing was a critical factor. In other words, it was critical not to wait until there was a steep decline in performance before making changes in management. Furthermore, it was just as important to allow the new leadership a chance to understand the organization's structure, dynamics and idiosyncra-

sies before making changes, and then, having the patience to allow those changes to take hold and have effect before deciding that the successor was unsuccessful. **Lesson: Don't wait until it's too late to make changes. And when you do, allow for an adjustment period before evaluating results of the succession.**

There have always been many parallels made between the business world and the sporting world. Everything from coaching, to lessons of leadership and team play are often compared, and sports are a popular metaphor for how companies ought to be run. In the case of succession planning however, there is even more similarity between the two, as professional sports teams are corporate organizations in their own right, complete with CEOs, managers, paid staff, boards of directors and shareholders. Their primary *raison d'être* is to make money for their owners, to the tune of tens and even hundreds of millions of dollars per year, and they will make all the necessary business decisions required to make that happen, especially those involving their key staff. It would make sense then, to take a page from their same playbook, by ensuring the team roster is well organized and that the players out on the field are just as capable of winning a game as those sitting on the sidelines, waiting on the bench. ☀



Atley Jonas joined The HR Agenda team as editor in chief, in 2014. He has a Master's in business administration, and spent 11 years living and working in Japan. He actively writes and edits for a number of U.S. and global business publications, while also pursuing several entrepreneurial ventures.



Originally established in the United States, the International Coach Federation (ICF) is one of the largest non-profit organizations in the coaching industry.

With more than 20,000 members around the globe, the ICF plays a pivotal role in the industry that includes establishment of a credentialing system recognized worldwide, formulation of the coaching core competencies and code of ethics, and development of the coaching community.

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- Hosting various workshops and events (HR people within an organization are welcome!)
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Please contact ICF Japan at info@icfjapan.com for any inquiries.

Culture's Key Role in Expatriate Success

Ronald C. Pilenz, PhD, SPHR, RODC
President, The Global HR Consultancy
Originally written in English

**Expats who return early from assignments are costly to their organizations.
Japanese culture may offer clues to improving the selection process.**

Studies consistently show the number of expatriates returning early from assignments to be high, at significant cost to their organizations. Selecting the wrong person for an international assignment can mean the disruption of a cohesive employee work group, the loss of productivity, damage to the company's reputation, and even loss of clients or customers.

It is now being recognized that cultural adaptation plays a much greater role in the success of an expatriate experience than was earlier realized.

Companies usually provide orientation and training programs for the expat candidate, but time is spent mainly on technical and managerial competence. Companies need to focus more on selecting expats who can accept differences between their country and their host country's business practices and protocols, as well as differences in political views and the social environment. Most important, but perhaps most difficult to assess for, is to find international assignees with the ability to provide leadership in a foreign culture that results in getting others to follow.

More also needs to be done to assess the readiness not only of the candidate, but also the willingness of the candidate's family to adapt to a challenging new environment. This involves the subtleties of learning a new language, understanding and accepting different societal norms, and the possibility of inadequate medical care, substandard housing conditions and the lack of a quality education for children.

Mapping Process

A good way to begin the selection process is with a detailed analysis of the country or region where the assignment will take place. The analysis should include an examination of local and national customs,

educational standards, cultural and societal norms as well as the political climate.

Before an employee is even considered for an international assignment, a mapping process that involves an objective analysis of the overall requirements should be undertaken. This mapping process should be considered a direct component of the selection process and not as a subsidiary factor. Information obtained from the mapping process should be shared with potential candidates. Some will opt out and save the company a great deal of interview time and assessment costs, and helping establish a more accurate selection process.

Japan's Rates Lowest

The United States is last among the developed countries with the largest number of early returns. The country with the lowest return rate is Japan.



Some parts of the world do not have sufficient data to measure or research.

Why is Japan the lowest? Part of the reason may be that Japan has a unique culture that places value on building a homogenous workforce and society. This is in part caused by the socio-dynamics of the size of the population and how people live in a relatively small geographic area that has forced them to adjust to smaller living spaces and crowded cities. This dynamic has in turn caused people to develop, by necessity, a sense of cooperation and tolerance that is valued and should become a model for other countries to consider.

Moreover, Japanese culture fosters and maintains a unique value system that rewards teamwork and group achievements over meritocracy and individual rewards such as in the United States. Japanese workers are extremely proud of the companies they work for, and they tend to place the company first and their individuality last. They also tend to work more readily as part of a team. Monetary rewards are also less important forms of recognition. Treating employees more humanely and as valued assets is a hallmark of most Japanese companies.

The director of the Japanese Productivity Center once told me that in Japan employees are considered first before anyone else, including the stockholders of the company. This is apparent when economic times are most difficult. Employees are not automatically terminated as the first option in saving costs. The director told a story about a bank that fell on bad times. Instead of immediately terminating large numbers of employees and closing branches, the decision makers waited things out, until the bank recovered financially after 18 months. As a result of the bank's commitment to protect its employees, the motivation and dedication of the workers to remain loyal to the company increased.

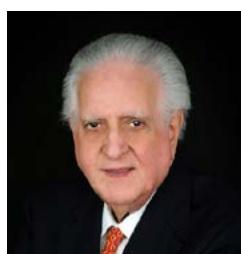
Japanese companies also value the ability of expats to bring their expertise and their value systems to a foreign assignment. Examples of the success of this practice are well-known in the building and staffing of Japanese automobile assembly plants in the United States.

Only time will tell if future Japanese expats will be able to hold on to their heritage and value systems, or if they become more prone to Western influences over time, and if these changes will result in higher rates of return.

But, as of now, Japan seems to be the most successful in their expat programs anchored by a system that is rooted in their culture, and this may be the fundamental reason why the country has the lowest early returns.

These examples are well documented and the proof is evidenced by the ability of these new operations to maintain high quality and Japanese productivity standards with non-Japanese employees over an extended period of time. On the other hand, in recent years, Japan's workforce is seeing changes driven by younger workers who place less value in becoming a team member than being rewarded for their individual contributions. However, this should not be interpreted as a rejection of the homogeneity of their country and its cultural heritage.

Companies in other countries may be able to use the Japanese business culture as a model for building a successful international assignment program. In the absence of the ability to replicate the Japanese culture, companies should at least consider how cultural adaptation impacts expatriate assignments and the overall costs of maintaining such a program. ☺



Ron Pilenz has more than 50 years of HR management experience. He served as president of SHRM from 1980-1990 and received the Georges Petitpas Award in 1990. He has taught at several U.S. universities and is an author and speaker. Currently, Pilenz is president of The Global HR Consultancy.



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Plugging the Talent Drain in Japan



How can foreign-affiliated organizations in Japan mitigate the talent drain, and find ways to keep and develop new leaders for this market?

—Executive Coach in Tokyo

YOSHI SAYS...

Translated from the Japanese original

The following are the top three supports for leadership development:

1. **Have an aligned development goal, approaches and possible paths.** Leadership or talent development is a collaborative effort between employees and their organization. When discussing development options, the organization needs to make sure that the chosen assignment and work location is a great development arena. SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals will help.
2. **Challenging assignments.** What keeps humans motivated and excited is primarily their work; this is especially important for high fliers. You need to ensure the organization offers challenging assignments to each assignee, so they can feel and enjoy a sense of accomplishment, growth and personal fulfillment.
3. **Have a coach or mentor for the target leader.** Even great leaders need a coach or a mentor

who can help them reflect on their accomplishments and growth on both their career and personal development on a regular basis, and whenever necessary. A coach who truly understands the target leaders' hopes and concerns and steers them toward self-awareness will be valuable to your leaders' growth.

I will save other support systems and activities for later or follow-up questions. As you are an executive coach yourself, I presume you and your client organizations are doing the three things I have discussed. Separately, you have no fundamental compensation and benefits issues such as leaders are jumping out for better money and perks.

By the way, I think there should be no eternal expat in one location in this global business community. Great leaders need to move on along with their progress, developing and leaving great successors behind. An individual leader may have a preferred destiny/location, but companies need not have one for expats unless it's their home country. The organizations need

to ensure that, no matter where their leaders are, they get enormous challenges and grow tremendously to achieve their peak performance.

Yoshiharu Matsui

President, HPO Creation, Inc.

Yoshi specializes in leadership and organization development leveraging his more than 12 years of marketing experience and 12 years of HR/OD experience. He provides executive coaching, leadership development, organizational change and marketing and sales development to help clients strengthen their business performance, organizational health and employee engagement.

He has a BA in intercultural communication from Kita-Kyushu University and an MBA from Northwest Missouri State University. He is currently working on his doctoral degree in organization change at Pepperdine University.

ANDREW SAYS...

Article originally written in English

Talent is on most HR and business leaders' list of issues no matter what the business and where it is located. As organizations increasingly realize that people are the difference between success and failure, everybody wants the best person for every role. And with so many roles to fill and only one best person, it feels like there is a limit on the talent available.

Based from the articles I've read and events I have recently attended, there is now a surplus of graduates. At the recent Asia Innovation Forum event in Tokyo which I attended, this was flagged as an issue here in Japan. Additionally, I think of the number of well-qualified people who are not employed at the moment following the raft of organizations changing their structures and people through the global financial crisis.

Talent is always available even if it is raw and requires development. With my previous employer, a key belief was: everyone has talent!

In terms of Japan and competing with other geographies I would look internally and see what people are saying about Japan and the other geographies to see if this is helping or hindering. People may be saying Japan is a big global economy, a safe, exciting and cultural destination. They may be saying that it is challenging, unique, and that business is hard. Whatever is being said will have an impact on how easy it is for you to attract talent to your market. An important role for you and your time is to manage what is being said so you do not become a place where nobody wants to go.

Disclaimer:

The answers, opinions, or viewpoints expressed by Andrew and Yoshi are their own and do not necessarily represent the general views and sentiments of The Japan HR Society and its members, Secretariat, friends, and supporters. In addition, the answers, advice, or opinions expressed by Andrew and Yoshi are for informational purposes only and are not meant to substitute for legal and/or financial advice from qualified legal and financial professionals.



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I see many people looking to experience working overseas and many would consider Japan as a great location. It is more developed than China and more sophisticated. It's seen as a great place to live, which in my experience is attractive for those looking and willing to relocate, since the number one question potential overseas assignees usually ask is about personal safety and standards of living more than business performance and other matters.

Having covered a few ways to challenge your current thinking, there are also a few tips on developing long-term strategies and plans to build a strong talent pipeline:

1. Get a good local recruitment partner who understands you, your business and your needs. Find an individual who truly reflects your business values and culture.
2. Build your line manager capability. People are attracted to great line managers because they inspire you, value you and develop you.
3. Build and buy your talent. Doing one or the other is limited, so go out and get good people externally but also ensure you have the programs in place to grow your own talent, such as:
 - a) Strong succession planning
 - b) Training programs
 - c) Secondments/transfers
 - d) High employee engagement
 - e) Recognition programs

My final tip is very simple. Talk to your people. Ask them how happy they are, whether they are thinking of leaving and why they are staying. Engage them one by one and occasion by occasion. ☺

Andrew Manterfield

*Executive Coach and Senior Consultant,
SudaManterfield*

Andrew has an innate belief in people and their desire and ability to achieve more. His purpose is to find the greatness in every person he meets and to ensure that greatness lives and breathes every day and is fulfilled.

He has worked in the global FMCG industry for over 27 years for Diageo Plc, the world's biggest adult drinks company. Andrew has over a decade of director-level experience in both human resources and sales. He has lived and worked in Japan, Australia, and the U.K., and he has worked with organisations across Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Withdrawing a Job Offer in Japan

QUESTION 1:

In Japan, when a company makes an informal employment offer and later withdraws the offer (for any reason) before the employment start date, can the potential employee claim any compensation, especially if she resigned from her current employer? If so, how much is the required compensation for this kind of situation?

– HR Manager, Telecom Company

ANSWER:

Translated from Japanese original

A contract signed by the company and the applicant renders the employment agreement official. However, the company may issue an informal employment offer before the official contract signing. This is characteristic of the Japanese labor market, in which companies hire a group of new graduates all at the same time. The informal offer is a promise that they are tentatively welcome to come work at the company in the future.

How these informal offers are positioned in the Japanese civil code and labor laws is a tricky question. It can be difficult to determine how much value a company's promises hold before an official employment agreement is concluded.

The Japanese courts have recognized that these informal promises do carry a certain degree of legal force. Companies that break their promise of an informal employment offer must pay the applicant some compensation. The amount of compensation varies on a case-by-case basis. In general, the company should expect to pay compensation in the range of ¥1 million.

Contract Cessation for Employee on Fixed-term and Open-Employment Contract

QUESTION 2:

We are a new business in Japan and we have been advised to hire employees on a fixed-term contract. Can we do a contractual cessation before the one-year period is over by paying out in lieu of the one-month notice? Also, in the case of an open-employment contract, can we separate the employee during a 3 or 6 month probation period?

– HR Director

ANSWER:

Translated from Japanese original

First of all, a one-month termination notice contradicts the purpose of the fixed-term contract. If the contract is intended for one year, the employer should then keep the employee for a year except under extraordinary circumstances. Basically, the employer cannot terminate the employee before the period that is stated in the contract.

Technically speaking, the employer can terminate the employee if the former will pay for the equivalent salary of the remaining months before the contract of the latter ends.

Regarding your concern about an open-employment contract (not fixed-term), a labor contract without the fixed-term specification usually has a probation period; hence, it is easier to terminate the employee during this period.

To terminate the employee, the employer needs to prove that the employee has undergone enough training but still failed to perform according to the set expectations. A certain process to improve one's performance should be established and in case some standards were not met, the employer can refuse the regularization of the employee. ☐



Atty. Jiro Oyama is principal of the Yokohama Partner Law Office. He is a graduate of the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Law and Washington University in St. Louis Law School. He worked in the legal and IP departments of Alpine Electronics, Inc. and Sidley Austin Tokyo Office for 16 years before establishing his private law practice specializing in labor/employment matters as well as providing legal counsel to his clients.

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Legal Questions?
 If you have legal questions relating to HR practices, or would like to become a member of our panel of legal experts, please contact us at hrclinic@jhrs.org.

Yoshikazu Sugino
 General corporate area, including asset liquidation transactions, advice on general labor issues and financing transactions.

Vicki Beyer
 Recruiting & hiring; benefits programs; termination; retirement; employee relations; discrimination & diversity; non-competition; investigations & disciplinary matters.

Toby Mallen
 Doing business in the U.S.A.; labor and employment; real estate laws.

Jiro Oyama
 Corporation laws; intellectual property laws.

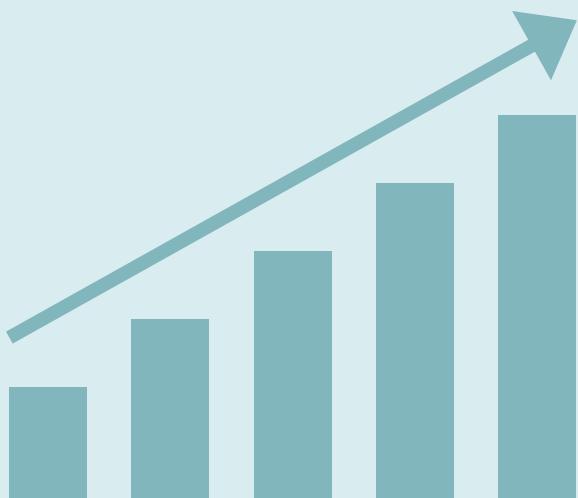
Grant Stillman
 Law of international organizations and trade.

Hideki Thurgood Kano
 Labour and employment

Sam Everett
 International HR Law, Pensions, Restructuring, Occupational Health and Safety, Global Mobility, Employee Compensation and Benefits, Individual Employee Rights, Discrimination and Data Privacy.

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Succession Planning vs. Replacement Planning



What's the Difference?

Bryan Krinzman, SPHR
Business Partner, Helios HR
Originally written in English

Successful succession planning isn't about reacting to crises. It's about long-term commitment to reviewing human capital and providing the additional development required to keep the company moving forward.

Sometimes organizations I work with say they want to plan for the future but really just want to mitigate their risk of an employee leaving the organization. This got me thinking: What is the true difference between succession planning and replacement planning?

Succession Planning

At its most basic level, succession planning is a "deliberate and systematic effort by a company to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement," according to William J. Rothwell, author of "Effective Succession Planning."

It is an organization's proactive attempt to come up with a succinct plan of action to ensure continuity in business operations, at all levels of an organization, by culti-

vating talent from within the organization through planned development activities.

This means reviewing your strategic plan for the organization, assessing the capabilities of the current staff, and determining what additional development activities these individuals need to help the organization move forward with the strategic plan.

Replacement Planning

On the other hand, replacement planning "is a form of risk management... The chief aim of replacement planning is to limit the chance of catastrophe stemming from the immediate and unplanned loss of key job incumbents," according to Rothwell. Replacement planning is asking the question: "What would happen if our CEO gets hit by a bus on the way to work?" While this is an

extreme example, the unexpected departure of an employee who is an important contributor to a team, department and organization is a possible scenario for any company.

What can your organization do now to start the succession planning process? One of the first things your organization should do is to map out your entire organization. You can do this by creating an organizational chart or an employee roster with a spreadsheet containing the following details: employee name, title and supervisor.

Once you have completed your employee roster, I would recommend the following seven steps:

How to Start the Succession Planning Process:

- 1. Review strategic plans.** Have an updated list of the strategic objectives for the entire organization and each department in the company. The updated information will help you decide if your current staff has the KSA (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) to achieve your strategic objectives.
- 2. Review key positions.** Go through your employee roster and identify your key positions not only on the senior management team, but throughout your organization. There is probably one position, and it doesn't always have to be supervisor, that is the key cog in the wheel for a department or team. Identify the top 5 to 10 percent of the positions your organization cannot live without. Remember, don't focus on the people but the positivons.
- 3. Ensure everyone has an updated resume.** Your organization should have some sort of updated resume or skillset-tracking mechanism to determine what KSAs are currently available within your employees, from the senior management team to the staff. While it takes time to compile this information, the more accurate information you gather the better the chances of creating a successful succession plan.
- 4. Analyze the data.** Review the people in the positions. Who is currently in each position and what skills are necessary if this person leaves the organization? Do you have people somewhere in the organization who could take over if this key employee were to

leave? You need to analyze what you have, what you need, and the path forward for getting there.

- 5. Talk to your employees.** One area in the succession planning process that employers tend to miss is engaging their key employees to find out each individual's career aspirations. While you don't have to reveal your list of key personnel, the managers or senior executives should be having conversations with the people on this list to determine if their career path is aligned with the company's plans for them. If it's not, you might be wasting training and delegation resources to an employee who has little interest in becoming the next managing director, COO, CFO, or even CEO.
- 6. Create a road map.** After speaking to the key employees, create a road map for the types of KSAs each employee will need for the next role. Keep your list short and don't get into too many details at this point. You can fill in the details later as your company strategy continues to take shape and change over time.
- 7. Continue assessing.** Make sure all employees stay on track for their next assignment. If they are on track, continue providing them opportunities to advance their KSAs. If someone is not on track, ask yourself: Is this employee still a viable candidate for the next level in the organization or does the project road map for the person's career need to be tweaked?

Remember, going out to the market to find an employee is not succession planning. That is replacement planning at its most basic form. Succession planning takes time and effort and should be carried out in a methodical manner to ensure you have the right people, in the right place, doing the right things. ☐

A different version of this article appears on the website [Helios HR](#).



As a business partner at Helios HR, www.helioshr.com, Bryan Krinzman consults on human capital strategies, HR management, talent acquisition and organizational development. He holds degrees from Georgetown University and Boston University and is an HRCI certified Senior Professional in Human Resources.



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Japanese Firms in the U.S. Aiming for Contrast, Not Clash

Stephenie Overman
Author, Next-Generation Wellness at Work
Originally written in English

Japanese companies doing business in the United States must be prepared for drastic differences not only in employment law, but in basic employee attitudes.

So much of the difference between human resource management practice in the United States and Japan boils down to the fact that the United States has a fluid labor market.

In Japan "companies assume people are going to be there forever and HR is based on that assumption," says Rochelle Kopp, managing principal of Japan Intercultural Consulting. "There are a lot of things in the U.S. that companies don't have to worry about in Japan. It changes all the things you do in HR."

Accustomed to the familiar attitude of loyal employees at home, Japanese companies often struggle with retention problems in the United States, she says.

First of all, when Kopp's working with Japanese companies coming to the United States, she tries to "get them to understand that it's not a moral defect if someone leaves. They have to get away from the emotional idea that staying with your company is good. The approach is different."

And while Japanese companies tend to provide reasonably good benefits, Kopp says they often need a better understanding of how competitive compensation is in the United States.

In Japan, three percent raises are the norm and salaries for engineers in the United States "are eye popping for Japanese," she says. "We're helping them get their head around how it works here."

"A lot of Japanese firms set themselves up to be the training ground for competitors because they penny pitch," she continues. Workers accept positions with prestigious Japanese companies that have operations in the United States, learn new skills, then leave for higher salaries elsewhere.

Kopp worked with a headhunter whose Japanese client wanted to hire someone in Silicon Valley with highly sought-after skills, but couldn't find anyone at the rate the company was willing to pay. The headhunter told her the company was considering hiring from other engineering specialties and then training them in the hot specialty.

"I told them: They will work for your client for one or two years, then they're out of there," she says.

Workers in the United States not only expect higher compensation, but also a clear idea of their opportunities to move up the corporate career ladder, according to Kopp.

Labor Laws

Employment laws may be very different in the United States and in Japan, but in some ways the results can be unsettlingly similar, says Philip Berkowitz, a shareholder in the New York City office of Littler. Berkowitz is the U.S. practice co-chair of Littler's International Employment Law Practice Group.

"Japan has stringent rules. It's difficult to fire someone unless there is good cause. In the U.S. we have this notion of employment at will, that a person can be fired for any reason or no reason, as long as [the reason stated] is lawful," he says.

But with so many U.S. laws against harassment and discrimination, everybody is protected to some degree, Berkowitz counters.

"The law may suggest it's easier to fire in the U.S., but most employers are very, very careful before they terminate someone," he says. "They want to be sure they have a long paper trail that shows they gave [the individual] the opportunity to succeed; that shows termination was the last resort. On its face it seems tougher in Japan but it may be other way around."

Japanese HR managers maybe accustomed to labor courts or tribunals where everyone is familiar with the law, but in the United States cases may go to jury trials and juries don't receive training on how a business is run, Berkowitz says. Employees may sue for emotional distress and sometimes attorneys' fees as well. As a result, when it comes to damages, if an employer is found guilty, the penalties can be through the roof.

To make matters worse, Berkowitz warns that Japanese companies may be especially attractive targets for employment-related lawsuits in the United States, if there is any hint of weakness or lack of knowledge in how things work in the U.S. There's a perception that Japanese companies are more likely to settle cases out of court, he says. "There's also the perception that Japanese companies don't give opportunities to women. That's changing, but it is still the perception."

To avoid costly legal actions, employers can require employees to sign agreements that waive the right to a jury trial or that agree to arbitration.

Aside from exercising diligence, Berkowitz also recommends that Japanese companies operating in the United States provide training at every level from managers to the CEO level. He notes that even U.S. corporate giants face costly employment lawsuits and it's only more difficult for foreign companies to navigate the system.

One key difference to keep in mind is that "we have an elaborate system of disclosure which is contrary to Japanese law, and Japanese custom," according to Berkowitz. Unlike anywhere else in the world, he says, employees who bring suit in the United States may demand access to all types of documents, even in draft form.

Berkowitz points out that litigating employees are entitled to request and examine every scrap of paper, except for those that would violate the attorney-client privilege principle. A U.S. judge can order a company to turn over documents that are on a server in Japan and senior executives may be required to endure cross-examination by an employee's lawyer before trial.

California Dreaming

Many companies from around the globe, including Japanese companies, are attracted to doing business in California. The Golden State's economy is the eighth largest in the world, according to the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy.

"Lots of Japanese companies want to come to California, if they want to be a player. It's closer to Japan, there are lots of people from Asia, the weather is nice," Kopp says. Both Silicon Valley in northern California and the southern Los Angeles region are popular locations for Japanese companies.

But California has what Kopp refers to as a special class of labor law that often trips up employers. These include laws regarding overtime pay, independent contractors, travel time, workers' compensation and meal and rest breaks.

Berkowitz notes that while companies from other countries often focus on U.S. federal employment laws, every state has the right to pass laws that are stricter. California is especially difficult for employers and it seems many more cases go to trial rather than settle out of court, he notes.

Wherever they operate in the United States, Kopp urges Japanese employers to be sensitive to the cultural differences and to the importance of the role of front-line managers.

Surveys often find that it's the immediate boss, not the corporation itself, that determines whether employers are satisfied with their jobs, Kopp notes.

As a consultant who interviews U.S. workers for their Japanese employers she finds "usually a whole bunch of stuff that has been bothering them that they haven't been able to get across to management" because of language or cultural misunderstandings.

In order to retain good employees "you need to be a lot more attuned to what they're interested in. You need to ferret out their needs and respond to them," she says. ■



Stephenie Overman is a contributing editor to The HR Agenda. She is based in the Washington, D.C. area and is the author of "Next-Generation Wellness at Work."

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Succession Planning: Leadership From Within

Jun Kabigting, MBA/MS/HRMP
 Chief Community Officer, The Japan HR Society (JHRS)
Originally written in English

It's time to rethink succession planning to reflect today's updated concepts of leadership.

The Chrysanthemum Throne – Japan's existing monarchy – is said to go as far back as the 6th century and the imperial succession has continued uninterrupted right up to the present emperor. This record of continuity is unsurpassed by any other existing monarchy, not only in neighboring Asian countries, but in the world.

The political authority of the emperor may only be symbolic but its continued existence is a lesson on effective succession planning which is, without a doubt, as relevant to running a business as it has been to running the affairs of a nation.

What is Succession Planning and its Benefits?

Succession planning in modern business parlance refers to a process of determining critical roles within the company,

identifying and assessing possible successors for people currently in those roles, and providing those possible successors with the appropriate skills and experience for future opportunities. Experts generally agree that succession planning is a combination of the following key elements:

- Recruiting the right people.
- Providing them with proper training so as to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities.
- Preparing them for advancement or promotion into more challenging roles.
- Dealing with the fact that eventually there may be a need to replace talented employees.



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Succession planning is important not just in terms of organizational development and providing a means of identifying and preparing suitable employees to replace key management roles. It is also a means of averting risk, particularly the risk the company faces due to the loss or demise of any of its key personnel.

As such, it is not unusual for succession planning programs to require the most senior-level executives to review those at the next levels to maintain a steady pool from which replacements may be chosen to fill each senior position.

Planning is vital because leadership does not mature overnight. Moreover, sometimes talents are not innate and need years of grooming. Organizations will need to prepare candidates with high leadership potential not only to ensure minimal disruption to management responsibilities but to minimize the impact on organizational effectiveness.

Not too long ago, most of this planning was focused on key management and leadership roles, much like grooming the successors of empires and kingdoms. Recently, however, succession planning has been steadily evolving to include not just an organization's most senior positions, but managers and team leaders at all levels. This new view of succession planning, according to experts, reflects the transition of leadership development from being a specialized activity to a company-wide culture that is relevant throughout the organization.

The Inside-Outsider Approach to Succession Planning

Unfortunately, according to Harvard Business School Professor Joseph Bower, most companies pay little attention to the issue of succession so they end up hiring either an outsider who quickly gets mired in corporate politics, or an insider who knows the business but does not have the ability to lead.

In his book, "[The CEO Within: Why Inside Outsiders are the Key to Succession Planning](#)," Bower insists that the best candidates for the top posts are not just insiders *per se*, but insiders who have somehow maintained as much detachment from the local traditions, ideologies and shibboleths as any outsider. This "inside-outsider" knows the company intimately but is outside the mainstream and hence still capable of providing a dispassionate perspective.

There is no debate that insiders outperform outsiders. Bower's own study of the top 500 companies in the U.S. led him to conclude that insiders performed better than outsiders regardless of the overall climate of the company at the time of their appointment. Being insiders may have given them an acute understanding of the organization and its culture, as well as the skills and knowledge that outsiders would only be able to accumulate over time, albeit with some difficulty.

Succession Planning in Japan

Interestingly, in Japan, some of the most successful companies are also among the oldest. These are typically family businesses whose control and management have been handed down in succession for centuries.

Shrine builder Kongo Gumi used to be the oldest company in the world until its unexpected demise in 2006. The business is said to have started when Prince Shotoku invited a carpenter from Chosun (present-day Korea) to construct the country's first Buddhist temple.

Soon, business became brisk – brisk enough to last for 40 generations. What made the company last for more than 1,400 years? In an April 16, 2007 [Business Week](#) article, Kongo Masakazu, the company's last patriarch, cited flexibility as a key factor.

For instance, rather than always handing the reins to the oldest son, Kongo Gumi chose the one who best exhibited good health, a sense of responsibility, and talent for the job. Moreover, it did not always have to be a son. The 38th Kongo was Masakazu's grandmother. Another factor that contributed to Kongo Gumi's extended existence was the practice of allowing sons-in-law to assume the family name when they joined the firm. This common Japanese practice allowed the company to continue under the same name, even when there were no male heirs in a given generation. What pulled the company down was not bad management but bad debts that went as far back as Japan's post-war reconstruction in the 1950s.

Another good example is Kikkoman, the world's largest producer of soy sauce and soya products, which was founded in 1630 by Shige Maki of the Mogi family who ventured into business after she lost her husband in the battle of Osaka Castle. Her small business officially became a global brand in 1917 when eight branches of the family merged their companies together.

Sumitomo Corporation, a worldwide conglomerate based in Tokyo, was established in 1630 when its first patriarch, Masatomo Sumitomo, opened a pharmacy and bookstore in the old capital, Kyoto. Succeeding generations eventually expanded the business. Currently, the company has about 20 companies engaged in diverse areas such as banking, shipbuilding, mining, glassmaking, electronics, cement, lumber and chemicals.

According to a study by [Yupana Wiwattanakantang](#), conducted in 2008 when she was at the Institute of Economic Research of Hitotsubashi University, in Japan heir-managed family firms have been outperforming non-family firms. This is in sharp contrast to the general tendency of family firms in other developed countries.

A comparison within Japan's heir-managed family firms also shows that non-blood, heir-managed family firms have been outperforming descendant-managed family firms. As mentioned earlier, Japanese family firms are unique in that they customarily bring in male heirs from outside the founding family (non-blood heirs) either by adoption or marriage.

Non-family firms belonging to a *keiretsu* (set of companies with interlocking business relationships and shareholdings) corporate group are ranked lowest, both in terms of performance and firm value, among various other types of firms that include founder-managed family firms; descendant-managed family firms; non-blood, heir-managed family firms; professionally-managed family firms; and non-*keiretsu*-affiliated, non-family firms.

If anything, this goes to show that Japanese companies, even those that are traditionally called family businesses, generally pass the torch to insiders even in the absence of competent heirs from within the family. Adoptions and marriages not only overcome the problem of intergenerational transmission of managerial skills but also mitigate the problems of alignment of incentives between managers and shareholders.

It may be worthwhile to mention that with regard to family firms, it appears that non-blood heirs are more competent than descendant heirs. Using educational background as indicator of competence, Wiwattanakan-tang found that non-blood CEOs had higher educational backgrounds relative to descendant CEOs, although in many cases descendant CEOs had higher educational backgrounds than founder CEOs. In terms of the length of tenure, non-blood heirs stayed as CEO for roughly 20 years on average, almost the same as the tenure of descendant heirs and substantially longer than the six-year average of professional managers. Of course, we know that things do not always work as they should, as the unfortunate fate of Kongo Gumi demonstrates. Even Japan's imperial throne has been recently put to a test. The possibility of the imperial tradition vanishing with the last male heir remained a real possibility, a serious problem that was just narrowly averted with the birth of Prince Hisahito in 2006.

The Succession Planning Imperative

It is clear that succession planning is no longer an option but an imperative for companies (and even empires) to perpetuate themselves and be rightfully called "built to last." As the saying goes: Failure to plan for succession is planning to fail.

The real challenge then, becomes one of execution. If you are really determined to do this, start by letting go of some of the traditional beliefs regarding the type of people you consider potential leaders. As HR professionals, maybe it is time for us to rethink, review, challenge and update our own concepts of leadership and move toward succession and workforce plans that attract, recruit, select, train and advance those individuals with the skills most aligned with current values.

It may also be time for us to provide better career tracks for younger employees to get early exposure, for women to occupy key leadership positions, for foreigners to be designated to positions of responsibility. It may even be time to sometimes challenge the commonly-held view that outsiders cannot perform as well as insiders. ■



Jun Kabigting is managing director of HR Central K.K. and an adjunct professor with Temple University Japan Campus and GLOBIS University. He has more than 20 years of experience across the entire HR value chain, most of them Japan-focused. He passionately believes in advancing the HR agenda in Japan through continuing HR education, knowledge sharing and use of HR best practices.

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BUILD THE LIFE YOU WANT AT WORK

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO CREATE TODAY?

DR. BOB TOBIN

Ben Bella Books, 2014 216 pages

Hilda Rosca Nartea
Contributing Editor, *The HR Agenda*

Originally written in English

Rather than suggesting readers automatically push the reset button, this author calls for a kinder, gentler way of making change.

Career reinvention has never seemed more attractive, relevant or realistic. Starting over is seen as the smart response in the face of rapid technological shifts, economic and political instability, and in countries such as Japan, with an ageing but still willing workforce.

When you're faced with such dynamism and unpredictability, to forge ahead with a new chapter in life can appear to be more than just an optional path, but a form of survival. Or is it?

At first reading, Bob Tobin in "What Do You Want to Create Today? Build the Life You Want at Work" may seem to suggest taking the path of a complete do-over. After all, the author starts with his own story of how he turned his back on a lucrative career as a consultant for the U.S. military to start anew life in Japan. But

as you go further, you'll soon realize that what Tobin prescribes isn't reinvention, but a kind of reimagination or revision of your identity from what you do, and therefore what you are.

The book can be viewed as a manual for managing alienation in the workplace. This feeling manifests itself in lackluster careers, meaningless work, boredom, or being surrounded by, as the author calls them, jerks. It is worth studying the recommended approach detailed in the book in huge part because of the sheer number of success stories and improved lives that have been made possible because of Tobin's approach.

Not a Rebel

It's interesting that the author as a coach, teacher, colleague, boss and friend has been able to help numerous individuals "learn to

work with purpose, passion and power," not by pushing them to rebel against the system that creates such feelings of massive disenfranchisement. His prescription is, rather to turn inward, and make shifts in the ways you think and work.

Tobin does not ask people to change jobs, take a vacation, or even simply pack their bags and say "to hell with it." What he offers is a more grounded perspective. At a time when pushing the reset button has never been so trendy and attractive an idea, Tobin chooses to seek a kinder, and for some, a more conservative way of enabling change: "We all need people to support us, and we have to consider the impact of our decisions on our loved ones."

Perhaps because of the focus on learning about one's self, most of the advice can be applied to high-powered executives, regular employees or students. For instance, Tobin asks readers to ditch the practice of goal setting, but focus instead on basing decisions and actions on their dreams, the life they want to have. At the end of the chapter on courage, he leaves the reader with real-life homework on how to handle work fears. He gives specific steps on how to deal with difficult co-workers, as well as instructions on how to make work more fun.

Tobin's love for Japan is apparent in his stories. A foreigner but a long-time resident (and in a domestic relationship with a Japanese), the author's viewpoint on his host country and his experiences with working with its people is an enlightening and accurate guide for those who are still getting to know Japanese culture. At the same time,

the discussions could be instructive to the Japanese reader.

While the book's inspiration seems at first rooted in the narrative (or mythology) of the Western concept of self-reinvention, the strong Japanese influence running throughout the book steers it in another direction. Tobin does not see a person's identity the way it is perpetuated in the American Dream: liberation from the past and a new self, made without regard to the past. He doesn't see identity as a commodity, as if it's something that we can simply manufacture one after another. The author knows that an identity is forged from a historical and material basis. The task is not to erase it, but to see it for what it is and to work on its improvement.

"*What Do You Want to Create Today?*" is written in the tradition of the greatest self-help books: an inspiring hero story, solid case studies, a structure that you can either consume in a few sittings or read slowly for reflection, and a series of practical tips and actionable steps.

What makes the book stand out is the author's engaging, highly motivational voice. His roles as teacher, business coach and art gallery owner are ones that he excels in, and ones that can only bloom through the nurturing spirit that is what makes the book an uplifting read. □



Hilda Rosca Narteo heads the writing team of a Sydney-based PR agency. She is also a content producer for non-profit organizations and has done projects for the United Nations Development Programme under the Philippine Department of Energy.

The advertisement features the Japan HR Society logo on the left, which includes the text "Japan HR Society" and the website "www.jhrs.org". To the right, the words "JAPAN-FOCUSED" are stamped above the word "Certification" in a large, stylized font. Below "Certification" is the website "http://www.jhrs.org/certification". On the far right, a close-up photograph shows a person's hand holding a fountain pen and signing a white document.

A Little Bit of Housekeeping...

The HR Agenda

Originally written in English

From the editor's desk, here are a few additional bits of news that may interest our readers:

Mailbag

For the past two issues we have received a little bit of feedback from our readers. Here's a brief cross-section of what some of you had to say.

[April-June 2015 Issue] Let Each Voice Be Heard: Creating a Culture of Coaching

I completely agree. Selecting managers and supervisors who actually enjoy coaching is one of the most effective ways to sustain a culture of coaching. Then, you can teach them how to be better coaches, and also reward coaching outcomes.

Larry Sternberg
President at Talent Plus, Inc.

[Jan.-March 2015 Issue] Glocalizing HR: The Role of Cultural Odor in Japanese Transnational Strategies

Indeed, glocalization in human capital development would be leading further the organization to a more strategic and distinct advantage from its competitors.

Aldrin Ancheta
Branch Head/Regional Manager

[Jan.-March 2015 Issue] Can a Unified Business Culture be Good for Business? + Prudential Life Japan Case Study

Culture is usually identified in the artifacts; systems, models and behaviors of the organization. Doing things the same as others is both a blessing and a curse; a blessing because we will get things done the same as we always have and a curse because the entrenched behavior is reticent to adapt to new and novel behaviors that are more compatible with today's faster environment.

Paul Steele
Managing Director at Jazzking Pty Ltd

November 2015-February 2016 Issue: Call for Submissions

The theme for our upcoming issue has been announced: Workplace Discrimination, Harassment,



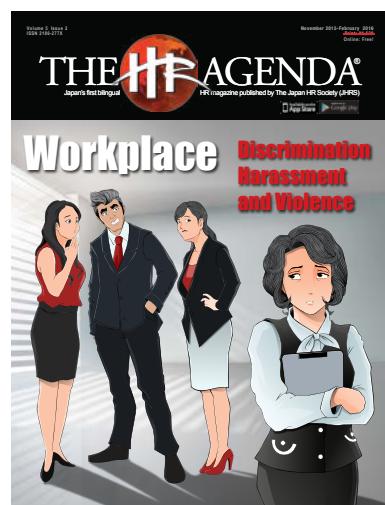
The Passing of Singapore's Founding Father, Lee Kuan Yew

The HR Agenda April-June 2015 issue featured Singapore in our Country Focus column, and just as we were going to print, we learned of the passing of Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of Singapore, on March 23. We regret not having been able to include this notice in the publication, but we would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences to the people of Singapore as well as all of our readers of Singaporean descent or connection, on the passing of a man that many respected and revered for the work he did and the contributions he made.

and Violence. At this time *The HR Agenda* is accepting submissions for inclusion into this issue.

All submissions should be between 800 and 1,000 words in English or between 2,000 and 2,500 characters in Japanese unless otherwise stated, and may be written in English and/or Japanese. Articles may be written as essays, original research, reviews, interviews, profiles, and analytical reports.

The deadline for manuscripts to be submitted is August 31, 2015. Any questions and correspondence may be addressed directly to the editor-in-chief, Atley Jonas (editor-in-chief@jhrs.org). ☎



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