

## Succession Planning

Companies today are facing the horns of a dilemma – while many are laying off employees to survive the economic slump, they are also losing many senior (meaning both older and middle to upper level management) employees to retirement. A recent BC Human Resources Management Association seminar addressed this issue and explored ways to create an effective succession plan:

- ◇ Through six-month or annual performance reviews, identify potential candidates for leadership roles. Create development plans to prepare them for additional responsibilities and provide specific, ongoing feedback. Informal monthly meetings will provide opportunities to discuss what the employee is doing well and what needs improvement;
- ◇ To identify potential leaders, a company may choose to administer standardized tests to provide objective data to identify strengths and weaknesses. There are many such tests available, but it is best to have the results interpreted by a trained human resources consultant;
- ◇ Create a specific, personalized development plan for each candidate that will enhance their strengths and help them overcome their weaknesses;
- ◇ As much as possible, try to identify potential pitfalls – senior management must support the program, the required leadership skills must be clearly defined, and the necessary follow-through must be in place;
- ◇ Communicate frequently with potential candidates regarding positions available, skills sets required, the assessment and development process.
- ◇ Ensure that candidates understand that promotion is based on predictions of future success, not past successes and if a candidate expresses reluctance to develop the necessary attributes, they may not be ready to advance to the next level;

Remember that succession management is about developing and strategically placing key people throughout the organization. It's important to note, too, that failure to institute an effective succession plan can impact your organization's effectiveness and may even weaken chances of success.