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S

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Succession Planning is broadly defined as a process for identifying and developing potential future leaders or managers, along with individuals to fill other mission-critical positions, either in the short or the long-term. Succession planning programmes typically include the provision of practical work experience that will be relevant for future senior or key roles in addition to training and development activities. In a service focused discipline like facilities management there are many roles where a vacant position is not tenable. Therefore a robust Succession Plan is a key component of the FM business continuity plan.

Focusing on the most senior posts and key roles, means that, even in large FM teams, only a few people at any given time would be subject to the Succession Planning process. The relatively low numbers involved can help make the process more manageable. That said, many large organisations operate devolved models in divisions, sites or countries where the same or similar processes are applied to a wider population

Those responsible for Succession Planning need to be highly knowledgeable about how the department is likely to evolve and how such change might affect the numbers involved in succession planning and the skills they must possess. This necessitates a close relationship between the Succession Plan and the facilities strategic plan. It is important to avoid talent tunnel vision, where the focus is purely on current skills needs, and to ensure they develop a good understanding of future needs across the discipline.

Participants in Succession Plan programmes may be selected either by informal methods, such as conversations with managers, or by more formal techniques, such as the performance review process or the assessment of competencies.

Generic competency frameworks can provide a useful starting point for evaluating an individual's potential for a role. However, there should not be an over-reliance on competencies because they may be too mechanistic to assess skills such as leadership. Moreover, they relate to the past and present rather than to the future.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has useful guidance on Succession Planning at www.cipd.co.uk