



AccessAbility SIG Succession Plan

Published March 2006

Background

Leadership succession is essential for any community to survive, but successful succession demands planning. A proactive approach to leadership management, including the engagement and retention of talent via succession planning, has become a critical priority for sustaining strong leadership.

Retention and succession planning is a combined process that should be recognized as a strategic imperative for an organization's future success. Each community has to develop a strategy that fits its own specific needs. The basic criteria required for any succession plan to be successful include the following:

- Making succession management part of an overall drive to develop leaders at all levels.
- Establishing the commitment of all leaders and potential leaders as they are identified.
- Using an overall organizational strategy to dictate necessary leadership skills and the quantity of management talent required.
- Clearly defining the specific behaviors, skills, and values that leaders need in order for them to succeed now and in the future.

A sound succession strategy is more than just a backup plan for qualified successors. It is a valuable tool used to develop new leaders and ensure continuous vitality and growth within the community.

Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive framework for actions that will support the implementation of our succession-planning efforts.

Related Documents

Please see also the following:

- A-SIG Transition Plan
- A-SIG Election Procedure

- A-SIG Job Descriptions for Officers and Key Positions
- A-SIG Membership Procedure
- A-SIG Five-Year Strategic Plan
- A-SIG Rechartering document (includes mission statement, goals and objectives, strategies, and activities)

Plan Objective

The primary objective of our succession-planning program is to ensure that effective leadership exists in our organization for years to come. The succession-planning process helps us to identify individuals with talent and to give them the experience and training they need to assume greater leadership responsibilities.

Procedure

Planning for succession involves the following steps:

1. **Identifying and grooming people to replace you.**

Ideal potential leaders are people who:

- Have a clear understanding of the SIG's (as well as STC's) mission, goals, and operations
- Are committed to the professional development of their peers
- Enjoy interacting with people
- Are reliable
- Are organized

After identifying potential leaders, "groom" them by:

- Inviting them to serve with you, whether officially or unofficially
- Helping them develop their skills by having them shadow a current leader

The best time to begin identifying and grooming leaders is early in your leadership term, about a month or two after you officially assume your leadership position. If you wait until five or six months have passed, elections are already upon you.

2. **Providing resources for your replacement.**

The new leader might find the following information useful:

- The five documents listed above under Related Documents
- Information in the archives of the SIG's communication media:
 - Web site
 - Newsletter
 - Conference presentations

- Published articles
 - Additional procedures for leadership planning followed by your community
 - A list of community resources, both electronic and in the form of other leaders and subject-matter experts
 - Samples of correspondence
 - Examples and results of member surveys
3. **Scheduling activities for the new leader.**
 By planning the first month or two of the new leader's term, you ensure that he or she gets comfortable sooner without the need for immediate actions and decisions. (Also see the A-SIG Transition Plan.)

What if you are unable to find a successor?

If you are unable to find a successor among your community members, you need to do one of two things:

- *Set your sights elsewhere.*
 Your most likely candidates will come from the ranks of other communities, such as those whose missions are closely related to those of your own (e.g., Usability SIG). You could also tap geographical communities with which the A-SIG has ties.
- *As a last resort, consider allowing the community to become inactive.*
 Sometimes that's all it takes to inspire someone to step forward. If nobody does, perhaps there isn't enough interest in your community's focus. The Society will maintain all community records that you have made available to them for an unspecified period of time. If a leader(s) steps forward in the future, the Society will supply him or her with these records. You may also want to consider merging your community with another one. Because the technical communications landscape is dynamic, be open and willing to accept changes in direction and adapt to them.

Measuring Success

- Once we have our Succession Plan in place, how do we measure its success?
The most common method to measure success is by calculating member turnover rates and satisfaction levels.
- Another key metric in evaluating a succession plan is the early identification of prospective leaders.
Success can also be evaluated based on how much of a positive effect a new leader has on the community's reputation and brand.
- Finding, maintaining, and training top leadership talent is of utmost importance for the vitality of our community.
Good succession planning means never having to say good-bye without saying hello.