



Succession Planning Workbook

This succession planning workbook is designed to guide you through the key steps of preparing your organization for a successful leadership transition and long-term continuity.

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Welcome!



At Synergy Pathfinders, we understand that leadership transitions can be pivotal moments for any organization. Whether you're a small business owner contemplating retirement or a nonprofit leader aiming to ensure continuity, having a clear succession plan is essential.

To assist you in this process, we've developed a comprehensive Succession Planning Services Guide tailored specifically for small businesses and nonprofits. This guide offers insights into:

- Identifying critical roles within your organization
- Developing internal talent pipelines
- Establishing clear transition protocols
- Ensuring organizational stability during leadership changes

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss how we can support your organization's succession planning needs, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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TABLE OF *contents*

03	<u>Succession Planning Overview</u>
04	<u>Owner Vision & Goals</u>
05	<u>Business Readiness Assessment</u>
06	<u>Successor Identification & Development</u>
07	<u>Successor Evaluation Matrix</u>
08	<u>Documenting the Transition Plan</u>
09	<u>Financial & Legal Preparation</u>
10	<u>Operational Continuity</u>
11	<u>90- Day Action Plan</u>
12	<u>Accountability Tracker</u>



Succession Planning Overview

Succession planning is the process of identifying and developing new leaders who can replace current leaders when they leave, retire, or step down. It's essential for preserving business value and ensuring continuity. Succession planning tools also help nonprofits ensure leadership continuity by identifying and preparing future leaders, reducing the risk of operational disruption. They also support strategic talent development aligned with the organization's mission and long-term goals.

Common Transition Paths

- Sale to outside buyer
- Family transition
- Internal leadership promotion
- Employee buyout/ ESOP
 - An Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) is a retirement plan that allows employees to become beneficial owners of stock in the company they work for.

Quick Readiness Quiz

- Do you have a documented succession plan?
- Is your business financially healthy?
- Have you identified potential successors?
- Are your business processes documented?
- Is your team prepared for leadership changes?

Owner Vision & Goals

Before planning your organization's future, take time to reflect on your own. This section helps you clarify your personal motivations, lifestyle goals, and vision for life after transition. A clear leader vision sets the tone for every step that follows.

Why are you planning for succession now?

What does your ideal transition look like?

What role do you want post-transition, if any?

What legacy do you want to leave?

What are your financial and lifestyle goals?

Business Readiness Assessment

This assessment will help you evaluate critical areas such as financial health, documentation, leadership strength, and dependency on you. Use your scores to identify where you need to focus first. Use the following scorecard to assess your business's readiness for succession. Rate each area on a scale of 1 (Not Ready) to 5 (Fully Ready). Use the space below each section for any notes.

Financial Health & Documentation: _ / 5

Systems & Processes: _ / 5

Team & Leadership Bench Strength: _ / 5

Legal Structure & Compliance: _ / 5

Customer & Vendor Relationships: _ / 5

Owner Dependency: _ / 5

Successor Identification & Development

Choosing the right successor is key to sustaining your organization's mission and momentum. This section guides you in identifying potential internal or external successors, assessing their capabilities, and outlining development steps to get them ready.

Who are potential successors (Internal/ External)?

What skills and traits are essential?

What development is needed to prepare them?

Successor Evaluation Matrix

Use this matrix to objectively compare potential candidates. Evaluate each person's strengths, leadership traits, and development needs. This tool helps clarify who might be the best fit and what support they may need to succeed.

Example: Candidate Name: Jordan Smith; Strengths: Strategic thinking, team leadership; Development Needs: Financial acumen, legal compliance knowledge; Estimated Timeline to Readiness: 6 months

Candidate Name	Strengths	Development Needs	Estimated Timeline to Readiness

Documenting the Transition Plan

A well-documented plan ensures that everyone is aligned and that no important detail is missed. Use this checklist to define the timeline, key responsibilities, communication strategy, legal updates, and contingency plans.

Checklist for a structured transition:

DEFINE TIMELINE AND PHASES OF TRANSITION

CLARIFY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN

IDENTIFY LEGAL DOCUMENTS TO UPDATE

CREATE A CONTINGENCY PLAN

Notes:

Financial & Legal Preparation

Proper financial and legal planning protects the organization, the successor, and you. In this section, you'll identify key tasks such as getting a business valuation, reviewing tax implications, updating agreements, and planning for your estate, if applicable.

BUSINESS VALUATION

TAX IMPLICATIONS

BUY-SELL AGREEMENTS

INSURANCE PLANNING

ESTATE PLANNING (FOR FAMILY TRANSITIONS)

Notes:

Operational Continuity

Can your organization operate smoothly without you? This section prompts you to document key procedures, transfer critical knowledge, and establish systems that ensure consistency and clarity for the next generation of leadership. Checklist to ensure your business can run smoothly without you:

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE DOCUMENTATION _____

KEY PASSWORDS AND TOOLS _____

DEFINED ROLES AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS _____

DOCUMENTED CLIENT AND VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS _____

Notes:

90-Day Action Plan

Break your big-picture transition into manageable steps. This section helps you define clear milestones over the next 90 days, setting momentum and ensuring progress toward your succession goals.

Example: *Short-Term Goal- Identify legal counsel for buy-sell agreement.*

Short-Term (1-3 Months)	Medium-Term (3-6 Months)	Long-Term (6-12+ Months)

Accountability Tracker

Use this space to organize tasks, assign deadlines, and monitor progress. This tracker keeps everyone accountable and helps you stay on top of your succession efforts.

Task	Owner	Deadline	Status

Client Testimonials



“Heather [of Synergy Pathfinders, LLC] is a results-driven powerhouse who consistently delivers polished, high-impact proposals and deliverables that elevate our success.”

– Jen Willette, Altman, Rogers & Co.

“Her [Heather of Synergy Pathfinders, LLC] dedication to providing high-quality service and her proactive approach make her a trusted asset to our team.”

– Anita Samarth, Clinovations Government + Health, Inc.

“We’ve been working with Heather [of Synergy Pathfinders, LLC] for over 6 years, and in that time, she’s been essential to strengthening our organizational accounting structure and financial recordkeeping.”

– September Wallingford, Costs of Care, Inc.



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