LASTING LEADERSHIP

A four-session masterclass programme to support leaders and organisations develop sustainable leadership capacity.

Masterclass Two: 16 June 2020

Succession Planning: *Developing capacity, contingency planning, and knowledge management processes.*

Hyperlinks to useful resources shared in the Masterclass:

- Lasting Leadership Guide
- Session One Notes
- Succession Planning Guide
- Succession Planning worksheet
- Knowledge Management Guide
- Trusted Charity (formerly PQASSO) quality system – NCVO
- The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, R. Heifitz, A. Grashow, M. Linsky
- Idea screening matrix, Grampian Opportunities (thanks Linda!)
- Intellectual Capital: the New Wealth of Organization, T.A. Stewart
- Masterclass three: Lateral Leadership bookings
- Masterclass four: Next Generation/Equalities bookings

Succession planning: the challenge

- Three quarters of non-profit organisations do not have a succession plan in place.
- Around one fifth of leaders in the sector are currently seeking a new opportunity.

A poll in today's session showed that just over 80% of Masterclass participants don't have a formal, written succession plan in place. However, most organisations are undertaking work on succession, and others had succession plans in place for board or senior positions.

We don't have a formal plan but we have a culture that takes succession seriously.

Our Board does and we've talked about it for the senior team a lot but it hasn't been turned into anything tangible yet.

Succession planning is often is seen as 'nice to have' – until we someone leaves, and we are at panic stage.

Practice sharing: succession planning challenges in your organisation

- We want to give our team progression opportunities but we're not able to pay people to take on additional responsibilities.
- Having charismatic/well-known Chief Executives (or trustees!) can mean the organisation is associated with one person.
- For smaller organisations (<10 staff) capacity can be limited and there can be a blurring or overlap in roles e.g. between delivery and management or between management and governance.
- Using 'acting in absence' policies is positive but sometimes people who have been acting up find it difficult to hand things back over again. When/how does 'acting' stop?
- There can be a pressure to not spend on management and admin. But to do what we do, we need to resource management capacity, including planning for succession.
- The current economic climate means money is going to be incredibly tight - this may mean that funding for management capacity may be even more difficult to secure.

Succession planning requires technical *and* adaptive responses:

Technical responses are best suited to situations that have a straightforward answer to a question or challenge e.g. how can we share files? or 'how do we assess risk?'. **Responses can include:** formal succession plans; file sharing software; knowledge management plans; 'how to' guides; risk register.

Adaptive responses are best suited to situations that are more complex, messy and/or uncertain – when there is no straightforward answer and we need to explore and adapt to find ways to respond. **Responses can include:** identifying ways to build leadership capacity across the team; *embedding* plans (succession / knowledge management, etc) into your existing organisational processes; sharing 'know-how' across the team e.g. shadowing and cross-team working; bringing 'how to' guides to life, so they don't gather dust on the shelf!

Practice sharing: planning for succession in your organisation:

Holistic and planned succession

- CV-19 has brought succession planning into sharp focus. It has made us plan for succession in every role and review processes, such as our scheme of delegation.
- Creating a sub-committee of the board ensures we take a planned approach to succession – it's more than just chatting about it.
- Using quality standards (such as PQASSO, as was) as a structure for storing and sharing information - and making it more accessible.

Dealing with risk, including single-person risk

- Developing structures for sharing information and leadership is key e.g. using a deputising matrix to plan for the risk of losing a team member.
- Ensuring the organisation's leadership is shared and making sure partners don't just associate the organisation with one person.
- We shouldn't be afraid of single-person risk – small/lean charities are likely to have one person with specific skills/knowledge. BUT we do need to be AWARE of this risk and plan how to manage it.
- Limiting trustees' terms of office can help to reduce dependence.

Building capacity

- Developing our team is critical to succession - even (particularly?) in a lean organisation – this can include:
  - Creating opportunities to shadow, having buddy schemes, enabling team members to spend time with trustees.
  - Embedding mentoring in support and supervision and allowing team members to test their leadership skills in 'safe' ways.
- Handovers only do part of the job! They tend to focus on the technical side of things, we need to also focus on relationships, etc.
- 'How things work' documents can be a challenge to keep up to date, and they need to be 'brought to life' - but it's better to have these, than not.
- Developing the skills and capacity needed to respond to the evolving environment will ensure we are prepared to meet future demands (e.g. by continuing a recruitment process during CV-19, developing internal capacity, or getting external help)

Opportunities to develop new ways of thinking and working

- Replacing trustees and staff creates ripples through everything we do. But this also creates opportunities to develop new systems, ways of thinking and working.
- Encouraging staff to take up senior role secondment opportunities in other organisations can build skills and knowledge in a sustainable way. Secondees come back to the organisation with that development/learning.

Resourcing succession and leadership development

- Combining management responsibilities into frontline roles can make it easier to fund.
- There is a variation amongst funders about resourcing management capacity - some are very good at recognising the need for good management.

Practice sharing: the next steps for succession planning in your organisation

Identify priorities and formalise succession planning

- We've had Informal discussions about succession where we agreed board roles and responsibilities. We now need to formalise this.
- Take a phased approach - don't try to do too much too soon. Start out by identifying the 'high level' knowledge and build it up over time.
- There is a lot to do – we need to get a clear plan in place to prioritise what actions we need to take.
- We'll put succession planning on the agenda of our 'Strategy & Futures' board subgroup and will possibly set up a separate sub-committee on the topic.
- Ownership of the succession plan: who should take responsibility for it? Possibly our risk committee? It shouldn't be just one person who drives this!

The Succession Planning self-assessment in the Lasting Leadership Guide can help with prioritising next steps.

Build capacity

- Focus on recruitment process to identify the right person, and the skills/knowledge needed for what we're trying to achieve. It's not about finding 'replacements' for key roles but building capacity and knowledge across the team.
- CV-19 has shown that people want to help - and are able to. They won't always have the knowledge/experience, but we can give them opportunities to get it!
- Bring in external knowledge when needed but try to build knowledge in our teams.
- Develop collective learning-exchange spaces to share internal knowledge, skills and learning. This will require investing time to make this happen.
- 'How to' guides can be helpful to set out guidelines for specific areas of work e.g. evaluation. BUT we need to bring these to life – otherwise they will just sit on the shelf.
- The challenge of CV-19 can make it feels like it's not the right time for these discussions – but then when IS the right time? Maybe CV-19 actually gives an opportunity to really talk about these things. E.g. when we go back to the office it will be a very different world – we'll probably need to re-induct people.
- We need to make the most of learning from CV-19 about different ways of working – so we don't just go back to our old routines when we go back to the office.
- Identify critical dependencies, key roles that people have - limiting that exposure to risk by identifying those responsibilities.

Identify our strengths and ways to share knowledge

- Start or renew conversations with our team and trustees, a light touch audit of our strengths and weaknesses (or skills audit).
- Look at knowledge gaps. Does everyone know where to find what they need?
- Use technical responses (e.g. Office365) - these can be helpful for sharing files, etc.

There are more ideas and examples of good practice in the Lasting Leadership Guide.

Next steps:

This is the second of a four-session Masterclass Programme. The next Masterclasses will focus on the following sustainable leadership capabilities:

- **Masterclass 3:** **Lateral leadership** (24 Sept). Click here to book your place.
- **Masterclass 4:** **Attracting the next generation of leaders & supporting equality and diversity** (13 Oct). Click here to book your place.

If you have any questions please contact Jen Curran Jennifer@wrenandgreyhound.co.uk or visit www.TheLastingDifference.com where you'll find more information and resources.