

## Are You Stunting the Career Growth of Your Top Performers?

The key to success in any design firm comes from its linchpin talent — those performers and leaders who are vital to moving your company forward.

PSMJ Resources consultant Sandy Blaha works with design firms by helping them find and develop linchpin talent from within the firm. According to Blaha, your firm's competitive advantage depends on a system for fast tracking the development of these linchpin performers.

“As your firm rebounds from the recent recession and begins to grow again, developing the high performer/leader pipeline becomes more and more essential,” says Blaha.

The need to have this process in place is more urgent than many think:

- There is increased pressure to perform, as globalization and cheaper overseas labor trims profit margins.
- By the year 2015, there will be 15 percent less workers in the 35-44 year-old age group.
- The number of students entering the A/E profession is on the decline.

Blaha offers the following checklist of questions used to assess how well your firm is doing at growing and developing your staff. If you answer “No” to any of these questions, you should consider an investment in that area.

### When managing linchpin talent, does your company ...

- Choose the right individuals for the most critical roles?

- Provide integrated leadership development interventions that support leadership succession?
- Develop and utilize a leadership development pathway?
- Have a culture that values emerging and developing leaders?
- Have enthusiastic champions leading performance and change?
- Design sophisticated learning pathways such as strategic job assignments and action learning projects?
- Link strategy and performance with promotions and rewards?

### When your firm expects a succession of leadership, does your company ...

- Know how to transfer authority to a key person?
- Define the requirements for success?
- Have both the stockholders and the successor define their vision for their future, define their goals and explain how those visions align with the future of the company?
- Meet weekly to review tasks and day to day goals and meet at least quarterly to evaluate the authority transfer and succession process?

### How does your company handle performance coaching? Does the company ...

- Have an approach for identifying high performance personnel?
- Have a targeted investment strategy for your high performers?

- Have a champion for each key person, either in-house or an outside neutral party who is a trusted advisor of your key individuals and committed to their success?
- Defined a reward process that distinguishes excellence rather than mediocrity?
- Set agreed upon performance challenges for key personnel such that they have the opportunity to excel?
- Have a process that supports learning transfer, from classroom to implementation, to results?

### And finally, you should be able to provide an answer to these important questions ...

- What is the success profile of leaders that excel in your company? Will the future be different? How should that success profile change?
- What are the styles and strengths of your key individuals? Do they know where they fit into the future of your company?
- Have you identified the leadership roles that will be vacated in the next five to ten years?
- Do you know what gaps exist in the capabilities of your staff?
- Do you have enough people in your future top talent pool?
- Do your leaders possess the foresight, flexibility and adaptability to lead when the market changes? ■

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