

# ***The Succession Challenge***

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*Human intelligence has many dimensions. The most fascinating is our ability to make sense of contradictions. Just look at the worldwide web. It is the most centralized system and yet, happens to be the most liberating, de-centralized and empowering. It connects people and facilitates communication, with access to valuable information in real-time!*

A healthy and vibrant business is one that welcomes change and encourages succession – a planned staff and management turnover. Adopting such a guiding philosophy is essential to build agility and sustainability in any organization.

Do you deliberately encourage your people to grow in their jobs, groom others, and go

on to the next level of responsibility - or out to another opportunity? The better you get at doing this, the stronger your business will become! I know this sounds crazy, but this is the way forward. It presents a real leadership challenge.

All successful businesses today are evidence of the fact that someone took a courageous people-decision at some point in time in the past. You are invited to do the same.

Think about it, price and quality used to determine success in business. But these two elements no longer serve as the key differentiating factors. Today, 'speed to market', along with the traditional two, is what gives organizations the competitive edge and the gift of endurance. To achieve speed, you need to redesign your business by entertaining a completely new paradigm – one that builds trust at every level and empowers people to make decisions that delight customers and consumers. Such a move would be nothing short of revolutionary.

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Consider a typical business scenario. In manufacturing, concepts like Just in Time (JIT), as successfully applied by companies like Toyota, the aim is to optimize inputs, work in progress and outputs. Use this as a metaphor to leverage the human factor in your organization.

Consider assigning an expiry date for every job position based on the level of complexity

and sophistication of the tasks involved. These timelines could range from two years to 5-7 years. Such a practice will help your managers and their staff at every level know what is expected of them. They will grow their capabilities accordingly. They will also be focused on identifying and grooming their successor/s in good time, and they will plan their move to the next level of responsibility, either in the same function or to a new area altogether, making the transitions seamless.

Conventional human resource management works on three core pillars “Attract, Retain and Grow. Attract and Grow are plausible. However, an attempt to retain talent is a questionable practice. Why should an organization want to cling to its people? An oft-presented explanation: ‘Because their value lies in what they know and how they perform. It takes a lot of time and money to develop people.’ A rebuttal: ‘But aren’t knowledge and skills transferable?’ Fact: ‘Yes, they are’. The very act of knowledge sharing, coaching and mentoring throughout the business is vital to efficient and effective succession.

In complying with the laws of nature, retention of people as a practice “block” the flow of progress, energy and leads to stagnation, deterioration and eventually, demise of any organization.

I encourage managers to embed KZR’s ‘GGG’ (Grow, Groom & Get on) model in their corporate culture. GGG encourages a healthy flow of people – joining, performing, developing successor, and exiting on a planned basis.

Flow, whether in streams or in blood vessels, is a sign of health. The best contribution any organization that genuinely cares about corporate social responsibility, is to provide its community with a constant flow of talented and committed people, who add value through their leadership in an entrepreneurial or an employment context.

As we flow into the future; as we evolve and grow, we come to ever newer sets of realizations of what is possible. Our individual and collective awareness of our own potential and that of our business makes us responsible. It is our sense of responsibility that empowers us to venture into domains of human activity where few have dared before.

A few smart business leaders have begun to shape their organizations on the ‘GGG’ principle, to unlock the hidden competitive edge. The art lies in unleashing human energy and channelizing it to achieve the corporate vision. This can be done by tapping into aspirations of people working with you and getting them to engage in meaningful conversations throughout the business on a regular basis.

Your challenge, in the face of countless uncertainties in your environment, lies in making succession a habit in your business.

The new paradigm for businesses of the future is ‘GGG’. According to this paradigm, individuals would join an organization for a mutually rewarding association for a pre-agreed duration, contribute to business goals, develop themselves, transfer their

knowledge and skills to their successors efficiently and effectively, and go on to the next levels of responsibility within the existing business or land themselves elsewhere.

Businesses of the future will be benchmarked for the rate at which they achieve succession at every level. While making intuitive sense and promising unique competitive advantages, implementation of GGG poses unique challenges for organizations that have thus far followed the traditional route of wanting to retain 'talent,' at any cost.

To embrace GGG you would need to confront status quo that is deeply infected by mistrust and insecurities.

Businesses seeking greater vitality, strength and endurance would need to review their people policies with respect to organizational development and the way they perceive staff turnover rates, compensation, rewards and recognition, roles of individuals, succession planning, and above all the kind of corporate culture that would facilitate succession as a way of life.

In my view, organizations that dare to implement GGG will attract the best people - people who are motivated by challenges and find security in skill and competence.

It will take a great leap of faith and imagination for you to achieve your dreams.

Meeting the succession challenge is like walking on water – or put another way – swimming against the tide!

We have walked on pavements far too long.  
What we need now is intelligent, courageous, wise, visionary and generous leadership!

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