

## Chapter 6

# Succession Planning and the Talent Management Toolbox

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter defines succession planning as a key component of talent management and explains its relevance for academic libraries. With a combination of unique human capital challenges and the current higher education environment, academic libraries are now facing risks that require special considerations as they plan for the future. In this chapter, the authors define talent management and succession planning and review the major models that are currently in use. They then discuss the “decision-science” framework, which they propose is best suited for addressing future talent needs in academic libraries. Such elements as resources and processes, organization and talent, and sustainable strategic success are highlighted as avenues to linking overall decisions around impact, effectiveness, and efficiency. The final aspect of the chapter includes techniques for developing the talent pipeline, identifying “pivotal” positions, and developing strategies and practices. Assessing progress against talent management goals, including identifying specific metrics, is also outlined.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Those involved with managing a workforce have been increasingly hearing not just about succession planning, workforce planning, strategic human capital, talent management, and other phrases that involve human resources, but their increasing importance. Such strategies comprise a key aspect of any organization's competitive advantage, so must be included in the organization's human resource (HR) portfolio. What does this all mean in an academic setting? Or, what does it actually mean, at all?

The goal of this chapter is to define talent management, its relevance for academic libraries, and to provide a framework for managing talent in order to improve succession planning outcomes. The combination of unique human capital challenges and the current higher education environment present risks that require special considerations. Academic libraries often face resource constraints, including understaffing, cultural challenges, lack of competitive salaries and advancement opportunities, and lack of support from the enterprise. Higher education is increasingly under scrutiny about costs, value, and how it stacks up against emerging alternatives such as for-profit institutions, distance education and MOOC's (massive open online courses).

With an abundance of open content on the Internet (including free articles and books, data, and even lectures) difficult questions are being asked about why anyone would attend college at all. This is especially true as concern grows about rising student debt, which was reported to outpace credit card

debt in 2012 (Martin & Lieber, 2012). The past several years of deep economic recession and the resulting high unemployment are causing legislators, the media and members of the general public to question the meaning of "gainful employment." This is especially true as unemployment rates even among college graduates has been so high as to call into question the value of a degree.

These competitive forces in higher education mean that libraries must be prepared to embrace the challenges of today and invest in talent in order to remain competitive and relevant.

## WHY TALENT MATTERS

In their book *The Talent-Powered Organization*, Cheese and his co-authors (2008) note that "talent has become the single most important force for creating strategic value for your organization." This represents a huge paradigm shift of the past 30 years. Formerly, in an industrial economy, the value lay in physical assets; today these matter much less; it is the people, knowledge and systems that make a greater impact on the success of an organization--"talent and brainpower are now the predominant currency."

In response to the need to develop talent within the academic library, some have undertaken succession planning programs in order to alleviate future staffing concerns and provide continuity of operations and development opportunities for "high-potential" employees. Hiring internally is seen as cheaper, faster, and less disruptive to operations. For libraries, there is concern that without succession

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