Avoiding Disappointing Departures
SAWA 2017 Annual Conference
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Topics

• Introductions
• CEO transitions: challenging, but inevitable
• Lessons from real life
• What makes transitions challenging?
• What to do about it

The panel

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MODERATOR
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A few questions to get us started...

Transitions: challenging, but inevitable

• EVERY job & career ends in a transition. It’s just a matter of WHEN, HOW, and HOW WELL managed.
• Watershed moment for the organization & all involved
• Profound impact on performance & sustainability
• A time of vulnerability & concern

Transitions: lessons from real life
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What makes transitions challenging?

- Succession denial → lack of plans
- Underappreciation of the board-CEO partnership
- “Replacement” succession mentality
- Equating “transition” with “search”

What to do about it

- **BOARDS:**
  - STEWARD the board-CEO partnership
  - GET PROACTIVE – have frank succession conversations
  - ADOPT a succession policy & backup plan
  - RECOGNIZE that a transition is more than a search
  - CONSIDER an employment contract
- **EXECUTIVES:**
  - INITIATE the succession conversations, policy, & backup plan
  - RECOGNIZE the three jobs of a departing executive

Steward the board-CEO partnership

1. Clarify aims/priorities,
2. Understand responsibilities,
3. Discuss mutual expectations, and
4. Identify and use performance measures.
   Rinse and repeat annually.
Succession policy & backup plan

• Succession policy
  • Gets everyone out of denial
  • Plans cover different CEO succession scenarios
• Backup plan
  • Defines “business as usual” duties
  • Designates a cross-trained backup

The Board’s Six Transition Tasks

Resources

• "Succession essentials" planning guide
• "Managing the CEO Transition: The Board's 6 Tasks" article
• Executive exit strategy planning guide
• Exit agreements article

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