Succession Planning: out with the old and in with the new, or a tool for organisational success?

Expected or not, leadership succession is inevitable for any organisation; of significance successful succession must be planned for.

To this end here at AfPP we have been planning for the Presidential transition between ourselves for the past six months and for the most significant of reasons:

- to assure corporate governance
- to safeguard organisational memory
- to maintain essential stakeholder relationships
- and importantly, to sustain and build the continuing pace of AfPP’s development.

Parallel to what is happening in AfPP as we change roles, succession planning should be an essential consideration in our fast changing world of health care, given the impact that the imminent retirement of an entire generation of leaders will have on our future perioperative capability.

As we continue to read regular press reports of ‘brain drain’ and ‘leadership gaps’, succession planning is fast becoming a distinct strategic imperative.

Of significance, the Annual Report of Investors in People UK (July 2008), identified that while efforts to improve the business performance and productivity of UK organisations are progressing; poor people management and inadequate succession planning continues to put organisations at risk, compromising their efficiency and productivity.

While AfPP has not pursued ‘investors in people’ status, we do recognise that well thought succession plans are vital to assure and maintain organisational growth and momentum. We also recognise that retention of individuals and succession planning for leadership are essential and combined processes.

Although consultants are always on hand to provide useful but often ‘expensive’ advice, there are some basic criteria that we should all heed if we want a succession plan to succeed:

- Best practise organisations make succession management part of an overall drive to develop managers/leaders at all levels.
- Successful planning requires ongoing commitment and positive communication with all directly affected.
- Leadership skills, and the talent required, have to be dictated by an overall organisational strategy.
- Succession management needs to be integrated within recruitment, selection, retention and development systems.

More than just a back up plan for filling staff gaps, a succession strategy is a valuable tool used by best practice organisations to grow their staff base and future leaders to ensure continuous development. Quite simply, succession planning is an investment of time and commitment to facilitate the long-term vision of an organisation.

We are confident that we have planned appropriately to take AfPP Forward.

‘Out with the Old’

Jane Reid
Past President AfPP

‘In with the New’

Diane Gilmour
President AfPP