

Future Planning - Why is succession planning important?

Succession planning is a critical element of any well run sporting organisation. When there are processes in place to assist with succession planning, much of the stress in your Club or Association can be minimised.

“The best recruit a Club/Association President can make is the recruitment of the club’s next President!”

It may take some time to set up, but the benefit is well worth the time taken. The tasks are often not difficult but just take some time and experience to work out.

Imagine you are a volunteer willing to help out and the Club or Association you have found yourself at is fumbling around explaining to you what to do, leaving parts out, not knowing how many people are needed, looking frazzled because the manager ‘needs’ to be somewhere else putting out another ‘spot fire’. Would you come back to volunteer in the future?

A good succession plan may include your organisations:

- Strategic/Operational plan
- Position/role descriptions
- A list of general volunteer positions
- Any relevant Club or Association policies

The benefits of strategic planning are huge – your organisation appears well organised, any volunteers have all the information they need and committee stress levels will benefit enormously. Find some time to commit to this process and reap the rewards personally and for your Club or Association.

Committee Succession and Elections

How the Committee is structured will determine how often it changes and the nature of that change. Changes usually occur through the annual election cycle and resignations. Whatever the reason, the resultant loss of management experience can be disruptive, although there are also positive aspects of alterations to Committee personnel. For example, new Committee members may inject the Club with fresh enthusiasm, increased expertise and new ideas.

Suggestion: Some organisations operate a rolling Committee structure in order to facilitate smooth transitions from election to election. In this approach, a designated number of Committee members stand down after a set period to enable fresh input from newly elected members. Even in these situations, there is the potential for important knowledge to be lost unless the Club is careful about the sequence and timing of the process.

An example of a rolling Committee could be:

Position	in	out	in	out
President	2020	2022	2023	2025
Secretary	2021	2023	2024	2026
Volunteer Coordinator	2022	2024	2025	2027
Treasurer	2023	2025	2026	2028

It is important for outgoing Committee members to pass on as much knowledge as possible to the person replacing them. This process will help new members to learn from past experiences, gain an understanding of how past successes were achieved and how to avoid potential problems. Such an approach emphasises the importance of keeping accurate and up-to-date records of all information relevant to particular roles. New members can also use previous minutes to become informed about past decisions of the Committee. The change process can be better managed by including the training and recruitment of potential Committee members within the overall business plan. Including these issues in the planning cycle also sends a message about their importance to the Club.

Suggested Handover procedures

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new Committee members should be informed through written position descriptions about their roles and responsibilities. Briefings from the previous office holder are important to clarify these issues. • A senior executive should brief the new Committee member about the Club, its history and its plans for the future. This could be backed up with a written strategic plan. • All new Committee members need to be supported in their role. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Committee members should be welcomed and encouraged to contribute. They need access to a past executive who can answer any questions on how the organisation works. • New Committee members need to know where all of the organisation's documents are filed and should have ready access to them. • New Committee members should be provided with copies of relevant documents e.g. The Constitution, contact details for other Committee members, Policies, Playing Rules / Bylaws etc |
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Planning your Election of Executives

The rules - **as stated in the constitution** - dictate how the Committee should function, how it is elected or appointed, meeting requirements, member terms, and who is eligible to serve. In most organisations, Committees are elected/appointed at the AGM. Nominations should be called for and made in writing well in advance of the AGM. This will require 'head hunting' to get the numbers and the right mix of motivations, skills and experiences needed to be represented on the Committee. In recruiting, members should consider how representative the Committee is and try to ensure that the Committee's composition balances the different sections of the organisation, age, gender, and ethnic and cultural background. It is worth undertaking recruitment well before the AGM and advertising that positions have been filled as a means of getting more members to attend. Some members won't attend an AGM if there is a fear of getting 'roped in' on the day.

The Election

If the club is serious about ensuring smooth transitions and maintaining effective Committee functioning, the election must be carefully planned. Key elements of successful elections include:

1. Making members aware of the importance of the election well in advance via a newsletter / email outlining the positions available and the responsibilities. Following up before the election, to boost nominations.
2. Contacting individuals that seem suitable for a particular position well in advance.
3. Inviting members interested in standing for office to attend open Committee meetings so they can see how the Committee functions.
4. Allowing members to nominate themselves so that everyone has a chance to stand regardless of whether they are asked.
5. Keeping track of the nominations in case it is necessary to approach suitable people who have not put their names forward for whatever reason.
6. If there is more than one nomination for a position, setting aside time for candidates to talk for two to three minutes at the AGM. The talk could cover past experience, the candidate's vision for the club and any special skills/experience they might offer.
7. Given that it is unlikely that people interested to support the club would be turned down – establishing other positions or breakdowns that could involve anyone showing interest.