



# Integrated Succession Plan Builds Sustainable Talent Pipeline for Aerospace Contractor

## **CONTACT US**

(925) 819 - 6007

[IntrinsicTalent.com](http://IntrinsicTalent.com)

[DBrand@IntrinsicTalent.com](mailto:DBrand@IntrinsicTalent.com)

## Department of Defense aerospace contractor embedded succession management into their business strategy. The result? Talent pools of emerging leaders and a reduction in turnover.

### THE CHALLENGES

In 2014, an aerospace contractor for the DoD desired substantial growth after a period of stagnation. Following the acquisition of a similarly-sized organization, the company nearly doubled in workforce. Despite the increased number of employees, over 80% of business areas were unable to identify an internal candidate ready to be the immediate successor.

Additionally, the aerospace industry at large presented challenges related to fierce competition and shifting demographics. As more and more students elected to invest in business-focused education rather than STEM career paths, there were—and still are—fewer young leaders qualified for promotional opportunities. As a result, increased attrition in leadership roles without internal successors became a substantial risk for business continuity.

The board recognized the risk and impending costs associated with having no internal

candidates to fill vacant positions due to turnover. To mitigate these operational and financial threats, the organization desired to refresh their outdated and static succession plan. The goal was to establish an actionable and strategic succession management plan that would build a sustainable talent pipeline in alignment with the company's business strategy and industry best practices.

### THE SOLUTIONS

Enlisting the engagement of senior leaders was key to establishing and implementing a successful succession strategy. Skipping this step may have resulted in a loss of talent, with the best talent leaving first. Relationships with each business line were swiftly developed in order to mitigate concerns, as well as identify the current state of succession. These relationships were critical to understanding the organization's succession landscape, and were also essential starting points for tools and processes to be piloted prior to organization-wide roll out.

**FIGURE A: Framework for Succession Management**



Three key tools served as the framework for enhancing their succession model:

## Succession Slates

---

Initial stakeholder conversations served as the foundation for developing succession slates, which articulated the business area's senior leader and potential successor(s). Succession slates allowed leaders to identify potential candidates who had the best chance to rapidly grow professionally in preparation for filling strategic roles in the near future. The succession slates were the catalyst for developing robust talent profiles to drive talent reviews.

## Talent Dashboards

---

Succession slates were then used to formulate actionable talent dashboards, demonstrating the current succession situation by categorizing potential candidates at various readiness levels. The first two levels articulated the number of individuals who would be ready for leadership immediately (Ready Now) or ready within one to two years with coaching support. The third level identified the number of emerging leaders for a talent pool. Ideally, organizations aim to have three to six candidates ready now or within one to two years, with 12-15 candidates identified in the talent pool.

In addition to identifying strengths, the dashboards uncovered risks, as leaders quickly saw where current and future succession gaps existed.

## Talent Profiles and Reviews

---

Talent profiles were then built for everyone identified on the succession slate. The profiles highlighted the potential successor's current role, key skills and leadership competencies,

coupled with their career aspirations and possible future roles. The executive leadership team initiated rigorous talent reviews for each candidate identified in the succession slates, using their talent profiles to generate robust discussion around their potential talent. Rather than holding reviews just once a year, talent reviews were conducted on a regular cadence, providing senior management more frequent exposure to prospective leaders. These sessions were facilitated around each candidate's Individual Development Plan (IDP).

### QUESTIONS FOR IDP'S

- Is this person invested in their development?
- Is the candidate progressing?
- What type of leader do they want to be?
- What kind of leader could they be?
- Where is the business that needs bolstering?

Talent reviews also enabled talent mobility for individuals demonstrating skills outside of their current business area.

“ Identifying candidates who could be cross-trained through a mix of on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring and education enabled leaders to begin developing near-term and mid-term leaders for generations of succession.

”

Leadership was also able to discuss future roles for succession candidates, including accelerated development for pressing needs. This proved to be an effective option for back-filling unexpected senior leader departures when an identified successor was not Ready Now for the new role.

In addition, the regular talent reviews identified employees with high demand skills and experience who were a flight risk. This provided direct managers a greater opportunity to retain top talent and engage employees throughout the process.

**Decreased Turnover.** The organization was able to reduce turnover of high-potential staff from 12% to 5% over a 12-month period. An enhanced succession model allowed them to be more proactive in their talent planning through frequent talent reviews. By having consistent dialog with upper managers regarding their career path, emerging leaders were motivated to stay on-board with the potential for future positions.

A renewed emphasis on the organization's talent pipeline enabled them to mitigate the future risk of unexpected departures with no

**FIGURE B: Tips for Talent Reviews**

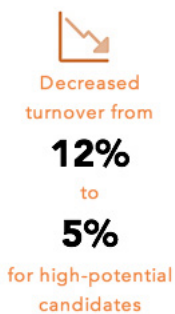


## THE RESULTS

The organization saw significant positive outcomes as a result of developing a detailed succession management plan. This critical investment of time and resources resulted in:

**Increased Engagement in Talent Strategy.** As business areas assumed ownership for their outcomes, leaders became much more engaged in the process. Managers felt empowered to provide clear direction and coaching for direct reports who demonstrated leadership potential.

They were also invested in becoming better career coaches that would highlight strengths and areas for future growth within the talent pool. By equipping managers with the appropriate tools and resources, intentional dialog began to shape the career paths for talented candidates.



qualified candidates to fill those roles. As leaders continue to hold themselves accountable to a Talent Dashboard, the health of the talent pipeline will remain front and center of their business strategy, ensuring emerging leaders are prepared for succession for generations to come.

---

**TO LEARN MORE,**  
**Visit [IntrinsicTalent.com](https://www.intrinsic.com)**

## MEET INTRINSIC TALENT SOLUTIONS

INTRINSIC Talent Solutions LLC is a Portland-based consultancy focused on Succession Management, as well as Leadership, Talent and Competency Development. We empower organizations from within by providing the knowledge, experience and expertise to solve your pressing talent challenges.

### DUNCAN BRAND, MBA, MA, BSc.

---



Duncan Brand is the Managing Principal for INTRINSIC Talent Solutions. Duncan was born and raised in the United Kingdom and then spent five years living and working in Central Europe before moving to the United States. His career has centered on the development of leaders, managers and employees in Senior Director roles for companies such as Cisco Systems, Aerojet Rocketdyne, Hewlett-Packard, Safeway, California ISO and the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, with a proven record of success in facilitating performance improvement through talent development initiatives, driving leadership and management projects with budgets up to \$10M. Duncan holds a Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems from California State University Sacramento, a Master of Business Administration from Golden Gate University, and a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Gonzaga University.

### MARVELL ALLEN, MA, BA

---



Marvell Allen is the Senior Talent Consultant at INTRINSIC Talent Solutions with a solid record of leading strategic training initiatives, leadership development and coaching efforts to resolve complex business issues. With expertise in delivering executive, management, and staff development programs to support organizational objectives, Marvell has a demonstrated track record as a training leader in dynamic organizations. By strategically partnering with senior executives and cross-functional teams, she successfully utilizes effective collaborative consulting and influencing skills to focus on business imperatives. Marvell's clients have included the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Twitter, LinkedIn, Genentech, Contra Costa County, Union Bank, Goodwill Industries, UC Berkeley, SanDisk, Institute on Aging, UC San Francisco, and Marriott International. Marvell is also currently a Lecturer for UC Davis, and was previously an Adjunct Faculty member at California State University East Bay. Her academic credentials include a Bachelor of Arts degree from University of California Berkeley, a Master of Arts in Political & Economic Assessment Pacific Basin (International Business), and Certified Leadership, Strengths-Finder, and Career Management Coaching credentials.