



How To Identify and Select Critical Positions For Succession Planning

Identifying and selecting criticality of key positions is a collaborative effort which requires an organization to convene a group of experts and/or leadership people for the purpose of making a decision for succession planning efforts. A group decision-making tool, called a Nominal Group Technique, is described below as one method of facilitating the collaboration of thoughts and ideas regarding the identification and selection of critical positions in the organization.

Prerequisite—Organizations must identify key positions before they can determine a criticality of a position. Please refer to the Identifying Key positions document for assistance in running a Nominal Group Technique to determine the key positions for the organization.

Objective - Identify what the participants think are the most important criteria for deciding the criticality of a position

1. Gather a group of decision makers.
2. Select a spokesperson, if necessary.
3. Define the topic under consideration: Identify the most important criteria for deciding the criticality of key positions for succession planning efforts.
4. Generate a list of proposed criteria (brainstorming):
 - Option 1 – Have the participants verbalize criteria and record those on a flip chart or grease board; stop when no more criteria is suggested. **Do not allow discussion on the criteria at this time.**
 - Option 2 – Have the participants write a list of criteria on cards without discussing the criteria. In round-robin fashion, go from one participant to the next having each participant read only one criteria at a time. Record their criteria on a flip chart or grease board. Continue this process until all participants have verbalized all their criteria. **Do not allow discussion on the criteria at this time.**
5. Clarify and discuss the criteria: The spokesperson points out each item, one by one, and asks if there are any questions or clarifications for a highlighted item. Initially, the person who generated the item should give clarification, but other members may join in to help define and focus the information. The participant that originally suggested the criteria must agree to any wording changes in defining the criteria. At this point the participants should combine and condense any duplicate criteria or information.
6. Once the criticality criteria are identified, create a matrix with the positions in the rows and the criteria in the columns.

7. Establish a criticality range (3, 2, or 1 or just 2 and 1) for each criterion. If possible, establish a high, medium, and low (or just high and low levels) of criticality for each criterion. Use 3 for high, 2 for medium, and 1 for low criticality. Discuss briefly with the participants what the definitions of high, medium, and low (or just high and low) mean for each criterion.
 8. Briefly discuss the first position on the first criterion. Once the discussion is completed have a show of hands to vote on whether the position is high, medium, or low on that criterion. Record the votes in the matrix on the flip chart. If most vote for high, the first criterion on the first position gets a 3. If most vote for medium, the criterion gets a 2, and if most vote for low, the first criterion gets a 1. (Use only 2 and 1 if the criterion only has two levels – high and low.).
 9. Discuss and vote on all criteria on one position first, then move to the next position and discuss and vote on all criteria, and so on until all positions have been discussed and voted on.
10. Total the rows to find the most critical key positions
- Sum the numbers in the cells in the row of the first position and put the total at the end of the row in a Total Column.
 - In the same manner, sum the numbers in the cells for the other rows (positions) and place those at the end of the row in the Total Column.
 - The key position with the highest number in the Total Column is the most critical of the key positions and should be the first position for the succession planning process. The key position with the second highest number in the Total Column is second in line for the succession planning process, and so on.