

THE 10-STEP SUCCESSION PLANNING BLUEPRINT

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- STEP 3 **People / Structure**
- STEP 4 **Culture**
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Succession planning for an A/E/C firm typically means preparing for an ownership transition. In reality, we're all in the process of succession, no matter what stage your firm is in. What are you headed toward?

Depending on your needs and goals, this may be a 7-step process, a three-year plan--or something entirely different. We decide that together.

At my previous architectural firm, our succession planning was over a decade long effort because it made working there more meaningful and fun for everyone. As we completed the 10 steps, we:

- Attracted and retained better talent.
- Designed better buildings.
- Built more lasting client relationships.
- Left a legacy by creating business value that lasted beyond the current owners.

Wherever you're at today is just fine--we can start there. We can break down these steps into manageable bites that allow you to meet your clients' deadlines, see results, still go on your vacations, meet your retirement goal and/or fall in love with your organization all over again.

Are you ready for that?

STEP 1 | **Benchmarking**

To develop an accurate snapshot of your starting point, together we benchmark firm valuation and document items of value to a potential future buyer. We review selling features, like your revenue to expense ratio, project profitability, revenue & profit growth trends, your team's strengths, and documented systems and processes—as well as discuss your probable retirement date range.

STEP 2 | **Mission**

A compelling mission statement that communicates your unique value proposition and higher social purpose will help attract your ideal client and your ideal employee. Whether your mission needs defining or a tune-up, together we discover it and communicate it in your materials—but more importantly it will become embodied through your decisions, from who you hire to how you do business.

STEP 3 | **People/Structure**

Your most important asset is your people. To make sure you have the right people in the right roles, I spend time meeting the team and conduct the PDPGlobal behavioral survey. We review your current organizational structure and identify career paths, emerging leaders, and a path to ownership. We also refine or develop your talent selection, onboarding, employee review, and professional development processes.

STEP 4 | **Culture**

“Culturally remarkable” companies perform 20–30% better than companies who don't take the time to build a motivating culture. Expanding upon your mission, we engage your team to discover your vision and core values, and then make sure your corporate practices, who you hire, the narrative you use to express yourself, and your physical office environment support your vision and core values.

STEP 5 | **Branding**

How is your company perceived by your clients and prospects? Your logo, tagline, mission, values, culture, and core competencies are all part of your brand. Together we conduct a client survey to confirm your firm's strengths and areas of development. Then we develop a plan to capitalize upon and correct significant survey discoveries, including a review of firm marketing materials to highlight your brand differentiators.

STEP 6 | **Operations Part I**

How effectively and efficiently you deliver your services is the key to increasing profits, improving client satisfaction, and reducing errors & omissions. Together with a select internal team, we refine your operational processes and standards, including your project management, quality control, and project kick-off/closeout processes—and any other aspect of operations that needs attention.

STEP 7 - **Marketing Part I**

Stellar strategy and execution of your marketing and business development game is how you will grow your practice. Are your processes consistently executed by an empowered marketing team? After reviewing what you have, we refine or develop items like your marketing specialization, Go/No-Go matrix, lead generation, new pursuit strategy, debriefing and other marketing processes.

STEP 8 | **Operations Part II**

Continually improving and documenting your operational processes is both a labor of love and labor-intensive. What's great is that you can develop your processes as you produce billable work AND they can positively affect project profits in real-time. Together we train your entire team to use the newly refined processes, tweak them based on experience, and keep using them until they become second nature.

STEP 9 | **Marketing Part II**

Once your key marketing and business development processes are refined and documented, we check in with your dedicated marketing team and technical “seller/does” to evaluate their success using the newly refined processes. We ask, what needs fine tuning, and have these processes translated into a stronger sales game?

STEP 10 | **Proof, Polish, and Go Public**

Now that your organization has strategic focus and improved processes, we conduct a follow-up valuation of the firm and document how your benchmarked items in Step 1 have improved. Then, we're ready to hold more detailed conversations with internal candidates who have expressed interest in ownership and/or firm management. We select your most desired financial method to transfer ownership and develop a Firm Succession Marketing Package that you present to prospective buyers. Lastly, we engage external consultants who will partner in the O/T process and discuss the emotional preparation for retirement. I'm here to help follow-through with your tailored succession plan until your goal is reached.