

Toolkit Template Replacing Key Employees

Objective: This template has been developed to document critical activities and information related to your business in the event of the incapacitation of your executive leader or owner. This toolkit profiles strategies and provides a guide for determining the best method for replacing key employees who may depart as a result of the incapacitation of the firm's leader or owner. It is not uncommon for key staff to resign based on uncertainty or other factors during such a situation.

There is an old adage that no staff member is indispensable. Many firms find themselves in situations in which processes, programming or other activities have not been properly documented by staff, making them indispensable by virtue of their unique undocumented knowledge. Especially for key employees, all duties, responsibilities and activities need to be fully documented to prevent major disruptions to the business as a result of their unexpected or sudden departures. Do not allow them to put off doing this task by claiming lack of time or other higher priority tasks. It may be helpful to assign another employee to shadow them and document what they do. The owner or senior leader needs to impress upon them the importance of proper and complete documentation. In regulated industries it is often a requirement. Certain insurance policies such as cyber insurance may also insist upon policy and procedure documentation as that is necessary for consistency of task performance and proper protections.

Regular activities and supporting information for executive fulfillment may include the following:

- Up to date job description that includes all responsibilities, performance baselines and requisite skills
- Access or subscription to a recruiting agency or online search service for the identification of candidates of the vacated position
- The posting or placement of the up to date job description with a recruiting agency or online as soon as possible once the intent of departure is known
- A confidential list of internal staff members who may be capable of stepping up and fulfilling the key position
- Documented processes to ensure that sensitive information such as customer files and confidential financials do not depart with the staff member
- Access to background checking and drug testing services to properly review the leading candidates

- Prepared reference form that you can request be completed by three former employers or managers.
- Active communication to internal staff and clients of the departure of the key staff member and the announcement of a replacement or the intent to conduct an executive search in the near term.
- A relationship with a firm that can supply senior staff on a temporary basis if finding a permanent replacement will extend beyond the departure date of the employee.

Regular activities and supporting information for the replacement of lower level staff members may include the following;

- Access or subscription to temporary personnel agencies that may be able to provide near term support for open staff positions.

Many of the aforementioned activities and strategies for replacing key staff members may also be leveraged to address replacing lower level staff members.