PUBLIC WORKS
Succession Planning

“Why Should we do it?”

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WILLINGBORO TOWNSHIP
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WHO AM I? Mechanical Engineer/MBA/CPWM/CPM

- Utility Industry (NJ): Engineer to Director of Operations
  - 16 years in the Utility Business
    - 8 years in a Power Plant
    - 8 years in Line Operations

- Director of Public Works for Willingboro Township, Burlington County
  - 15 plus years

Why speak on this topic?
- Because it is important
- Because I am thankful
- Because I care about the future of the town where I work

We offer Service. There is no higher purpose than service to others
Peaceful Warrior, Film from 2006
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Nice to know stuff:

Statistics:
• Everyday in the United States, 10,000 people turn 65. According to the PEW Research Center, millennials outnumber baby boomers in the workplace, 76 million to 75 million. In 10 years millennials will make up 75% of the workforce.
• There is a brain drain going on. The experienced workers are leaving organizations but the need for them has never been greater.

Definitions:
• Succession Planning
  • A process for identifying and cultivating the future leaders of an organization
  • Who replaces
    • Equipment Operators
    • Mechanics
    • Supervisors
    • Truck Drivers
    • Repairman
    • ETC..........

What is the current structure of the environment where you work?
• Dictatorship
  • The Leaders are determined by a Power struggle
• Monarchy
  • It is who is the King or Queen next........For example England
• Business or in this case Government
  • Succession planning involves identifying internal people to fill the roles above before the roles are vacated
The “How It Is” stuff:

What is the reality of the current structure of the environment where you work?
  • People work and are in the mindset of:
    • When I am gone it doesn’t matter what happens
    • I got mine
    • It is gonna be their problem not mine
    • And on and on……
      • If this is you this will not work for you

You know who knows and who does not know. Right?
  • You should or being trying to figure it out
  • This is the assessment stage of succession planning
    • You as the “Boss” should be able to identify the strength and weaknesses of the employees you are responsible for. Leaders are already working on them……
    • You should give employees a chance to try to demonstrate some of the core competencies you will need in the future even if you have them now.
      • Think about this
        • How long did it take you to learn how to parallel park?
        • Hit a baseball?
        • Do math in school?

But there are a few things you should have done before you begin to assess!
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REWIND the TAPE: First you have to identify who you will need to replace

Let’s use Willingboro

- 4 Supervisors with over 140 years of experience and the Director will be retired in the next 5 years
  - 2 Supervisors have over 20 years as a supervisor
  - 1 Supervisor has 13 years as a supervisor
  - Assistant Supt has 9 years as a Supervisor
  - Director has 16 years
- When you become a supervisor do you know all the Paperwork, time system, equipment operation, CDL testing requirements, where things are (infrastructure), dealing with resident questions, etc....

  You get the drift

- In the past 5 years four employees with over 100 years gone
  - 2 equipment operators
  - 1 truck Driver
  - 1 Long time laborer

  P.S. They all knew how to plow snow and their routes.....Without being told what to do

THE FUTURE OF WILLINGBORO DPW
IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- Think about when you became a Director, Supt, Supervisor
  - Did you know everything? Or were you just thrown into the fire?
    - It would have been great if you had a little idea of what you were getting yourself into
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So now you know who you have to replace.........

Let’s use Willingboro Again
• NEEDS
  • Equipment Operators
  • Repairman
  • Supervisors
  • Fleet Supervisor
  • Assistant Superintendent
  • Director

• The next step is Exposure but before that....
  • Identify by experience with employees:
    • Aptitude
      • Can the employees pick up quickly?
        • Chain Saw Exercise
    • Attendance
      • Are they reliable? Will they be there?
        • Not everyone can be trained to run the sweeper. But once they are they need to be there....... 

• Do they care about their profession
  • Last time I checked you gotta like what you do to do it well

I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING.  I will say it for you.

• What about the union?
• What about seniority?
• What about the guy who damages everything?
• What about ..................?
• What about ..................?

This is not easy. It will take years. That is why you have to start early before the gaps in experience or ability become so great it cannot be overcome or diminishes our service levels which is a reflection on us all.

P.S. We are learning the hard way!

So how can do you do it..................Let’s use Willingboro
WHAT ABOUT:

Seniority

- We start there because that is what the union wants.....No need to fight
- Try to give each person a shot. We document time in equipment. We assess based on that time. We assign based on the assessment sometimes.....We are trying to be more consistent.

The employee who damages everything

- Big money spent on chainsaws......We now have 4 people we trust. Assigned a chainsaw to them....It is theirs to keep operating or destroy...Been okay so far.......We now have good saw operators

Equipment that is not a game:

- Backhoe:
  - We let the infrastructure crew members each get time in the seat......They are competent now. They will only get better.
  - We assign duties in the yard...So they can’t hurt anything.....But remember they will take time to be as good as you are.......Think about it.....

- Loader:
  - We started in the yard...We are getting to leaving the yard.....Can you roll a 621? We did!

- Plowing
  - We are rotating in so they are exposed to plowing mains with experienced men...Yea it takes a little more time but they are getting there......
  - We are seeing improvement in the interiors with the “rookies”...PS I was a rookie once
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- **Supervisors**
  - Posting Assistant Supervisor positions
    - Plan is to promote 2-3
    - They will still work in the field
    - But they need to start to learn what Supervisors do
      - They do not know......

- **Equipment Operators**
  - This one is tough. Remember CPWM’s are not just in charge of DPW but we are liability managers. We will be deposed when something goes wrong.
  - Use outside resources to train! Train in basics. How to safely operate equipment the feel comes later.

- **Truck Drivers**
  - CDL Training with an outside resource
    - Spot check employees and crews
    - Put with an experienced operator when you can to just visually learn
    - Share the stories with them.....

- **Laborers**
  - Basic tools awareness and maintenance
    - The Chainsaw story ......Again!
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• So why should you do this?
  • Ask these questions of yourself:
    • Has where I worked provided for my family
    • Have I had a secure job
    • Who paid for this job........Answer taxpayers
    • Do I care about the people I work with and the future of the department
  • Don’t we owe it to the communities in which we work to ensure that the work we do continues with skilled people and at a somewhat seamless or level continuity in service and performance.
  • Do we care enough to ensure the job(s) that have provided for all the questions above continue for the employees who still have time they need to work to reap the benefits we will when we retire.
  • Trust me....The employees are more concerned than you think

I think the answer is yes...We owe it to the towns, the taxpayers and our employees to prepare for when talent leaves....Including everyone sitting in this room......
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• Establishing succession planning can entail a culture change. It can be a shift in an organization where vacancies were worried about when they happen. It requires commitment to a longer-term view of talent needs (when you or key people are gone) and doing it will bring benefits........

  • Take inventory of the skills that exist in the current staff (ASSESS)
    • Know when your staff resources and experience level will change
      • Ask who will run the sweeper, loader, backhoe
      • Ask who will be the lead on major snow routes
      • Ask who will fix our infrastructure
      • Stuff like that...................

  • Develop Strategies to educate (even at a basic level) to establish the foundation to build on (PLAN)
    • Basic Equipment Operator Training for example
    • Mix in employees with experienced crews and personnel
    • Encourage employees to self educate
      • Basic Supervisor classes
      • Go to seminars or classes
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• **Develop your Bench (TRAIN)**
  • Put time and effort into educating people to be prepared to step in
    • Improves morale and sends a message of caring about their futures
    • Gives employees a path
      • Will take on more responsibility
      • Will take on ownership
    • Takes time. Repetition breeds competence.

• **Tell the employees what you are doing (GET BUY IN)**
  • Let them know why you are doing it (it’s for them)
  • Encourage them to want to do it.
  • They will hear you even though you think they are not listening or don’t care
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**CPWM’s Role**
- Someone agreed to send you to school.
- Someone thought you could do it

**Public Works Manager Program**
- This series of courses is designed to train municipal and county public works personnel in the **responsibility of supervising public works operations**. The curriculum emphasizes pragmatic technical management and political skills necessary for professional success. The program focuses on New Jersey's governmental practices that contribute to improved work performance of department administrators.
- The nine included courses — in the areas of **management, technical, and government** — and other criteria are required for the state designation of Certified Public Works Manager.
- The three-course management unit addresses the human relations and personnel development needs of public works management. The intent of this segment is to acquire a better understanding of management, strengthen managerial and personnel skills, and to promote a professional public works image to the public.
  - Information from the Rutgers Center for Government Services Website
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Public Works Manager Program

• Responsibility of supervising public works operations.
  • We are charged with a responsibility. Does that not include preparing our employees for future roles in the department?
• Contribute to improved work performance of department administrators.
  • I would argue part of the improved work performance includes succession planning
• Management, technical, and government
  • Same as the two responses above
Public Works Manager Program

• Addresses the **human relations** and **personnel development** needs of public works management. The intent of this segment is to acquire a better understanding of management, strengthen managerial and personnel skills, and to promote a professional public works image to the public.

• Human Relations is the public and **our employees**

• Personnel Development is succession planning

• By doing Succession Planning we will promote a Professional Image to the Public. Our service levels and responses to issues will be seamless. It is our responsibility as CPWM’s to ensure it does!
Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort.

Paul J. Meyer

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.”

Greek Proverb

“True succession planning takes time—it’s a process, not an event.”

Anne M. Mulcahy
Thanks!

• QUESTIONS?

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