Succession Planning

In Industry

By

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the program of study leading to the award of Doctorate in Training and Education Leadership is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

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Abstract

The subject matter of this thesis is succession planning and the management of the succession planning process (SP&M). In particular, the focus of this inquiry is non C-suite level (Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer, and Chief Information) leadership succession planning and management, in a business context. The research was conducted on site of the Ireland based, European Sales headquarters, of a fortune 100 listed organisation, posting revenues in excess of $99 billion dollars and employing approximately 450,000 people worldwide. The Irish based operation currently employs in excess of 700 employees made up of Operations and Sales professionals.

The objectives of this research are twofold; in the first instance the research explores the lived experiences of Inside Sales managers tasked with implementing succession planning and management. Secondly; opportunities to improve succession planning and management are catalogued and explored. In order to capture these objectives and give structure to the research the following research questions were proposed:

1) What is the lived experience of Inside Sales managers with the SP&M program?

2) What SP&M features could advance the practice of SP&M in Inside Sales?

This inquiry takes the form of an ethnographic case study research approach and semi structured interview as the primary data gathering instrument. Secondary research data takes the form of eight best practice SP&M case studies from other industries. These two data sources are contrasted and compared to produce a comprehensive set of recommendations for the advancement of SP&M practice in Inside Sales.

This research contributes to existing SP&M literature by proposing a new conceptual model for SP&M which combines the input from all stakeholders and provides a framework for the implementation and practice of SP&M. Whilst the primary research was conducted in the context of the single case of SP&M in the Inside Sales organisation, the conceptual design is informed by case study research from eight external best practice SP&M organisations.

The combination of the Inside Sales case study and eight external case studies makes possible some claims as to the transferability of this conceptual model to other contexts.

The author found that much of the current SP&M literature is overly populated with case study research written from the perspectives of Human Resources or C-Suite executives. This study contributes to a growing body of SP&M organisational research written from the point of view of non C-suite leaders tasked with the practice of SP&M.

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to the research subject of succession planning and management. The reasons why succession planning and management are important to organisations and the research community are explored, along with some of the socio economic drivers of the succession planning and management research agenda. The reader is given an overview of the research context which describes the organisational setting for the research. The chapter closes with a brief introduction to the background of the author and sets out the research questions which provide the focus for the remaining chapters.

1.2 Research Subject

The subject matter of this thesis is succession planning and the management of the succession planning process (SP&M). There are many forms of succession planning such as; succession planning which relates to royal family succession (Squibb 1994), Family business succession (Dyer and Handler 1994) concerning matters relating to how a family owned business is handed over to another family member and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) succession planning (Vancil 1987) which examines issues concerning the search for, and selection of, a new CEO.

The focus of this thesis is non C-suite (CEO, CFO, CIO) leadership succession planning and management. Leadership SP&M typically concerns itself with the distributed leadership function in organisations and focuses on the development of current leaders and other employees who are regarded as having the potential to succeed to a leadership role. Succession planning programs reside under the broader sweet of HR practices known as Talent Management (TM) (Kearns 2013, Collings 2015). Collings and Mellahi (2009) define TM as:

> *Activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organisations sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organisation*

Collings and Mellahi (2009 p.305)

Whilst SP and TM share many common practices the distinction between TM and SP lies in the cohort of employees that the programs are aimed at. Succession Planning is about preparing the next generation of leaders whilst TM has a broader brief concerning the availability talent in organisations including leaders and critical roles for which incumbents may require high levels of expertise or organisational knowledge. Rothwell (2010 p.6) defines succession planning as:

> *A means of identifying critical management positions, starting at the levels of project manager and supervisor and extending up to the highest position in the organisation. Succession planning also describes management positions to provide maximum flexibility in lateral management moves and to ensure that as individuals achieve greater seniority, their management skills will broaden and become more generalized in relation to total organisational objectives rather than to purely departmental objectives*

This definition is clearly focused on the management levels of the organisation. However, with the advent of the "Knowledge Worker" as described by Drucker (1999) organisations realised that succession plans cannot simply focus on management. A review of current journals on the topic of succession planning show a trend moving away from planning the replacement of individual managers. Kur and Bunning's (2002) review of succession planning and leadership development practices culminates with the observation that plans limited to only the replacement of existing leaders are incomplete and that organisations must focus succession plans on the leadership function. This observation is supported by the following definition from Hirsh (2000) who defines succession planning as:

> *A process by which one or more successors are identified for key posts (or groups of similar key posts), and career moves and or development activities are planned for these successors. Successors may be fairly ready to do the job (short-term successors) or seen as having longer-term potential (long-term successors)*

(Hirsh, 2000 p.4)

This definition swaps the "Management" term in the Rothwell (2010) definition with the term "Key posts" suggesting that leadership is not confined to management roles. The Hirsh (2000) definition implies that succession planning must address the leadership function.

The planned development of leaders is not by any means a new phenomenon. Two thousand years ago, the Roman armies relied on succession planning to replace officers

killed or wounded in combat (Druckman et al. 1997). Although the origins of succession planning can be traced back to ancient times, it became a management concept mainly in the 1950's. The 1970's saw a period of theory building and empirical investigation on the subject while the years since 1980 are characterized by scholarly review and explosive growth of the concept.

1.3 The Organisational Imperative

In order to understand why leadership succession planning is important to organisations and scholars alike, it is important to understand the leadership function and its perceived effect on organisational outcomes.

Over the last 25 years there has been considerable theoretical and empirical work conducted on organisational performance. This work has sought to better understand the antecedents, processes, and emergent states that facilitate effective organisational outcomes. An emerging area within this work is the role attributed to leadership in facilitating organisational performance enhancement. The impact of leadership styles on organisational performance has been a topic of interest among academics and practitioners working in the area of leadership (Cannella and Rowe 1995, Giambatista, 2004). Perhaps the most prominent reason for this interest is the widespread belief that leadership can affect the performance of organisations (Rowe et al., 2005). The style of leadership adopted is considered by some researchers (Awamleh 1999; Conger 1999; Dubinsky et al. 1995; Yammarino et al. 1993) to be particularly important in achieving organisational goals, and is a catalyst for driving performance among subordinates (Barling et al. 1996; Berson et al. 2001; Zacharatos et al. 2000).

It is widely believed that leadership creates the vital link between organisational effectiveness and people's performance at organisation level (Avolio 1999; Bass 1999; McGrath and MacMillan 2000; Yukl 2002). Scholars and practitioners suggest that effective leadership behaviours can facilitate the improvement of performance when organisations face new challenges (McGrath and MacMillan 2000, Teece, Pisano and Shuen 1997). Understanding the effects of leadership on performance is also important because leadership is viewed by some researchers (Zhu et al. 2005) as one of the key driving forces for a firm's performance.

Effective leadership is seen as a potent source of management development and sustained competitive advantage for organisational performance improvement (Avolio 1999). If the leaders of an organisation are deemed to have an impact on the organisations performance, competitive advantage, ability to face new challenges, and the performance of its employees, it's easy to understand why leadership SP&M is a vibrant subject for Human Resources practitioners, Learning consultants and academic scholars.

1.4 Socio Economic Factors

In addition to the aforementioned reasons why SP&M is important to organisations, there are socio economic factors driving the succession planning agenda. The most frequently cited economic driver of the succession planning agenda is the retirement from the workforce of the "Baby Boomer" generation (Ball 2011, Cummings and Diala 2013, Dohm 2000). The term 'Baby Boomer' is an American colloquialism for persons born in the United States directly after World War II, beginning in 1946. Dohm (2000) projected the likely impact of "Baby Boomer" retirements across a number of employment categories in America. The data from his study shows that, the executive, administrative, and managerial occupations will experience the greatest turnover. Those aged forty five and older make up forty one percent of this group, and forty two percent of these older workers were expected to leave by 2008, equating to nearly three million job openings in this field due to retirements, resulting in a significant loss of managerial skill, experience and institutional knowledge. Projections such as these have crystallised the leadership issue in the minds of organisational leaders prompting renewed focus on leadership development and retention activities such as succession planning.

This growing concern on the issue of leadership is quantified in the Development Dimensions International Global Leadership forecast (Howard and Wellins 2008-2009). Development Dimensions International gathered data from 13,700 leaders and HR professionals around the world. Their report shows that seventy five percent of organisation leaders cite the improvement and or leverage of talent to be their top business priority.

Furthermore, data from the 1,493 HR professionals who took part in the research indicated that thirty seven percent of those who fill leadership positions fail. These

findings are supported by similar studies from IBM's Institute of Business Value (Berman 2010) and American Society for Training and Development (Atwood 2007). Recent events such as the Global Banking Crises have caused the general public to question the qualities of leadership prompting calls for a return to more ethical leadership values. Banks (2008) captures this growing public sentiment calling for greater scrutiny in relation to how leaders are chosen and how their development is planned.

Tragic events such as the 2001 September 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington (Bush 2001), and the 2008 Asian tsunami disaster (Liou and Lin 2008) highlighted the fact that contributions of organisational leaders can be quickly lost and organisations must be in a position to appoint new leaders to ensure organisational continuity. Many organisations lost key executives who were on planes or who worked out of New York's World Trade Centre at the time of the terrorist attack, including Sun Microsystems, Cisco Systems, Oracle and AON Insurance. Cantor Fitzgerald, a bond-trading firm, lost 700 of its 1,000 World Trade Centre workers, including many top executives (Davis and Lucchetti 2004, Greengard 2001). The New York Fire Department lost over 350 employees, but its leadership succession plan helped it to replace many of its top leaders within days. Whilst these are the most dramatic of circumstances, terrorism and climate extremes have become additional drivers of succession planning and management agenda.

1.5 Research Context.

The following research was conducted in the Irish based, European Sales headquarters, of a fortune 100 listed organisation, posting revenues in excess of $99 billion dollars and employing approximately 450,000 people worldwide. The Irish based operation currently employs in excess of 700 employees made up of Operations and Sales professionals. The Sales teams service clients in every country in Europe. The Operations team provide a full range of back office support services to the sales teams including, hiring, training and education delivery, business metrics, and customer analytics. In addition, they manage the deployment of education and training delivery for the Sales and Operations teams across Europe. The Irish based operation sells, hardware, software and business services to private and public sector clients, across all industries and market sectors in Europe.

The sellers are teamed by language and conduct client business via the phone, internet and comprehensive suite of social media channels, in the client's local language. The demography of the Irish operation is culturally diverse. Employees, native to almost every European country, work in the Irish operation. The employee to manager staffing ratio is typically 12:1. Expansion is planned for this year and expectations are that by December 2014 the organisation will have approximately 1,000 employees.

The operation runs to an accepted employee annual attrition rate of approximately ten percent which is not unusually high in organisations of this type and demographic makeup. However, attrition does present some challenges in relation to maintaining the high level of expertise required by clients. The market segments in which it operates are extremely competitive, driven by exponential technological change and globalisation. Consequentially, attracting and retaining talented staff is an ongoing effort and subject to competitive pressures from other organisations.

1.6 The Researcher

I commenced my career with this organisation in June 2000 and have worked in various functions including Engineering, Manufacturing and Education before joining the Inside Sales organisation as a Learning Consultant in December 2010. I began my engineering career in 1988 and have worked for various multinationals in the Electronics and Telecommunications industries. The multinationals ranged in ownership from, German, Japanese, Swedish, English, and American.

I have long held the belief that an employee's career progression has a direct relationship to the level of management support and encouragement they receive, coupled with the quality of education and development opportunities open to them. I have often reflected on my good fortune to receive quality mentoring and coaching, from some accomplished engineers, and educational opportunities from some supportive managers. This experience, coupled with my enjoyment of assisting the education of my colleagues, was the primary driver behind undertaking an MSc in Training and Education Management, which facilitated a career move from engineering to the learning and development function.

My career to date spans some twenty eight years, working across a broad range of technologies and companies in Ireland and overseas. In that time I have worked directly with some excellent professionals, whose actions demonstrated dedication to producing the very best quality work and a genuine interest in assisting their colleagues. I have also had occasion to work with others who I would regard as worthy of less celebration. Often this dichotomy of performance existed within the same organisation. These experiences prompted me to question how employees and managers given the same organisational goals, culture and ethos, could have such variance in their approach. Ultimately, these thoughts sparked my interest in the subject of SP&M, which I believe offers a framework that can lead to a standardisation behaviour and professionalism, among those tasked with leadership positions and those hoping to attain a position of leadership in the future. Furthermore, I believe that by implementing a best practice succession planning and management system, organisations can give employees a defined leadership career where advancement is based on merit and learning.

1.7 The Research Question.

The objectives of this research are twofold; in the first instance the research must explore the lived experiences of managers tasked with implementing succession planning and management. Secondly; opportunities to improve the current succession planning and management process must be catalogued. In order to capture these objectives and give structure to the research the following research questions are proposed:

1) What is the lived experience of Inside Sales managers with the SP&M program?
2) What SP&M features could advance the practice of SP&M in Inside Sales?

1.8 Summary

The reader has been introduced to the subject of succession planning and management. The more salient issues driving the succession planning agenda in both business and academia have been set out and the research questions which guide the remaining content of this inquiry have been put forward.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 History of Succession planning

The following review chronicles the evolution of succession planning. Succession Planning (SP) and management can trace its evolution back to ancient times. Two thousand years ago, the Roman armies relied on SP to replace officers killed or wounded in combat (Druckman et al. 1997). In the early twentieth century, French industrialist and writer Henri Fayol argued that management consists of a set of activities that are common to all organisations. In 1916, he published his experiences of management in his book *Administration Industrielle et Générale*, where he developed his fourteen principles of administration. Fayol (1916) claimed that management has the responsibility to ensure the long-term stability of tenured personnel and if that stability were ignored, then key positions in an organisation would be filled with ill-prepared workers. Furthermore, he claimed that organisational strength lies within its people, and when people become more skilled and prepared, the organisation benefits. Much of the early literature on succession concerned itself primarily with senior management succession or the succession of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This early literature mostly took the form of case studies on a particular leader or company. The works of Whyte (1949), Dale (1957) and Gouldner (1950) typify these early studies. Although much of the following literature is also focused on CEO succession, it differs from these early studies in that it is characterised by more empirically based inquiries.

Grusky (1960) is widely credited with moving the field forward. He proposed a rationale for the importance of succession planning; first, that succession results in instability and second, that succession is inevitable for all organisations. Grusky (1964) claimed that "Inside Succession" led to increased organisation performance. The well known "three theories" of succession and performance emerged at this time. These theories termed common sense, vicious cycle, and ritual scapegoating originate from an exchange between Grusky (1963) and Gamson & Scotch (1964) in their interpretation of managerial baseball succession. The common sense theory argued that a wisely chosen successor; the replacement of a known failure, combined with honeymoon effects and the fresh outlook of a newcomer, would lead to improved performance. Vicious Circle theory (Grusky 1963) proposed that decline precedes succession, which

leads to instability, lower morale, hastening decline and more succession. Gamson & Scotch (1964) challenged Grusky's claims by suggesting that while poor performance precipitates succession, no post-succession performance improvements would be expected, indicating that succession is best described as ritual "Scapegoating", motivated in part by the need to placate frustrated shareholders and publicly demonstrate an awareness of the need for change.

The 1970s saw a period of theory building and empirical investigation on the subject prompted in part by the research of Liebreson & O'Connor (1972) by using the magnitude of the relationship between succession and performance as a lens through which the question; does leadership matter?, was explored. Helmich & Brown (1972) explored leadership style; they found that successors were chosen based on the degree of "Fit" their leadership styles had for the particular set of circumstances. Hall (1976) explored the issue of "Fit" further by suggesting linkage between a CEO's educational background, career path and the type of organisation they led. Thus, succession was most effective when the needs of the organisation matched the background of the CEO.

The years since 1980 were characterised by scholarly review and explosive growth of the SP concepts (Kesner and Sebora 1994). This period of theory building provided the foundation for the development of new strands of SP research. Among these were CEO–firm fit, which resulted in higher performance (Gupta and Govindarajan 1984), various aspects of boards, including boards initiation of succession and the effects of a CEO's influence with the board in constraining board influence, market response the leader succession, succession frequency and successor origin to mention a few. The explosive growth in the concept of SP thought during this decade, prompted Kesner and Sebora (1994) to label SP research as a "diffused and often chaotic research stream" (Kesner and Sebora 1994 p.327). Many of the most notable works on SP during the 1980's concerned themselves with review and critique of literature, Gordon & Rosen (1981), Kohler & Straus (1983) and Brady & Helmich (1984) exemplify these reflective studies. Gordon & Rosen (1981) called for leadership succession to replace more traditional leadership studies. Kohel & Straus (1983) lamented the lack of clarity in the terms used by researchers. Terms such as "Successful Succession" or "Effective Succession" could refer to post succession organisational performance or refer to a successor selection process culminating in the identification of a successor.

Brady & Helmich (1984) found no consensus as to why succession occurred at different rates. Furthermore, they found no definitive links between CEO tenure and other variables such as CEO origin or performance. The authors concluded with a call for future SP research to include new variables, greater focus on the succession planning process and a warning to be mindful of the role of the incumbent in future research.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, businesses menaced by an economic recession, fears of a global depression and the challenges of competing in a global economy, found themselves needing to take dramatic actions in order to survive (Economist 1992). Firms like IBM, known for being family centric and proud of claims that they had never made any employee redundant, were now forced to lay off employees in their thousands (Lohr 1993). Business that stripped out layers of management (Mandel 1990) and adopted new business software, found that old hierarchical business models did not suit the increasing speed of doing business. Businesses responded by restructuring into flatter organisations (Budros 1999) where communication speeds and decision-making were less hampered by many layers of command. These new structures brought to light the critical roles non-management professionals play, in decision-making, research and development, and the ultimate performance of an organisation. Scholars responded to these new business structures by recognising that leadership occurred at non-management levels and "key" employees and non-management professionals required succession plans (Guinn 2000).

The speed of organisational change, driven by globalisation, identified flaws in traditional succession planning (preparing staff to take on a particular role) approaches. Guinn (2000) proposed that grooming staff for specific roles could result in employees being ready to take on roles that become superfluous due to shifts in organisational strategy. Guinn recommended focusing SP policies on leadership competencies, which could be used across multiple roles. Fulmer & Conger (2004) echo the views of Guinn (2000); they claim that most companies possess an essential but largely unheralded succession management list, identifying an adequate but inappropriate pool of replacements. Such a model of succession management had several fundamental shortcomings. For one, it was focused only on the top positions of the company and, as a result, the names were chosen at the general manager level.

Secondly, it gave top management few options in the search for the next generation of company leaders. Fuller & Conger (2004) called for greater transparency in SP. They recommend that old succession planning systems, impeded by complete confidentiality and secrecy should be phased out and replaced by more open and inclusive systems. Guinn (2000), Fulmer & Conger (2003) and Rothwell (2010) agree that SP has strong links to Talent Management, Talent Retention, Intellectual Capital and Human Capital Management and that SP development must have regard to these organisational processes.

Despite the scholarly interest in succession planning, moving from theory to practice appears to be problematic. Howard and Wellins (2008, 2009) commissioned by Development Dimensions International (DDI), a leading United States (US) based organisation providing professional services to industry, conducted a global study of leadership development. The study comprised of a survey of 1,493 human resource (HR) leaders and some 12,293 leaders of organisations in 76 countries. The survey showed that less than 50 percent of organisations engaged in SP. Furthermore, the report (Howard and Wellins, 2008 p.17 fig 13) went on to characterise Leadership Development programs (See Figure 2.1).

Execution of Leadership Development Programs

	Percent Agree or Strongly Agree
Aligned with business priorities	60%
Accountable for developing own skills	57%
Clear communication of importance	53%
Aligned with performance management	52%
Managers accountable	49%
Managers have support tools/knowledge	39%
Consistent deployment across locations	37%
Senior management accountable	35%
Regularly monitored	29%
Results formally measured	26%

Figure 2.1

Figure 2.1 shows that only 35 percent of HR leaders agree or agree strongly, that in their organisations, senior management are accountable for the execution of leadership development programs, of these programs 29 percent were monitored regularly and 26 percent of leadership development programs were formally measured.

The findings support a more recent report from the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) the world's largest association dedicated to workplace learning and performance professionals. The ASTD found that while many organisations acknowledged the importance of planning successors for leadership and other vital positions, fewer than half of those surveyed (45 percent) said their organisations have formal SP processes, whilst only 14 percent found their SP programs to be effective (Atwood 2007). These figures suggest disparity between the theory and practice of Succession Planning.

If Succession planning and management (SP&M) were shown to have a positive effect on the financial performance of businesses, improved figures for Senior management participation and willingness to be accountable for leadership development programs may be achieved. Therefore, restating the business case for SP&M is required.

2.2. The Business Case for Succession Planning

The terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 on the World Trade Centre in New York had a devastating effect on many important companies and organisations. In terms of the loss of key personnel, the New York Police and Fire Departments, Cantor Fitzgerald, Aon Insurance, Oracle and Cisco Systems, emphasised the need for efficient, effective, continuous and strategic planning, in terms of SP for key people in the organisation. Cantor Fitzgerald, a bond-trading entity, lost 700 out of its 1050 employees in the collapse of the World Trade Centre (Davis and Lucchetti 2004, Greengard 2001). The company did not have SP in place and even if it had, the sheer number of sudden disappearance of employees would have made the process of replacing those employees a very arduous task. However, proper SP may have, at the very least, provided the executive committee with an inventory of key personnel, their core competencies and their readiness to move into higher or lateral positions.

Whilst this is the most dramatic of situations, recent events such as the disastrous earthquake in Japan with an estimated loss of life of in excess of 14,000, shows that companies must prepare for events of this type. SP could form the basis for such preparations. Beazley, Boenisch and Hardan (2002 p.ix) list the following scenarios based on actual historic occurrences, which may provide more likely reasons for organisations to implement adopt SP&M policies:

Scenario 1. Over the previous 12-month period, 70 percent of the employees in the sales department of your Fortune 100 company have left. More alarmingly, you discover that they have taken their knowledge with them, leaving a knowledge vacuum of stunning proportions that their successors are struggling to fill, while productivity drops and revenue plummets.

Scenario 2. An internal survey reveals that 25 percent of your employees intend to look for a new job within the year. However, you have no way to harvest their knowledge—knowledge that is about to walk out the door when they do. In addition, you do not even know who will be leaving.

Scenario 3. Your organisation is about to implement a downsizing program that will result in the termination of hundreds of experienced individuals with critical operational knowledge. When their terminations are announced, they will leave quickly and unhappily, and their knowledge will leave with them. What will the organisation do without that knowledge? What will you do?

(Beazley, Boenisch and Hardan, 2002 p.ix)

Researchers claim that knowledge is now the organisation's most valuable resource (Grant 1996, Zack 1999). Employees with valuable knowledge (human capital) may take this with them when they leave. The knowledge may be unique or difficult to imitate, making replacement difficult. Furthermore, employee turnover rates are increasing (Arthur and Rousseau 1996) and often, employees are not replaced. This suggests a reduction in the organisation's overall knowledge, because stocks of knowledge resources are not being replenished. Third, the average age of the workforce is increasing. Over the next 18 years, employees born in the United States of America during the demographic birth boom between 1946 and 1964, commonly known as "Baby Boomers" will reach retirement age every 18 seconds (Beazley et al. 2002). This means that organisations are increasingly at risk of losing valuable human capital and institutional knowledge.

Previous research identified a range of negative impacts caused by knowledge loss, including reduced organisational output (Droege and Hoobler 2003) and productivity (Osterman 1987), and lost organisational memory (Shah 2000). Cascio (1993) studied the effects of downsizing on firms. They found that there are real costs for firms that fail to implement policies aimed at capturing knowledge of key employees or planning for their departure.

A senior manager of a Fortune 100 company recalled a situation where a bookkeeper making $9 an hour was let go in a downsizing effort. The company later discovered that it lost valuable institutional memory in the process and had to rehire the bookkeeper as a consultant for $42 per hour! Other senior managers found that headcount costs rose post downsizing because of having to rehire staff at increased rates in part time or consultancy roles (Cascio 1993). The above demonstrates that institutional knowledge has economic value. Therefore, it is fair to say, that processes such as SP&M, which aim to preserve knowledge and improve retention rates of key employees, have economic benefit for companies.

Shen and Cannella (2003) studied four hundred randomly selected corporations from Compustat. Compustat provides professional services to industry and academia. They host global data, normalised according to country accounting principles, disclosure methods and specific data item definitions. Their databases provide financial and market data covering publicly traded companies. In addition, Compustat global offers data models specific to industrial companies and financial services sectors including banks, insurance companies, real estate investment trusts, and brokers/securities dealers. The Shen and Cannella study focused on organisations that reported at least $200 million in sales in 2003. They found that investors reacted negatively when CEO succession plans ended in the heir apparent leaving the company. Failed succession plans led to investor speculation of discord among the senior leadership of such companies.

Newel and Wilson (2002) commissioned by McKinsey, a world renowned global management and consulting firm that helps leading organisations improve their performance, found that investors are willing to pay a premium of up to 20 percent on shares of enterprises known to have strong corporate governance frameworks in place that include monitors for leadership bench strength and plans to preserve it.

Howard and Wellins (2008) reported that 55 percent of leaders said that their firm's performance was likely or very likely to suffer in the near future from insufficient leadership talent and that next to achieving growth, improving or leveraging existing talent was the second highest business priority. The findings of Newel and Wilson (2008) and Howard and Wellins (2008) concur with research from The Institute for Business (IBV).

The IBV is the business research arm of International Business Machines (IBM). The IBV provides thought leadership on a variety of business critical challenges. They conducted face-to-face interviews with more than 1,500 chief executive officers worldwide in 2010. Berman (2010) found that CEO's highlighted creative leadership as critical to future business success.

The research suggests that implementation of SP&M processes offer clear benefits for businesses. Increased leadership bench strength, knowledge preservation, improved planning through increased visibility of organisational skill inventories, to mention a few. Furthermore, claims of less tangible benefits such as, improvements in employee morale, engagement, productivity, and retention rates are made. The writings of Rothwell (2010), Fulmer et al. (2009), Giambatista (2005), Collins (2007) and Colley (2008) exemplify the increasing body of research that support these claims. The author finds little evidence of opposition to SP&M in theory. Opposition to SP&M appears to take the form of lamenting the time consuming complexity of SP&M in practice (Holstein and Campell 2009, Stevenson et al. 2011).

The author notes that whilst SP&M continues to be a subject of interest to researchers, much of the evidence constitutes self-reporting by companies. That is not to say that information freely given by participating companies is incorrect, but more in the way of empirical research on the relationship between succession planning, learning and development practice and learning & development program effectiveness, could provide new insight and advance the theory and practice of these paradigms. The author finds an over reliance on the case studies which appear to be written from the perspective of the HR executive and or consultants who developed and implemented the processes, effectively narrowing the perspective on the subject matter. Given that many of the cases emphasise the importance of senior leadership support, and sensitivity to participant needs, including perspectives from these two key stakeholder groups may add rich seems of data to the cases. Several of the cases do provide glimpses of participant reactions, but even these tended to treat participants as a homogeneous mass rather than as individual experiences.

2.3 Human Capital Management

Although the modern theory of human capital developed over the past half century, the concept of human capital has been traced back to the 17th century. The importance attributed to human capital research is demonstrated by the fact that since 1971 no less than five Nobel prises were awarded to scholars in, or affiliated with the field of human capital theory (Becker 1993). The genesis of scientific thought in human capital is attributed to Adam Smith who in 1776 penned The Wealth of Nations. Smith (1776 cited in Sweetland 1996, p343) postulated that:

1) *Labour inputs are not merely quantitative. They include the acquired and usefull abilities of all inhabitants or members of the society as well as the state of skill, dexterity, and judgement with which labour is applied.*
2) *Ability acquired through education, study, and apprenticeship, always costs a real expense, which is a capitol fixed and realised, as it were, in person.*

(Sweetland 1996 p.343)

Relating human capital theory developments that underpin developments in human capital management and by extension SP&M, scholars such as Becker, Denison, Fabricant, Mincer and Schultz have produced what are regarded as seminal works in human capital theory (Nafukho et al. 2004, Sweetland 1996). These scholars focused their analyses on the impact of investments in training and development on human capital. All concur that investments in training and education are capital investments and must be accounted for in the same way as non-human capital investments. Divergences between their studies are formulaic in nature as they attempted to account for the economic impacts of distinct forms of education.

Schultz (1961 cited in Nafukho et al. 2004, p.11) defines human capital as "the knowledge and skills that people acquire through education and training as being a form of capital, and this capital is a product of deliberate investment that yields returns". De Geus (1988) suggests human capital planning moves the idea of human expertise as an element of competitive advantage into the realm of organisational planning.

Human capital theory distinguishes among several types and means of education Sweetland (1996). There is formalised education at primary, secondary, and higher levels (Cohn & Geske 1990), informal education at home and at work (Schultz 1961), on-the-job training and apprenticeships (Mincer 1974) and specialised vocational education at secondary and higher levels (Corazzini 1967).

As scholarship in the field is examined, it becomes apparent that the types and means of education greatly affect the research design of each human capital study. In most instances, however, it is appropriate to assume that education increases or improves the economic capabilities of people (Schultz 1961).

Schultz (1961 p.1) claims "Although it is obvious that people acquire useful skills and knowledge, it is not so obvious that skills and knowledge are a form of capital, or that this capital is in substantial part a product of deliberate investment". Shultz went on to produce a Nobel Prize winning examination of what he referred to as the residual factor, which he argued accounted for the variance in income levels in the United States. The residual factor or variance stemmed from the failure of the classical aggregate model of production to account for the growth in economic output when compared with the inputs. Shultz (1961) observed that increases in national output were large when compared with the increases of land, man-hours, and physical reproducible capital. He posited that investment in human capital is probably the major explanation for this difference.

Becker's (1992) initial work on human capital began with an effort to calculate both private and social rates of return to men, women, blacks, and other groups from investments in different levels of education. Becker (1992) claimed that human capital is a form of investment by individuals in education. Returns on such investments present in the form of additional income to the individual. Becker (1993) found that the earnings of the more educated and highly trained are almost always well above average.

Human Capital continues to be a rich stream of research for scholars. A simple search of the JSTOR database for the term "Human Capital" shows 85,654 articles published between 2000 and 2014. A corresponding search of Business Source Complete shows 8,892 articles published between 2008 and 2014. The results suggest the topic is indeed alive in the minds of academics and HR practitioners, however despite the works of noble prise winners such as Schultz and Becker, human capital is still not formally listed on company financial reports. There are several reasons for this, but perhaps the primary and most significant reason comes from the field of financial accounting and in particular how they define assets.

In the United States of America accounting rules developed by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), advise that for an item to be recognised and reported as an asset in external financial statements, it must meet the definition of an asset, which is "probable future economic benefits obtained or controlled by a particular entity as a result of past transactions or events" (FASB, 2008b p.12). The inclusion of the word "control" in their definition precludes human capital from being considered an asset because human beings have free will and may leave one firm for better working conditions or pay in another. Firms do not have control over their workforce, whereas the firm owns plant, land, and equipment outright. Consequentially, training and education is listed as a cost and not an investment in financial reports. Likert (1979) was optimistic that the practice of none reporting of human capital would resolve itself in the near future.

He posited the following:

> *"In my judgment it is highly likely that, within a decade, the Current Value method of HRA [human resource accounting] will become an accepted part of standard business accounting procedures. When boards of directors and shareholders learn that the methodology is available and can be applied to their firm, they will demand that it be done. To permit a sizable proportion of a firm's assets to be under no surveillance or control is financially and morally irresponsible".*

(Likert, 1979 p.155)

Likert (1979) claimed that because human capital is not formally valued and monitored in same way as financial capital, human capital may be less salient in the minds of organisational decision makers and subject to greater risk of neglect or underutilisation as compared to other assets formally recognised and reported as such. Three decades later the rules relating to human capital and financial reporting remain unchanged. Fulmar and Polyart (2014) observe that financial reporting rules do not prohibit firms estimating the value of their human capital management. Moreover, lack of governance over how organisations do this leads to inconsistency. Consequently, few organisations can state what their human capital is worth (Litan and Wallison 2003).

2.4 Knowledge and Knowledge Management

Knowledge is typically classified as tacit or explicit. Polanyi (1962) defines tacit knowledge as non-verbalised, intuitive and unarticulated. Explicit or articulated knowledge is considered to be that which is "recorded, written down or residing in computer databases" (Hedlund, 1994 pp.73-90). Information is associated with explicit knowledge because it is readily accessible by many. Applying this to an organisational setting, tacit knowledge can be considered to be the expertise that an employee develops whilst executing their role. Should they choose to document what they have learned, for access to a wider population, then at least to some extent this knowledge may become explicit.

Theorists as disparate as Dewey (1933), Vygotsky (1962), and Piaget and Inhelder (1969) have shown that the mere presentation of information does not necessarily result in learning. Learners have to become actively involved for behaviour to change, insight to occur, and problems to be solved. Vygotsky (1962) stressed that learning and insight had a significant social component, even if the resulting knowledge was of a type that could be classified as mathematical or scientific.

Von Krogh and Roos (1995a) set the organisational relevance of the above by introducing the concept of epistemological stance. They draw attention to two stances in particular. The first being the cognitivist stance which links knowledge with data, and views the human brain and organisation as a "machine" in which data is stored. The cognitivist stance implies that tacit knowledge must be made explicit, in order for it to be shared or accessed. The second stance is a connectionist epistemology suggesting that knowledge resides in expert links within the social networks of organisations. This stance proposes that for knowledge transfer, these experts can be identified, who can then be tapped for their knowledge both tacit and explicit.

Using SP&M as a lens through which to examine these epistemologies further, the cognitive stance suggests, that SP&M policies should oblige key employees to document or otherwise make record of any unique expertise, organisational insight, new knowledge or nuance that the employee regards as imperative to the execution of their role. The record would serve as part of a role specific curriculum of learning for potential successors to such role.

Furthermore, it implies that succession plans focus on building skill for key roles as opposed to building broader leadership skill which may span many roles.

The connectionist stance suggests that SP&M policies should facilitate collaborative learning environments where potential successors have opportunity to work alongside employees who demonstrate expert knowledge or leadership behaviours and that self-managed teamwork and communities of practice are encouraged. Thomas et al. (2001) caution against an oversimplification of knowledge transfer. They claim that knowledge work involves communication among loosely structured networks and communities of people, and that understanding it involves identifying the social practices and relationships that are operative in a particular context. In essence, recording knowledge for later wider distribution must include reference to the context in which the knowledge was derived. Failure to make sufficient reference to context may result in knowledge seekers or scholars misunderstanding the original meaning and applying recorded knowledge incorrectly.

The literature presented assumes a willingness to share knowledge. It is important to note that there are several barriers to the transfer of knowledge. Husted and Michailova (2002) point out that employees may be hostile to sharing knowledge. Ultimately effective knowledge transfer is reliant on the collaborative actions of individuals (Huxham and Hibbert 2005). During times of change organisational power struggles often occur. Employees often seek to consolidate their positions by holding on to or withholding knowledge because they see this knowledge as a 'bargaining chip', which may be useful in negotiations should their positions become under threat. The implication for SP&M policy development and implementation is that even the most well thought out, employee centric plans, may well fail, if collaborative cultures are not fostered by rewarding employees for knowledge sharing. Furthermore, SP&M implementation should not be attempted during large-scale organisational change initiatives as this may cause employees to be fearful for their futures and less inclined to adopt new policies, especially policies that have knowledge capturing components. McDermott and O'Dell (2001) speak about the importance of organisational culture and climate. They explain that unless the right climate exists, new jobholders joining teams may find that the assimilation of the knowledge required for their new jobs from existing team members much more challenging.

Chiu et al. (2006) supports McDermott and O'Dell (2001), who cite organisational culture literature to support their assertion that "value-based decision making functions to reconcile potential conflict of interests between individuals and their organisations and cultural values serve as normative principles for employees to make day-to-day decisions in the interest of an organisation" (Chiu et al., 2006 p.46). Research shows that transfer of knowledge across cultural boundaries creates additional challenges for collaborative learning in multinational and global organisations. Wenger et al. (2002) claims that:

> *"People's willingness to ask questions that reveal their 'ignorance', disagree with others in public, contradict known experts, discuss their problems, or follow others in the thread of conversation, all these behaviours, vary greatly across cultures".*

(Wenger et al., 2002 p.118)

A review of the related cross-cultural research suggests that several national culture characteristics influence employee knowledge-sharing patterns within multinational organisations, among them: in-group and out-group orientation; fear of losing face; differences in understanding what constitutes modest behaviour; and power distance (Ardichvili et al. 2006). Hofstede (2001) suggested that in high power distance cultures (where it is generally accepted that the existence of a high power differential between individuals is normal), information flows are usually constrained by hierarchy. Therefore, in hierarchical cultures, top managers need for control over the information flow, and the desire to restrict access to critical information by lower-level employees, could lead to significant organisational barriers to knowledge sharing.

Globalisation has given rise to the need to share knowledge across cultures and geographies. In recent years, communities of practice have been rapidly gaining popularity as a vehicle of collective learning and knowledge creation within organisations (Ardichvili et al. 2006, Gourlay 2001; Vestal 2006). The term community of practice (CoP) was coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) who studied situated learning in the context of five apprenticeships: Yucatec midwives; Vai and Gola tailors; naval quartermasters; meat cutters; and non-drinking alcoholics.

Lave and Wenger (1991 p.98) define CoP as "an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their community".

This definition of a CoP has clear similarities with some definitions of knowledge management. Collison & Parcell (2005) view knowledge management (KM) as a framework that can be used for learning, capturing, sharing and exploiting knowledge, experience and good practices. They write that knowledge management:

> *Is about capturing, creating, distilling, sharing and using know-how. That know-how includes explicit and tacit knowledge. Know-how is used as shorthand for know-how, know-what, know-who, know-why and know-when. It's not about books of wisdom and best practices, its more about the communities that keep know-how of a topic alive by sharing what they know, building on it and adapting it to their own use. It is not a snapshot of what is known at a single point in time, but an evolving set of know-how kept current by people who regularly use it.*

<div align="right">(Collison and Parcell, 2005 p.52)</div>

The similarities in the definitions of a CoP and KM explain the attraction to use CoPs as a knowledge management vehicle. Recent studies of CoP suggest that they can be cultivated and leveraged for strategic advantage (Saint-Onge and Wallace, 2003 and Wenger et al. 2002). In line with this view, an increasing number of consultancy firms are offering to improve their client's abilities to manage knowledge creation and dissemination by identifying or establishing communities of practice.

In contrast, Kimble and Hildreth (2004) question whether CoP's are always suitable for the business setting; arguing that the self-directed nature of a CoP could put it at odds with the goals of the location organisations that formed them. Hislop (2004) examined three case studies of CoPs in large European organisations and concluded that only one was successful in sharing knowledge between communities; the other two failed to do so because of a lack of shared identity and a lack of consensual knowledge. Hislop argues that because of a strong internal sense of identity, CoPs can actually lead to less knowledge sharing between communities rather than more. Similarly, Vaast (2004), in her four case studies of public and private sector organisations in France, noted that in one case the strengthening of the internal sense of identity within a CoP resulted in employees outside the CoP becoming marginalised.

The literature suggests that communities of practice do have much to offer globally dispersed organisations as a knowledge management vehicle; however, organisations should be cognisant of becoming overly reliant on a vehicle, over which they have no direct control, to capture and disseminate their organisational knowledge.

The implications for SP&M development and implementation are that SP&M programs designed in one location, a multinationals headquarters for example; may have varying degrees of success, depending on whether there are close cultural matches between the culture of designers and those of the implementing country. Furthermore, employee development plans must allow for individual learning style and skill gaps. These implications raise questions about the suitability of centrally designed SP&M programs and suggest that programs must be flexible enough to incorporate localised employee culture and learning style. Moreover, as organisations refine their KM and SP&M policies to preserve their institutional knowledge and prepare the next generation of leaders, it is imperative that they do so, informed with a clear understanding of the characteristics of adults as learners and disseminators of knowledge.

2.5 Adult learning

There is a great deal of literature available on how adults learn and how 'creativity' may be acquired and developed (Henry 1991). Dubin & Okun (1973) identified eight different schools of adult learning, which can be broken down into two groups. The first group focuses on empirical observation (Knox 1977) and the other on speculation and generalisation (Gibb 1960). The main theme arising from both groups claims that adults learn throughout their lives and that experiential learning is vital to enhance further learning. Brookfield (1986) claims that adult learning capability varies depending on the stages of a person's life. He goes on to say that:

> *Adults exhibit diverse learning styles and strategies for coding information, cognitive procedures, mental sets, and learn in different ways, at different times, and for different purposes. The experiences of adults affect their learning, sometimes serving as enhancement, sometimes as a hindrance. Effective learning is also linked to the adult's superscription to a self-concept of themselves as learners. Finally, adults exhibit a tendency toward self-directedness in their learning*

> (Brookfield, 1986 p.31)

Knowles (1980) advocacy of andragogical teaching styles for adult learners, supports Brookfield, as he claims that adults prefer self-directed learning, learn most effectively through experience and by means of actual day-to-day jobs and routines, rather than formal and structured training programs.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD 2008), Europe's largest HR and development professional body with over 135,000 members across 120 countries, conducted a series of telephone interviews with employees working in UK firms in both private and public sector. The study (Who Learns at Work) sought the views of 751 employed people on the training they had received at work in the 12 months, what they thought of the training they received and their preferred methods of learning. The results (CIPD 2008 p.7 fig 4) for preferred methods of learning are illustrated in Figure 2.2.

: The best method of learning

• Clearly, the preferred method of learning is to be shown how do to things and then to practise them (46%).

Be shown and practise	46
One-to-one coaching	18
Meeting room/classroom	15
From colleagues	13
Other	8

Base: 751

Percentage of respondents
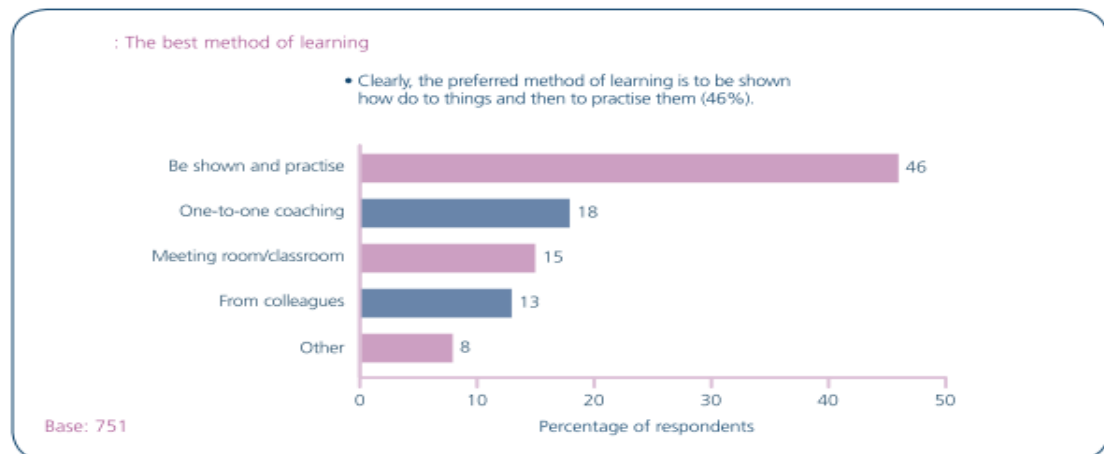
Figure 2.2

The results appear to support the literature, in that it shows that forty six percent of adults prefer to learn by being shown what to do and then practicing what they have learned. Similarly, the least preferred learning styles (CIPD 2008 p.8 fig 5) illustrated in Figure 2.3 show that adults least prefer books and via the internet

.: Least appealing method of learning

From books/articles	25
Learning via the Internet	21
In meeting room/classroom	19
Watching videos	15
Correspondence courses	14
Other	7

• Twenty-five per cent particularly disliked learning from books or articles, 21% did not like learning via the Internet and 19% found learning in a meeting room or classroom unappealing.

Base: 751

Percentage of respondents

Figure 2.3

The results suggest that for adults e-learning has not yet replaced more traditional learning methods. Kelly (2004 p.1) lists some characteristics of adults as learners.

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Adults as Learners:

- ➢ Are unsure of their learning ability: "I don't think I can do this".
- ➢ Are time conscious: "Don't waste my time".
- ➢ Are focused on specific goals: "I know what I want to learn".
- ➢ Are highly motivated (when it's relevant): "Give me something I can use".
- ➢ Have a wealth of life experience: "Treat me as an adult".

Garavan (2003) goes on to describe factors that may influence how effectively adults learn. He states that "effective learning will be transferred to the workplace, if it takes place in an environment that is conducive to learning". He expands on the concept of the learning environment by making the following points:

- ➢ Every learner has worth as a person. An individual is entitled to their self respect and dignity. The learner's feelings are important and should be respected.
- ➢ The most effective type learning is that which is most likely to influence attitudes and behaviour, and comes through having emotionally involving experiences, and reflecting upon them.
- ➢ A permissive atmosphere; a group climate conducive to free discussion and experimentation, with different ways of behaving is a necessary condition for learning.

(Garavan, 2003 pp.129-135)

Gagne and Medsker (1996) make note of the importance of understanding the emotional needs of adult learners. Garavan (2003) claims that adult learners have the following needs;

- ➢ Safety needs: These needs relate to the security that can be achieved through training. This is when learners know that they can undertake potentially dangerous tasks safely and without danger to themselves.
- ➢ Emotional needs: These needs are satisfied when trainees are able to see that learning new skills and acquiring additional knowledge will affect their performance by giving them more control and independence in what they do.
- ➢ Intellectual needs: Being able to master new skills and new knowledge is stimulating for many learners. They need variety in what they do and the opportunity to exercise curiosity in finding out about the what, why and how, of the learning that they undertake.
- ➢ Self-fulfilment needs: Most people like to feel that they have "got somewhere" and in this respect, learning helps to provide a meaning and sense of purpose.

(Garavan, 2003 pp.131-132)

Mumford (1995) went on to identify what types of learners benefited for certain types of learning, proposing the following learning styles:

> ➢ Activists: Enjoy the here and now, dominated by immediate experiences.
> ➢ Reflectors: Like to stand back and ponder experiences, look at different perspectives.
> ➢ Theorists: Interested in basic assumptions, theory, models, and systems thinking.
> ➢ Pragmatists: Search for new ideas, experiment and enjoy problem solving

(Mumford, 1995 p.5)

The author observes that Mumford's four categories of learning were developed from a questionnaire consisting of some eighty behavioural type statements. Participants were invited to agree or disagree with these statements. Being able to categorise all learners under four headings has an obvious attraction for teaching practice, however one must question the validity of using a questionnaire that relies on self-reporting and only facilitates agree or disagree answers.

It is evident from the literature that for an adult to undertake a learning activity, they must see it's "worth". They are unlikely to invest the time and effort in learning something that they do not feel will contribute to their professional or personal well-being. Furthermore, the way in which an adult learns, is directly influenced by their prior experience of learning, suggesting that if the prior learning experience was unrewarding or unsuccessful, it may influence how they approach their next learning opportunity. The literature makes note of the fact that learning styles of an adult change, depending on their stage of life, the subject matter, and the learning environment. From an organisations point of view, if the workforce is to embrace the notion of lifelong learning, they will need to clarify the benefits of learning to the workforce. This in turn will help them develop the self-motivation required to learn new skills.

The author observes an absence of literature concerning the timing of learning interventions. A descriptive scenario might be, scheduling a course months ahead of the opportunity to apply the learning. This could be considered wasteful in cost terms and demoralising for the learner. When the opportunity finally arrives to apply the learning; the learner may find they have forgotten much of the course content. Moreover, organisations may be less inclined to invest future learning opportunities, because of poor return on investment from their point of view.

2.6 Summary

The reader has been introduced to a comprehensive review of Succession Planning Literature. The evolution of Succession Planning Theory has been examined and its current status as a rich topic for scholars explained. The author presented the socio economic drivers of Succession Planning and set out in the business case for Succession planning. Expanding on the business case literature the reader has been introduced to Human Capital Management Literature which points out the organisations and employees can realise real economic returns for investing in education and development. By extension education and development centric programs such as Succession Planning can be expected to yield similar economic returns.

The literature proceeded to examine the theories of Knowledge Management and Adult Learning theory. Given the central goal of Succession planning being the education and development of the next generation of leaders, the author set out the substantive issues in Knowledge Management and Adult education theory and presented them in a business context.

Chapter 3
Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the various forms of research exploring each from an ontological and epistemological point of view. The chapter opens with an examination of the most common research paradigms and their philosophical positions. This sets the scene for a closer examination of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The author revisits the subject of research paradigms and focuses on those which are considered to have more bearing for this inquiry. With regard to the various methodological approaches, research questions and research context, the chapter closes with an explanation of the rational for the chosen research method and data analysis approach. Finally a section devoted to the area of research ethics and problems associated with insider ethnographic research is presented.

3.2 What is research?

Research results in the creation of knowledge to solve a problem, answer a question and better describe or understand something. Waltz and Bussell (1981) define research as:

> *A systematic, formal, rigorous, and precise process employed to gain solutions to problems and/or to discover and interpret new facts and relationships.*
>
> (Waltz and Bussell, 1981 p.1)

There are many definitions of research in literature, however all agree that research must be rigorous, systematic, develop new knowledge on a subject or bring additional clarity to existing knowledge. The differences as they exist are found in the paradigms that a researcher may use, that govern the execution of the research. Bassey (1999) describes a paradigm as:

> *A network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and the function of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions*
>
> (Bassey, 1999 p.42)

The most common research paradigms include: positivist, post positivist, constructivist, interpretivist, transformative, emancipator, critical, pragmatism, and deconstructivist (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006).

Scott and Morrison (2006) lists positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and postmodernism as being the dominant paradigms associated with educational research. Moses and Knutsen (2007) describe naturalism and constructivism as the two most dominant methodological traditions. Despite the diverse range of terms describing the various paradigms they can for the most part be categorized under quantitative or qualitative research. Ultimately the researcher must choose which paradigm or paradigms should be used to answer their research questions.

Clough and Nutbrown (2002) claim the issue is not so much a question of which paradigm to use, but "how to dissolve that distinction in the interests of developing a research design which serves the investigation of the questions posed through that research" (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002 p.19). Patton (1990) proposes that paradigmatic choice centres on two fundamentally competing paradigms:

> *1. Logical-positivism, which uses quantitative and experimental methods to test hypothetical-deductive generalisations, versus 2. Phenomenological inquiry, using qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand human experience in context-specific settings.*

(Patton, 1990 p.37)

However, Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2004) point out that there is no imperative that researchers must choose a single paradigm or conduct paradigmatic driven research. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) categorise quantitative (positivism) versus qualitative (phenomenology) under four philosophical questions of ontology, epistemology, logic and teleology as shown in Table3.1.

Table 3.1 Framing research within philosophy

Areas of Philosophy as they relate to research.	Questions
1) Ontology raises questions about the nature of reality	What is the nature of the world? What is real? What counts as evidence?
2) Epistemology is interested in the origins of nature and knowing and the construct of knowledge	What is the relationship between the knower and the known? What role do values play?
3) Logic, as it relates to research, deals with principles of demonstration and verification	Are causal links between bits of information possible?
4) Teleology is generally concerned with questions of purpose	5) What is research for?

(Maykut and Morehouse, 1994 p.4)

Ontologically speaking, positivism holds the view that reality exists independently of our experience of it and proposes the existence of social facts. Furthermore, deterministic objective assumptions support the view that humans are the product of an environment over which they have no control. Phenomenology on the other hand holds the view that the world exists as a function of our experience of it and that reality exists as a function of our experience of the world. Furthermore, objective assumptions such as voluntarism support the view that humans have control over their environment and exercise free will. Heisenberg (1958) adds clarity to the ontological position of phenomenology by proposing that "what we observe is not nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning" (Heisenberg, 1958 p.81).

Epistemologically speaking, positivism suggests that objects can be observed and quantified independently of values, suggesting that only what can be observed is of significance and by quantifying observations, predication of object behaviour is possible. This view originates from the natural sciences and experimentation, where in order to produce repeatable results leading to valid claims to knowledge; control over the environment and excluding all variables from the object under study was a scientific imperative. Phenomenology at the other end the epistemology continuum, suggests that objects are value laden and object behaviour cannot be understood except with regard to their values.

Logic in relation to positivism suggests events are sequential nature in that one event leads to another, giving grounds for claims of causality. Phenomenology on the other hand holds the view that events shape each other leading to multiple outcomes.

Finally, teleology, which poses questions relating to the purpose of research, proposes that positivist research is conducted in order to establish facts, proofs, or claims to predictability of events, whilst phenomenology seeks to uncover meaning or discover propositions. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) present the various philosophical views and contrasting postulates of positivist and phenomenological research approaches in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Postulates of the research paradigms

Questions		Postulates of the positivist approach	Postulates of the phenomenological approach
Ontology	How does the world work?	Reality is one. By carefully dividing and studying its parts the whole can be understood.	There are multiple realities. These realities are socio-psychological constructions forming an interconnected whole. These realities can only be understood as such.
Epistemology	What is the relationship between knower and the known?	The knower can stand outside of what is to be known. True objectivity is possible.	The knower and known are interdependent.
Epistemology	What role do values play in understanding the world?	Values can be suspended in order to understand.	Values mediate and shape what is understood
Logic	Are casual linkages possible?	One event comes before another event and can be said to cause that event.	Events shape each other. Multidirectional relationships can be discovered
Logic	What is the possibility of generalisation?	Explanation from one time and place can be generalised to other times and places.	Only tentative explanations for one time and place are possible
Teleology	What does research contribute to knowledge?	Generally, the positivist seeks verification or proof of propositions	Generally, the phenomenologist seeks to discover or uncover propositions.

(Maykut and Morehouse, 1994 p.12)

we don't Clearly it is essential for the researcher to examine their philosophical position prior to engaging in research as it will have a significant influence on the choice of research method. Traditional positivism proposes that reality is *Out There* and that methods of research used by the natural sciences can be incorporated into the social sciences (Blaikie 1993). However, Stenhouse (1982) argues that applying this methodology to situations involving behaviour requires a more holistic view; in consequence, a qualitative approach is required.

Moody and Hutchinson (1989) claim that the researcher, in choosing how best to conduct research, must look at the research question being asked. They say that "the method chosen should not become an end in itself, but must be appropriate for answering the research question" (Moody & Hutchinson, 1989 p.292). In essence, they advise that research questions must guide the choice of methodology and a clear understanding of the philosophical pillars that support each research method is necessary prior to choosing which method to employ and when. Furthermore, it is imperative that the researcher explain the rationale behind their choice of research method, outlining why one or more methods are chosen over others.

Patton (1990, p.14) points out that "qualitative and quantitative methods constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research" claiming that both methods may be employed in the same study.

3.3 Research Paradigms

The term paradigm was coined by Thomas Kuhn (1962) as a means to describe an approach to research. Kuhn challenged the prevailing beliefs about how scientific thought evolves; suggesting that scientific beliefs or paradigms change when through experimentation and evidence gathering, sufficient data accumulates challenging the exiting paradigm. Once the existing paradigm is no longer accepted, a period of testing and paradigmatic shift occurs, until the scientific community defines a new paradigm to explain the phenomena in question. Morgan (2007) presents Kuhn's (1996) "incommensurability" of paradigms which argues that:

> *The radically different assumptions about the nature of reality and truth in paradigms like realism and constructivism made it impossible to translate or reinterpret research between these paradigms. Instead, researchers who chose to operate within one set of metaphysical assumptions inherently rejected the principles that guided researchers who operated within other paradigms.*

(Morgan 2007 p58)

Kuhn's claims of paradigm incommensurability suggest that research paradigms are distinct and cross pollination of paradigms is not possible as they are underpinned by differing philosophical assumptions. Patton (1990) argues against paradigm incommensurability claiming that researchers should focus attention on their research questions and adopt the most appropriate research methods to provide the optimum understanding of the phenomena under study.

When analysing research, Briggs and Coleman (2007) claim that researchers draw upon a set of beliefs or epistemological assumptions called paradigms to transform information into data. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) describe a paradigm as:

> *A set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research. The beliefs include but are not limited to ontological, epistemological, axiological, aesthetic, and methodological beliefs.*

(Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004 p.24)

McKenzie and Knipe (2006) present the following table, adapted from the works of Mertons (2005) and Creswell (2003), which categorises the major research paradigms in relation to their associated language.

Table 3.3 Framing research within philosophy

Positivist/ Postpositivist	Interpretivist/ Constructivist	Transformative	Pragmatic
Experimental	Naturalistic	Critical theory	Consequences of actions
Quasi-experimental	Phenomenological	Neo-marxist	Problem-centred
Correlational	Hermeneutic	Feminist	Pluralistic
Reductionism	Interpretivist	Critical Race Theory	Real-world practice oriented
Theory verification	Ethnographic	Freirean	Mixed models
Causal comparative	Multiple participant meanings	Participatory	
Determination	Social and historical construction	Emancipatory	
Normative	Theory generation	Advocacy	
	Symbolic interaction	Grand Narrative	
		Empowerment issue oriented	
		Change-oriented	
		Interventionist	
		Queer theory	
		Race specific	
		Political	

(Mckensie and Knipe 2006)

Relating the above to the research questions for this inquiry, the author has chosen to explore the following paradigms in more detail as they have particular relevance to the rational employed in deciding the research method.

The transformative paradigm is rejected on the grounds that implicit in its associated language; Interventionist, Change oriented, Empowerment, and Participatory are notions of change. This research is not attempting to change the SP&M program; it is attempting to understand it, through the lived experiences of managers tasked with its implementation. Whilst the second research question uncovers opportunity for change, change, in and of itself, is not the goal of this research.

The positivist paradigm is chosen for further examination in so far as it provides the counterbalance for the post positivist paradigm. The positivist paradigm represents one of the most dominant paradigms in social research (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006, Scott and Morrison 2006). Furthermore, an examination of the positivist paradigm is required as data to the methodological choice rational presented by the author.

The Constructionism / Interpretism paradigm is chosen as its associated language; Phenomenological, Ethnographic, Multiple participant meanings, Social and historical construction, speaks directly to the type of knowledge or ontology of this research endeavor and the philosophical position of the author. The author subscribes to the view that multiple realities exist, are socio psychological and value laden (Maykut & Morehouse 1994). In other words, each individual creates their own reality based on their context and values, which shape how they understand their world. It is the position of this author that the constructionist / interpretist paradigm is most appropriate to uuncovering the lived experience of each manager with the SP&M program.

Pragmatism is chosen for examination in response to the research context. The fast moving, political nature of the Inside Sales organisation has implications for the researcher in so far as the context is unstable from a research point of view. The associated language; Consequences of actions, Real world practice, Mixed methods suggest a degree of adaptability to real world situations. In order to cope with political shifts, prudence suggests building a degree of flexibility into the research design, facilitated by the adoption of the pragmatic paradigm.

3.3.1 Positivist / Quantitative research

The terms qualitative and quantitative are commonly used in two distinct discourses. In one sense the terms refer to the research paradigm and in another they refer to research methods (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). As paradigms they represent the two dominant approaches to social science research (Morgan 2007). Qualitative and quantitative research paradigms can be considered to be at the opposite ends of an imaginary paradigmatic continuum (Moses and Knutsen 2007). Participatory research and pragmatic research, each with its own particular focus, can employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Creswell (2009) defines quantitative research as

> *A means of testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures..... those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings.*

> (Creswell, 2009 p.4)

Quantitative research is also known as the scientific method (Creswell et al. 2003). Quantitative approaches to research dominated in the social sciences from the late 19th century up to the mid 20th century (Creswell 2009) and were an attempt to apply methods of natural science to social phenomena. The French philosopher Auguste Comte used positivism as a means to explain the social world which prior to that was normally explained through religious taxonomies (Babbie 2010).

The positivist paradigm guides the quantitative mode of inquiry and is based on the assumption that social reality is objective in structure and can be measured and explained scientifically. Quantitative research measurement is concerned with reliability, validity and generalisability in its prediction of cause and effect. Quantitative approaches espouse the following features:

- There exists regularities or patterns in nature that can be observed and described.
- Statements based on these regularities can be tested empirically according to a falsification principle and a correspondence theory of truth.
- It is possible to distinguish between value-laden and factual statements.
- The scientific project should be aimed at the general (nomothetic) at the expense of the particular (ideographic)
- Human knowledge is both singular and cumulative.

(Moses and Knutsen, 2007 p.9)

In simple terms, quantitative approaches to research which stem from the positivist paradigm, seek to explain human behavior by gathering factual information about such behavior. The body of evidence emerging from such inquires find rigor in measurements of repeatability, validity, predictability and reliability. Objectivity claims are justified as a function of quantitative research method. In practical terms the quantitative researcher may not need to have any direct contact with research subjects.

This objective approach claims to raise the research outcome above any suspicion of researcher bias (Carr 1994). Quantitative research is synonymous with the use of tools such as the quantitative survey often used to gather data from large populations. Large data sets of this type lend themselves readily to empirical testing, and bolster claims to the generalisability of research outcomes. Furthermore, large data samples facilitate greater accuracy in empirical validity testing of research outcomes (McColl et al. 2001).

Whitfield and Strauss (2000) identify a variety of risks stemming from an excessive reliance on quantitative and deductive approaches, including a disproportionate focus on more readily quantifiable topics, reference to correlation rather than causality, the use of inappropriate variables, a retreat from the 'real world' peoples and interactions. Furthermore, quantitative approaches show a loss of scope for uncovering "surprising findings" (Byrman and Bell 2004, p.13) in research.

In principle, the author rejects the use of the positivist paradigm as a "theoretical framework" (Mertons, 2005 p.2) for this research in view of the fact that philosophically, it rejects the existence of multiple realities which by extension rejects, the notion that a managers lived experience is value laden and contextual and socio psychologically constructed. Furthermore, the associated quantitative data gathering method such as the quantitative survey instrument does not allow the researcher to probe in sufficient detail to uncover hidden meanings or truths.

3.3.2 Post Positivist / Qualitative research

The qualitative research paradigm is governed by its phenomenological underpinnings. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach, to the study of phenomena and in particular the human experience. Ontologically speaking, phenomenology espouses the belief that there are multiple realities. These realities are socio psychological (Maykut & Morehouse 1994). In other words, each individual creates their own reality based on their context and values, which shape how they understand their world. The epistemology of phenomenology suggests that values provide the lens through which the individual views the world. In consequence, researchers must have a deep understanding of their research subjects, in order to produce rigorous, ethical, research. This deep understanding is achieved by adopting less objective modes of social inquiry. In terms of a definition for qualitative research there are as many definitions as there are authors on the subject. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) offer the following definition which makes reference to its philosophical origins and to data gathering instruments;

> *Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world.*

This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3)

Creswell (2009) offers a similar definition which makes reference to the deductive, interpretive nature of making sense from qualitative data;

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building form the particulars to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of data..... Those who engage in the form of inquiry support a way of looking as research the honours an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation

(Creswell, 2009 p.4)

The inductive and flexible nature of qualitative research offers unique advantages in comparison to quantitative inquiry. Probably the biggest advantage is the ability to probe into responses or observations as needed and obtain more detailed descriptions and explanations of experiences, behaviours, and beliefs. Bryman (1984) highlights the more dominant data gathering methods used in qualitative research.

Unstructured interviewing and life histories (the latter to a lesser extent) are frequently mentioned as providing appropriate vehicles, but above all participant observation is the most favored technique. 'Participant observation' is a rather broad term, in that not only does it encapsulate a wide range of observational practices, it is also used to denote a fieldwork strategy which includes general interviewing, usually of a relatively unstructured kind, the perusal of documents, and the interviewing of key informants

(Bryman, 1984 p.78)

Critiques of qualitative research point to several perceived weakness in the approach. Bryman and Bell (2003) point out that qualitative research can be critiqued under the following headings:

➢ Subjectivity.

Due to the interpretive nature of qualitative research and the closeness of the researcher to the research subjects, it is argued that research outcomes rely on unsystematic data analysis techniques which do not measure up to quantitative data analysis standards. In addition, the primary data gathering instrument being the researcher themselves and associated tools such as unstructured interviews, note taking and observation are not value free. As such qualitative research outcomes are regarded as entirely subjective.

> ➢ Repeatability

> The researcher being the primary data gathering instrument means that what is included in the data or regarded as significant is down to the researcher themselves. It is highly unlikely, even if all other contextual issues could be controlled, that another researcher could replicate an inquiry and its outcome.

> ➢ Generalisation

> When participant observation is used with typically small or focused research populations it is argued that it is impossible to know how the research outcome can be generalised to other organisations of similar context.

3.3.3 Constructivism / Interpretism

Constructivism can be considered as a direct contrast to positivism. A positivist approach would see knowledge as objective and not taking account of opinions or feelings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) view constructivism as having a relativist ontology, transactional epistemology, and a hermeneutic, dialectical methodology. Ontologically speaking, relativist implies that although we all live in the same world multiple realities exist as a function of an individual's value system which can be considered a lens for how they experience the world. Essentially as experiences and or values change, reality is constructed each time. Epistemologically speaking constructivism implies that the researcher and the researched are linked and that research outcomes and knowledge are created as the inquiry proceeds. In simple terms the constructivism paradigm is aligned to the belief in the uniqueness of human beings and their experiences of the social world. In consequence, laws derived from quantitative inquiries, to describe, predict or govern human behaviour are considered fallacious.

3.3.4 Pragmatism

Pragmatism from a research point view is a paradigm which has no intrinsically linked research method. Decisions about which research method to employ are based on the research problem as opposed to a particular philosophical position adopted by the researcher (Mckensie and knipe 2006). Patton (1990, p.14) points out that "qualitative and quantitative methods constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research" claiming that both methods may be employed in the same study. Kuhn (1996) observes that ontological differences between paradigms such as constructivism and realism; meant researchers working within one paradigm auto-rejected the guiding principles of researchers aligned to other paradigms.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) reject paradigm incompatibility and argue that;

> *Epistemological and methodological pluralism should be promoted in educational research so that researchers are informed about epistemological and methodological possibilities and, ultimately, so that we are able to conduct more effective research*

<div align="right">(Johnson and Onwuegbuzie. 2004 p.15)</div>

Essentially, exponents of the pragmatism research paradigm employ mixed methods research approaches. The combination of methods and procedures are chosen purely on their usefulness in eliciting the most complete information set possible from the research subjects, in order to accurately and holistically answer research questions. With regard to data gathering; there are two options open to the researcher, quantitative and qualitative. They represent distinct but not mutually exclusive choices for the researcher.

It is imperative, that prior to choosing which methods to employ, where, and with what data, that the ontological and epistemological questions posed by these strategies be understood. Failing to understand these questions may result in choosing a methodology that is unlikely to answer the research questions posed. Furthermore, it is essential that the researcher has regard to research context issues and ensure such issues inform the rational for choosing the research method.

3.4 Research Method

This section sets out the rationale behind the choice of the research method which provides the framework upon which this inquiry is built. Where appropriate, references to ontology, epistemology and paradigms are made.

3.4.1 Research Question and Objectives Revisited

The objectives of this research are twofold; in the first instance the research must explore the lived experiences of managers tasked with implementing succession planning and management. Secondly; opportunities to improve the current succession planning and management process must be catalogued and explored. In order to capture these objectives and give structure to the research the following research questions are proposed:

1) What is the lived experience of Inside Sales managers with the succession planning and management process?
2) What SP&M features could advance the practice of SP&M in Inside Sales?

The key terms in the above question are lived and experience. The first research question, the "term lived" experience has a particular meaning in research and is synonymous with ethnography and anthropology (Maykut and Morehouse 1994) Polanyi (2012) describes the position of researchers conducting ethnographic research as being indwellers engaged in prolonged emersion in the field to uncover meanings through the observation of subjects in their natural setting.

Traditionally prolonged engagements were understood to mean engagements spanning several years, however, shorter engagements in the field are now common place giving rise to the term micro-ethnography (Simons 2009). This particular study examines the lived experience of managers in relation to the SP&M program which declares the researched experiences are bounded to this particular program in a particular context.

This research is not attempting to put forward social facts as characterised by quantitative inquires. It is attempting to uncover the feelings and experiences of a defined group of employees in a particular context. Such feelings and experiences can be shared among the group but the researcher must gather data at the individual level.

On examination of the research questions, ontology would suggest a phenomenological approach as it allows for socially constructed multiply realities. Epistemology examines the relationship between the knower and the known and the extent to which values influence this relationship. Thoughts, feelings and experiences on an individual level are value laden. In practice, eliciting data of an intimate nature from research participants may require probing by the researcher, implying a more subjective relationship between the researcher and the researched. Such a relationship brings the values of both parties into play. The very nature of the data being sought and the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the research population, suggests the adoption of a phenomenological based form of inquiry.

3.4.2 Research Context Revisited

This research seeks to understand the experience of Inside Sales managers and employees with succession planning and management. In addition, the research must bring to light any opportunities to improve these experiences. Quantitative data gathering approaches and subsequent analysis find rigour in their ability to make generalisations.

Whitfield and Strauss (2000) identify a variety of risks stemming from a preoccupation with generalisability and excessive reliance on quantitative and deductive approaches. It's important to restate that this research does not seek to make generalizations but simply to understand how managers and employees of this organisation experience succession planning and management.

Global organisations operating in market segments such as the Electronics, Software and Services industries have inherent organisational characteristics that researchers must be cognisant of when choosing research methodologies. Daft (2004) links organisation type, market segment and decision making processes. The characteristics of the Inside Sales organisation can be listed as;

➢ Fast moving
➢ Engaged in extensive boundary spanning
➢ Many competitors
➢ Bounded rationality decision making, internal and external politics involved

Business decisions made in such organisations are based on context, time and operating environment, all of which are subject to rapid change. Similarly, agreements organisations make in relation to research should not be regarded as sacrosanct.

This fast changing environment suggests, building some degree of flexibility into the research design, by adopting a mixed methods approach, aligned to the pragmatism paradigm.

3.4.3 Stakeholders

Apart from the researcher the senior management team is the major stakeholder in this inquiry. This team will ultimately decide whether or not to support the research or adopt any recommendations emerging from the research. Were the author to adopt a pure positivist outlook to this research, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of empiricism would suggest that considerations of their consciousness, inter-subjectivity, and will can be ignored. Furthermore, the a positivist approach suggests, that it would be possible to understand reactions of the senior management team, by understanding how each manager reacts in isolation, to succession planning, by remaining remote and "objective".

The author recalls witnessing the failure of many promising initiatives by assuming what individuals say and do in isolation can be used as a predictor for how they might react as a team and *vice versa*. Failure to recognise issues such as the feelings and interactions of the senior management team could result in serious challenges to the research.

Cognisant of the need to account for the feelings and interactions of employees in my research, does not rule out gathering and using quantitative data; however, it does suggest its use in a supportive role. Therefore, the research method requires a more phenomenological, practitioner based, mode of inquiry.

3.5 Research Method Selection

Having considered the research question, population and context the author chooses to use Ethnographic case study as the research method and semi structured interview as the data gathering tool.

3.5.1 What is a Case?

Opinions vary on what constitutes a case. Simons (2009, p.4) suggests a Case could be "a person, classroom, institution, policy or programme". George and Bennett (2004) offer a definition for a case:

> *A case is an instance of a class of events". They suggest, the term class "refers to a phenomenon of scientific interest that the researcher studies, with the aim of theory development regarding the causes of similarities or differences among cases of that class of event".*

(George and Bennett , 2004 p.17)

This infers that a case is a singularity or particular instance of an occurrence. Furthermore, a case can be compared and contrasted to other cases that share context or class. The use of the words case, phenomenon and event suggest that a case has the additional property of being bounded by time and place.

3.5.2 What is a Case study?

The same variance found in the descriptions and definitions of a 'Case', are similarly, expressed in definitions for a 'Case study'. Stake (1995, p.17) defines a Case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its

activity within important circumstances". Whilst this definition has merit, the following definition from Simons (2009) offers additional clarity to the researcher:

"A Case study is an in depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, or system in a 'real life' context. It is research based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence led"

(Simons (2009, p.21)

This definition supports Stake (1995), in so far as it gives clear mention to the particular and uniqueness of case research. In addition, this definition informs the researcher that multiple perspectives drawn from positivist and post positivist epistemologies are valid sources of evidence. Yin (2009) offers a technical definition of the case study, he suggests that a case study is an empirical enquiry that:

- *Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident.*
- *Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points.*
- *Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion*
- *Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.*

(Yin, 2009 p.18)

Furthermore, Yin (2009) makes note of the fact that although case study is categorised as a qualitative form of research, some case studies go beyond a type of qualitative research by using a mix of qualitative and quantitative forms of evidence In addition, Yin claims that typically there are at least four different applications for the case study;

1) Explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies.
2) Describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred
3) Illustrate certain topics within an evaluation, in a descriptive mode
4) Enlighten a set of outcomes

(Yin, 2009 p.19)

3.5.3 How is a Case Study Critiqued and Defended?

A frequent criticism of case study methodology is that its dependence on a single case renders it incapable of providing a generalizing conclusion. Yin (1993) presented Giddens' view that considered case methodology "microscopic" because it "lacked a sufficient number" of cases.

These criticisms originate from the positivist schools of research. However, a consequence of the positivist preoccupation with generalisable research outcomes means that often rich seams of evidential data are discarded. The case study can bring to bear many sources of data which gives the case report reader a more holistic view of the event or subject.

Yin (1989a, 1989b) argues that the relative size of the sample whether two, ten, or one hundred cases are used, does not transform a multiple case into a macroscopic study. The goal of the study should establish the parameters, and then should be applied to all research. In this way, even a single case could be considered acceptable, provided it met the established objective. The strength of the case study research approach is its ability to draw from a breath of resources to provide an in depth explanation or description. Conversely, this breath of evidential source material can prove problematic to the researcher as they must harness this often unwieldy data to develop scholarly arguments.

3.5.4 Interview as a data gathering tool

Aron & Wiseman (1972 cited in Bell 2005, p.157) describes interviews as analogous to fishing:

> *Liken interviewing to a fishing expedition and, pursuing this analogy, Cohen (1976,82) adds like fishing interviewing is an activity requiring careful preparation, much patience, and considerable practice if the eventual reward is to be a worthwhile catch.*
>
> Bell (2005 p.157)

This quote cautions interviewers to carefully choose the questions they might ask in the pursuit of data. Expanding on this analogy; use the right bait to catch a particular fish. All interviews yield data, but it would take skill and careful choice of questions to get usable, analysable, data. Interviews with one person typically take one of two forms, structured or semi structured.

Ribbins (2007) describes such interviews as;

> *"The researcher broadly controlling the agenda and process of the interview, whilst leaving the interviewees free, within limits, to respond as they best see fit"*

<div align="right">(Ribbins, 2007 p.209)</div>

This description broadly matches the type of semi structured interview employed in this research. The author rejected using unstructured interviews as described by in Corbin & Morse (2003)

> *In unstructured interactive interviews, sometimes referred to as open-ended or narrative interviews, participants are given considerable control over the course of the interview. Researchers establish what will be studied or what Spradley (1979) called a "grand tour question." Participants are asked to tell their story as they see it, feel it, experience it. As such, participants determine where to begin the narrative, what topics to include or exclude, the order in which topics are introduced, and the amount of detail*

<div align="right">(Corbin & Morse, 2003 p.6)</div>

The unstructured interview style was rejected on the grounds that access to the senior management team is extremely limited, as such every effort needed to be made to ensure that the required research data could be elicited in one interview sitting. The interview questions (See Appendix A) were constructed with regard to the literature review, in particular the works of Fulmer and Congar (2004) and Rothwell (2010). The final list were reviewed and approved by the Senior Hr partner, Talent manager and my research supervisor.

3.6 Data Analysis

The methodology adopted by this study is based on the constant comparative method as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) who draw on the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) in their development of this methodological framework. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.18) point out: "words are the way that most people come to understand their situations; we create our world with words; we explain ourselves with words; we defend and hide ourselves with words".

Thus, in qualitative data analysis and presentation: "the task of the researcher is to find patterns within those words and to present those patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994 p.18).

Qualitative research is a holistic approach which takes account of contexts within which human experiences occur and is thus concerned with learning from particular instances or cases. Qualitative research seeks to access the inner world of perception and meaning-making in order to understand, describe, and explain social process from the perspective of study participants. This approach does not commence with a prior hypothesis to be tested and proved but with a focus of inquiry that takes the researcher on a voyage of discovery as it takes an inductive approach to data analysis. Research outcomes are not broad generalizations but contextual findings; qualitative researchers tend to speak of 'transferability' (from context to context) rather than generalisability.

3.6.1 Constant Comparative Method

While qualitative research is not given to mathematical abstractions, it is nonetheless systematic in its approach to data collection and analysis. Framed by a focus of inquiry, whether data is collected through interviews or questionnaires, open-ended questioning allows study participants to articulate their perceptions and experiences freely and spontaneously. In analysing data generated in this format, responses are not grouped according to pre-defined categories, rather salient categories of meaning and relationships between categories are derived from the data itself through a process of inductive reasoning.

The constant comparative method offers the means whereby by the researcher may access and analyse articulated perspectives so that they may be integrated in a model that seeks to explain the social processes under study. In practice, it involves breaking down the data into discrete incidents (Glaser and Strauss 1967) or units (Lincoln and Guba 1985) and coding them into categories. Categories arising from this method generally take two forms: those that are derived from the participants' customs and language, and those that the researcher identifies as significant to the project's focus-of-inquiry.

The goal of the former is "to reconstruct the categories used by subjects to conceptualise their own experiences and world view". The goal of the latter is to assist the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the social processes operative in the site under study; thus, "the process of constant comparison stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 pp. 334-341).

Categories undergo content and definition changes as units and incidents are compared and categorised, and as understandings of the properties of categories and the relationships between categories are developed and refined over the course of the analytical process. Taylor and Bogdan (1984, p.126) describe the comparative practice:

> *In the constant comparative method the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts; by continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent explanatory model.*

Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p.126)

3.7 Data Analysis Process

This section sets out the cycles of analysis planned for this study. There are nine discrete cycles of analyses under four general analytical processes as defined by Maykut & Morehouse (1994). These cycles will involve three separate cycles of coding, two cycles of managing codes, one for initial categorisation of open codes and one for data reduction through consolidating codes into a more abstract theoretical framework and three which uses writing itself as a tool to prompt deeper thinking of the data (Bazeley 2009) leading to findings from which conclusions may be drawn. Some management of coding cycles involve additional coding (See Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Cycles of Analysis

Analytical Process	Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative process throughout analysis
1. Comparing units of meaning across categories for inductive category coding	Phase 1 Open Coding	**Descriptive Accounts** *(Reordering, 'coding on' and annotating through NVIVO)*	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning
2. Refining categories	Phase 2 Categorization of Codes		Refining and distilling more abstract concepts
3. Exploring relationships and patterns across categories;	Phase 3 Coding on Phase 4 – In case analysis Phase 5 – Cross case analysis	**Data Management** *(Open and hierarchal coding through NINVO)*	Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning Assigning meaning
4. Integrating data to write findings	Phase 6 –Data Reduction Phase 7 – writing *analytical memos* Phase 8 – Validating *analytical memos* *Phase 9 – synthesising analytical memos*	**Explanatory Accounts** *(Extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVIVO)*	Generating themes and concepts

Phase 1 – Open Coding will involve participant-driven descriptive 'open coding' or deconstruction of the data from its original chronology by coding of participants' interviews to initial codes which will labelled and defined and grouped or clustered under cases in the research site network.

Phase 2 – Categorisation of Codes will involve reorganising, re-labelling distilling and merging codes identified in phase 1 and clustering them under broader categories of codes so as to re-construct the data into a framework of codes that makes sense in terms of furthering the analysis and is relative to the study's focus of inquiry.

Phase 3 – Coding on will involve identifying qualitative codes for 'coding on' the now re-structured categories of codes into sub-categories so as to fully understand meanings embedded in these categories. This phase will be more interpretive in nature and more researcher-led as it seeks to develop themes embedded in the data.

Phase 4 – **In case analyses** – will involve an analysis of all emergent themes and sub-themes as developed in previous phases according to each case in the 'network' so as to initially examine and report on a case-by-case basis within the research site's network.

Phase 5 – **Cross case analysis** – will involve a comparative analysis of all emergent themes and sub-themes as developed in previous phases considering all cases in the 'network' so as to report on similarities and differences between cases in the 'network' in the research site under scrutiny.

Phase 6 – Data Reduction – will involve consolidating codes from previous cycles of coding into a more abstract, philosophical, literature based and researcher led conceptual framework or map of themes and their relationships to each other for reporting purposes (Buzan 1993).

Phase 7 – writing *analytical memos* against the higher level codes to accurately summarise the content of each category and its codes and propose empirical findings against such categories (Richards 2005).

These memos will consider 5 key areas:

1. The content of the cluster of codes on which it is reporting
2. The patterns where relevant (levels of coding for example although this could be used to identify exceptional cases as well as shared experiences)
3. Considering background information recorded against participants and considering any patterns that may exist in relation to participants' profiles
4. Situating the code(s) in the storyboard –meaning considering the relatedness of codes to each other and drawing and describing inferences, and their importance to addressing the research question and sequencing disparate codes and clusters of codes into a story or narrative which is structured and can be expressed in the form of a coherent and cohesive chapter
5. Considering primary sources in the context of relationships with the literature as well as identifying gaps in the literature so as to facilitate a discussion of the study findings

Phase 8 – **validating analytical memos** involves testing, validating and revising analytical memos so as to self-audit proposed findings by seeking evidence in the data beyond textual quotes to support the stated findings and seeking to expand on deeper meanings embedded in the data. This process involves interrogation of data and forces the consideration of elements beyond the category itself; drawing on relationships across and between categories and cross tabulation with demographics, observations and literature. This phase will result in evidence based findings as each finding must be validated by being rooted in the data itself and will rely on the creation of reports from the data to substantiate findings.

Phase 9 involves synthesizing the analytical memos into a coherent, cohesive and well supported set of findings. Table 3.3 adapted from Maykut and Morehouse (1994) sets out the stages and process involved in Qualitative Analysis.

3.8 Using Qualitative Data Analysis Software

Nvivo 10 is used as a document and coding management system to give clarity to the coding and analytical processes. It must be stressed that in using qualitative data analysis software, the researcher does not capitulate the hermeneutic task to the logic of the computer; rather the computer is used as a tool for efficiency and not as a tool which in and of itself conducts analysis and draws conclusions.

As Fielding and Lee (1998, p.167) explain, qualitative researchers "want tools which support analysis, but leave the analyst firmly in charge". Importantly such software also serves a tool for transparency. Arguably, the production of an audit trail is the key most important criteria on which the trustworthiness and plausibility of a study can be established. Qualitative analysis software's logging of data movements, coding patterns, and mapping of conceptual categories and thought progression; render all stages of the analytical process traceable and transparent, facilitating the researcher in producing a more detailed and comprehensive audit trail than manual mapping of this complicated process can allow.

3.9 Insider Research Challenges and Ethics

Insider research is described as being research conducted by complete members of organisational systems, on their own organisation, as opposed to organisational research that is conducted by researchers who temporarily join the organisation for the purposes and duration of the research (Adler and Adler 1987). This description is reflective of the position of the author of this inquiry as a permanent employee of the organisation under study.

Insider research presents a number of challenges for researchers and is often regarded as being inherently problematic (Alvesson 2003). Insider research outcomes are frequently disqualified on the grounds that it is perceived not to conform to standards of intellectual rigor, because insider researchers have a personal stake and substantive emotional investment in the setting (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen 1994). Furthermore, insiders are perceived as prone to charges of being too close, and thereby, not attaining the critical distance and objectivity deemed to be necessary for valid research (Brannick and Coughlan 2007).

It is important to state that whilst my role as European learning consultant, requires contact and communication with all employees up to and including Vice President Level, the role has no part in the SP&M program. This affords the author a degree of critical distance and objectivity from the interview data despite being familiar with the interviewees. Furthermore, by applying grounded theory inductive, qualitative analysis techniques to the interview data, such as the constant comparative method, qualitative researchers may make rigorous claims for their research outcomes Maykut and Morehouse 1994).

Organisational and interviewee familiarity presents an additional challenge to the inside researcher. On one hand, being familiar with the organisation and interviewees allows the researcher to converse with research participants in terms of the language, culture and symbols unique to the organisation. Fluency in this language allows the researcher to build a rapport with interviewees, conducive to eliciting rich data. However, despite the ethical guarantees set out in the plain language statement, elite interviewees (Smith 2005, Welch et al. 2002) may be mindful that statements made in confidence to an inside researcher, lower down in the organisational hierarchy, cannot be wiped from the

mind once the research project is over. Welch et al. (2002) describes elite interviewees as being;

> *Informants occupying a senior or middle management position; has functional responsibility in an area which enjoys high status in accordance with corporate values; has considerable industry experience and frequently also long tenure with the company; possesses a broad network of personal relationships; and has considerable international exposure.*

<div align="right">Welch et al. (2002, p.613)</div>

Desmond (2004) addresses the issue of power asymmetry when conducting research involving elites claiming that researching up, poses a set of challenges which are quite different from researching down. Whilst research authors have significant levels of power as writers of research outcomes they may experience lesser degrees of power when interviewing elites (McDowell 1998). Furthermore, elites may attempt to dominate the interview or influence the research outcome. However, the author notes that during the participant interviewing stage for this particular inquiry, despite the difference in hierarchal organisational power between the interviewer and the interviewees, the elites made no attempt to exercise that power. Participants engaged in a frank and open discourse and appeared to candidly voice areas of concern or personal feelings about their experiences with the SP&M program.

3.9.1 Business Research Ethics

Discussions about ethical principles in business research, and perhaps more specifically transgressions of them, tend to revolve around certain issues that recur in different guises but that have been broken down by Diener and Crandall (1978) into four main areas:

1) harm to participants
2) lack of informed consent
3) invasion of privacy
4) Is deception is involved?

Harm to participants: In consideration of ways research participants could be harmed, Diener and Crandall (1978) list the following; physical harm to participants' development or self-esteem; stress; harm to career prospects, future employment; and inducement of subjects to perform reprehensible acts. Among the most frequently cited examples of research participants being harmed are Banks, and Zimbardo's (1973) prison experiments and the Milgram (1963) experiment on responses to authority.

These studies involved actions whereby the participants where psychologically or physically harmed.

The issue of harm to participants is further addressed in ethical codes by advocating care over maintaining the confidentiality of records and anonymity of accounts (Bell and Waters 2014). This means that the identities and records of individuals and organisations should be maintained as confidential. However, Bryman and Bell (2003) claim that even the use of pseudonyms in research reports cannot guarantee total anonymity, especially research contexts involving world renowned organisations.

In relation to this inquiry the author used a pseudonym for the organisation and codified participant names for use in this thesis. The author contends that adhering to the principle of no harm and conducting insider research may have resulted in writing what could be interpreted as an uncritical account of the organisations part in relation to SP&M. However writing in this way did not detract from answering the research questions. Furthermore, insider researchers must have regard for their potential to harm their future career prospects by making negative statements especially when researching world renowned organisations.

Informed Consent: Informed consent is centralised on the principle that prospective research participants should be given as much information about the proposed research project as might be needed to make an uninfluenced, informed decision, about whether or not they wish to participate in a study (Bell and Waters 2014). Dingwall (2008) contends that informed consent could have negative consequences for many people traditionally excluded from putting their views forward in research; for example; children, people with learning disabilities, people with advanced dementia or those with psychiatric histories. Strict adherence to the principle of informed consent may have the unintended effect of silencing groups such as these and could be construed as a form of censorship (Parker and Crabtree 2014).

In the context of this inquiry the research proposal was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of Dublin City University and received approval as a low risk study. Permission to carry out the study in the organisation was sought and granted from the Vice President of Inside Sales, under the terms set out in the plain language statement (See Appendix A).

All participants received a copy of the plain language statement in their individual solicitation emails and were free to opt in or out without fear of recrimination of any kind. Their professional status in the organisation is such that they are regarded as elites and as such would be deemed capable of making informed choices.

Privacy: This third area of ethical concern relates to the issue of the degree to which invasions of privacy can be condoned. Privacy is linked to the notion of informed consent, because informed consent is given on the basis of a detailed understanding of what the research participant's involvement is likely to entail (Bryman and Bell 2003). In the context of this inquiry all participant interviews were conducted in the privacy of their offices. As set out in the planning language statement (See Appendix A), interviews could only take place at times chosen so as not to interfere with the normal conduct of business, placing the conduct of research as secondary at all times to the participants business commitments. Clear commitments were given in relation to the storage of data recordings and transcripts. Prior to the commencement of the interviews participants were asked to confirm their understanding of the plain language statement and their rights as participants.

Deception: Bryman and Bell (2003) claim deception to be an occasion where conducted research is not in line with its stated intentions. Babbie (2015) cites occasions such as investigative research where the goal is uncovering wrong doing or instances where the researcher believes that total disclosure of research goals may cause research participants to behave differently, negatively impacting social science experiments. However, in general, deception is regarded as bad practice and may have particularly negative consequences for ethnographic insider researchers in relation to their careers and or their ability to conduct future insider research (Bryman and Bell 2003).

3.10 Summary

The author presented the various forms of research exploring each from an ontological and epistemological point of view. The most common research paradigms and their philosophical positions have been set out, followed by a closer examination of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The author revisited the subject of research paradigms and focussed on those which are considered to have more bearing for this inquiry.

With regard to the various methodological approaches, research questions and research context, the reader was presented with an explanation of the rational for the chosen research method and a detailed description of the data analysis approach. In relation to research ethics and insider research, the substantive issues were examined and linked to the context of this inquiry,

Chapter 4
Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

The following sections introduce the reader through the iterative research participant selection process, the verification of the primary research instrument and the rationale for some of the research methodological decisions.

There are two sources of data examined in this chapter. The primary sources of data are the experiences of managers Inside Sales managers with SP&M program, as gathered from their semi structured interviews. The process of coding and theme identification is explained and modelled, emergent themes are examined and set in context with supporting quotations.

The secondary data sources are a series of best SP&M company case studies as collated by eminent authors in the field of succession planning. The process of coding and theme identification is explained and modelled. The case study analysis collates all the best practice SP&M features from each case study and sets them in context with supporting quotations.

This analysis concludes with a full cross-case and in-case analysis comparison of the best practice SP&M features to those of the Inside Sales SP&M program.

4.2 Research Population

The research population for this enquiry was chosen from employees deemed to have responsibility for implementing succession planning and selection of succession planning candidates. The research participants n=16 range in seniority from Senior Vice President to first line managers. Their span of control or influence covers the entire Inside Sales organisation. The author initially sought permission to select additional participants from the ranks of succession candidates to these managers. However, some second line managers expressed concerns with the idea of naming successors as such information is considered highly confidential in Inside Sales. Despite the assurances set out in the Plain language statement and Informed consent form (See Appendices A and B) a compromise solution to research participant selection was required.

The author noted the possibility of candidates being "cherry picked" resulting in skewed data, which could have portrayed the SP&M program in a more favourable light. However, the research data will show that the author's fears in this regard proved to be unfounded.

The actual selection of research participants was agreed between the Senior Vice President, Talent manager and the HR partner. A positive consequence of this selection process was the removal of any possibility of researcher bias in the selection of candidates.

The final list of research participants consisted of two Vice Presidents, six second line managers and eight first line managers.

4.3 Data Gathering

The primary data gathering instrument employed in this enquiry is the semi structured qualitative interview. The final list of questions was agreed between the author and the Inside Sales HR partner (See Appendix C). Whilst vetting of the interview questions was not sought by the organisation, the author felt it prudent to involve the HR partner to ensure complicity with any corporate and legal regulations regarding the conduction of research in this organisation. The final list of questions was also reviewed by my research supervisor, who performed the role of "critical friend" throughout this research.

The interviews took place in the offices of the various managers. The option to conduct the interviews in a more neutral meeting room was considered. However, the author felt that research participants would be more comfortable and relaxed in a familiar setting. The interviews were recorded for transcription accuracy purposes as set out in the Plain language statement and Informed consent form, which all participants received as attachments to the Participant Solicitation email (See Appendix D). The author noted that recording of interviews would not be typical in this organisation, which further influenced the decision to conduct the interviews in a setting most familiar to the research participants and conducive to the data gathering process. The interviews themselves were approximately 1 hour in duration. The semi structured interview questions were used as a guide for the author, as opposed to a rigid list of questions that must be asked of each participant.

The participants received a copy of the interview questions in advance. The author noted that sending out the questions in advance could have negative connotations with regards to the research data, in so far as it may facilitate participants giving "canned" or rehearsed responses to interview questions. However, due to heavy participant work schedules and business travel requirements the author was informed that re-interviewing participants may not be possible. In consequence, the author chose to afford the research participants some opportunity to prepare for the interview and call to mind their experiences of SP&M. This was deemed an acceptable risk, as opposed to the possibility of conducting interviews which yielded little in the way of usable data.

4.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the semi structured interviews follows a four step process, beginning with data categorisation and ending with a final list of emergent themes uncovered through the application of the constant comparative qualitative data analysis method. The following model describes the process of inductive coding and theme generation in more detail (See Figure 4.1).

4.4.1 Categorization

Interviews with participants revealed that Inside Sales is staffed by professionals who can be categorised as either 1) Sales or 2) Operations. The Sales category is quite self explanatory in so much as it is staffed by professionals whose primary expertise is selling Hardware, Software and Business services to external clientele located in Europe.

The Operations category is staffed by professionals who deliver the following services to the Sales function: Business Controls, Process and tools, Education and training, Pay and rewards, Business analytics and Staffing & Recruitment. All research participants were categorised under the headings of:

- Manager level
- Department
- Nationality
- Gender
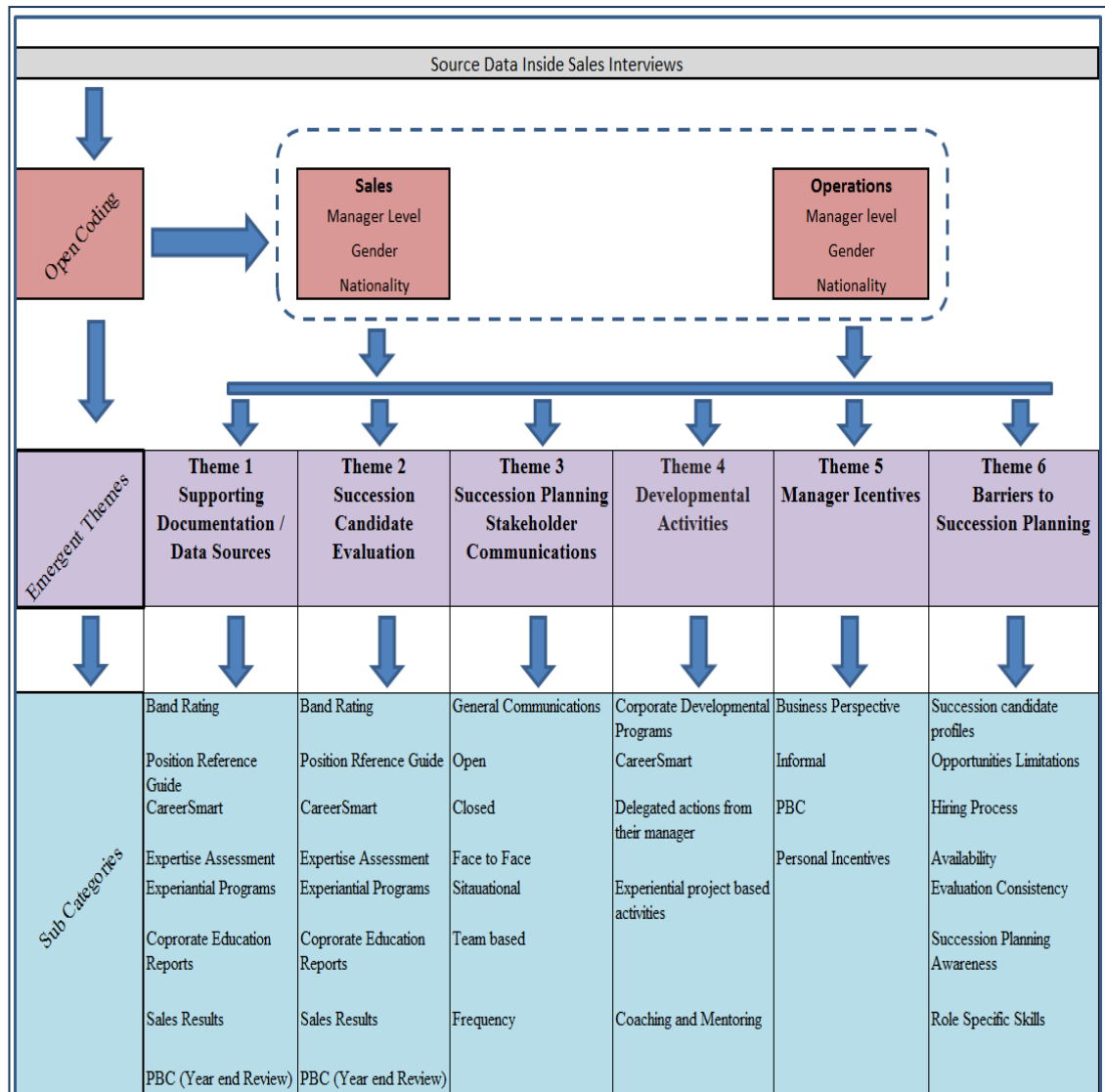
Figure 4.1

4.5 Overview of Succession Planning and Management in Inside Sales

The succession planning program in Inside Sales could for the most part, be described as replacement planning. When asked to describe the current state of succession planning for their organisation all participants went on to explain how many employees they had who could be considered as their potential replacements. They categorised their possible replacements as being either ready now, ready in one year or ready in two years.

As a general rule, it is accepted that each manager should have at least three people in their succession plan. However, this maxim is not strictly adhered to as an interview with one particular manager revealed that they had no identified successor.

In the event that a manager moves on from their current role, managers explained that actual successor selection is not in their remit. They nominate who they feel would be a good replacement to their up-line manager. The up-line managers meet as a team with their peer managers to discuss possible successors and the final choice of successor is largely a group decision. The up-line managers may choose the successor as nominated by the current manager or from a list of identified successors to other managers.

In relation to evaluation of employees for succession planning, 1st line manager opinions vary as to what formal criteria, if any, should be applied. Some managers base their evaluations on demonstrated skills or capabilities and more subjective elements such as how the candidate is perceived by other managers in their performance of project related activities. Other managers place emphasis on more quantifiable elements such as sales target achievements or previous year end evaluations known as the PBC (Personal Business Commitments).

The final element that managers mention in relation to evaluation criteria is the individual rating employees receive, post participation on the many corporate leadership or management development programmes. However, once employees move from band eight roles (See Appendix E) into higher banded roles, delivery of sales targets and the ability to grow the dollar value of the business become the primary evaluation metrics.

The main distinction between Sales employees and Operations employees is that Operations employees do not have revenue targets and only require language fluency in English. However, the ability to deliver timely, accurate, business analytics reports or project manage the deployment of tools and processes, demand a high level of multitasking skill and attention to detail. The degree to which Operations employees can cope with these demands can be considered a direct metric comparison to the sales targets for sellers. Operations employees are departmentalised by skill and job role function such as Tool and process, Business analytics, Business controls and Training and Development.

Sales employees share a common core set of sales skills. In addition, most Sales employees are fluent in at least two languages one of which must be English. Sales employees are departmentalised by brand (Product or Service they sell) and by language.

Manager opinion varies in relation to succession planning stakeholder communications. First line managers claim that non-managerial employees may or may not be aware of succession planning as a process. The majority feel that employees should be made aware of succession planning in so far as it may serve to inform their career development plans.

Managers describe varying codes of practice in relation to the scheduling of career development focused meetings with their employees. Some schedule career development meetings with each of their successors either quarterly or twice a year. Others express the view that they have an "Open door policy" and it was the responsibility of employees to schedule developmental meetings, as and when required. Managers accept that ideally developmental meetings should be held quarterly but point out that some teams are larger than others and they are expected to have developmental meetings with all their employees, not only listed successors. Consequentially, team size can be limiting factor on the frequency of developmental meetings. Furthermore, managers point out that developmental discussions are not limited to scheduled meetings only and can be triggered by impromptu conversations.

In summary, the author characterises SP&M in Inside Sales as replacement planning oriented and unstructured from a process point of view. It is important to state that unstructured does not mean that templates for identifying and quantifying candidate readiness do not exist. The unstructured label is founded from the variation of approach to SP&M as articulated by the research participants.

Whilst it is fare to say that in general all managers are knowledgeable in relation to the SP&M planning process as it exists today, the knowledge would have to be regarded as institutional in nature. From Figure 4.1, six discrete themes emerged from the semi structured interview data:

Theme 1: Supporting Documentation / Data Sources
Theme 2: Succession Candidate Evaluation
Theme 3: Succession Planning Stakeholder Communications
Theme 4: Developmental Activities
Theme 5: Manager Incentives
Theme 6: Barriers to Succession Planning

The following explores each theme in chronological order. Supporting quotes from research participants are coded according to the key in Figure 4.2

Citing Key for Semi Structured Interviews			
Manager level	Department	Interview Number	
F = First line manager	S = Sales	1	9
S = Second line manager	O= Operations	2	10
T = Third line manager		3	11
SVP = Senior Vice President		4	12
		5	13
		6	14
		7	15
		8	16

Example 1: Quote from Second line Operations Manager 2
-----> SOM2

Example 2: Quote from First line Sales Manager 4
-----> FSM4

Figure 4.2

4.5.1 Supporting Documentation and Data Sources

When questioned about the existence of formal documentation describing the SP&M process, managers either indicated that no such document exists or that they are unsure if such a document exists. Furthermore, the majority of managers have no standard documentation, with which to record their thoughts and observations, relating to the performance, successes, achievements or skill gap closure activities of succession candidates. In the absence of a standard document or template some managers mention keeping a diary or Excel spreadsheet for record making purposes. Participants agree in principle that this is less than ideal, and some state their intention to formalise their approach to performance record taking. The apparent absence of documentation supporting the SP&M program further supports the contention that Inside Sales's approach to SP&M can be characterised as unstructured.

Managers mention many sources of documentation and data repositories that can be used as an aid to evaluating the skills, capabilities or readiness for advancement of succession candidates. However, the degree to which any of these are used is at the discretion of each individual manager. Some Sales managers voice concerns regarding the evaluation of candidates in so far as the absence of a uniform approach to succession candidate evaluation, may lead to varying degrees of evaluation subjectivity.

4.5.2 Succession Candidate Evaluation and Information Sources

The following sub section sets out the various sources of documentation or data sources managers mentioned during the interviews. All managers have access to these documents or data sources and are at liberty to use them to augment their succession candidate evaluation.

Band Rating

In all interviews, managers refer to an employee's current band level. All employees in Inside Sales are assigned a band level, which denotes their functional capability. In most cases, minimum band levels are also attached to job roles. The bands in Inside Sales range from band 6 to band 10 for leadership or manager positions and then a further executive level grouping from band A to band D. The corporate position reference guide links the various bands to the required capability levels (See Appendix E). From a succession candidate evaluation point of view, a candidate's band provides some indication of the candidate's skills and capabilities. In practical terms a band nine manager cannot nominate a band seven employee for consideration as their direct replacement. Only in the most exceptional of circumstances can employees move more than one band level at a time.

CareerSmart

CareerSmart is an intranet web based application, where all employees seeking to increase their band level rating, are required to list their capabilities and provide supporting evidence as to why capabilities warrant a band level increase. The succession candidate's listed capabilities and evidence is known as a package. The employee then presents the packaged CareerSmart capabilities and evidence to a board of management who either sign off or reject the package. The key purpose of CareerSmart is to remove subjectivity from the decision-making process around band level increases. Furthermore, the CareerSmart application adds structure and rigour to the process of assembling the employee's evidence.

Expertise Assessment

The Expertise Assessment is another intranet web based application, where all employees apply a rating to their skills and capabilities. Each job role in Inside Sales has a defined taxonomy of skills and capabilities. The employee selects their job role and rates each skill and capability.

All skills and capabilities have a four-point rating system, set out as follows:

0= No skill.
1= Education received, but skill not applied.
2= Applied: Education received and skill applied
3= Expert: Education received, extensive application of the skill, capable of mentoring others in the application of the skill.
4= Thought leader: Education received, extensive application of the skill, has produced peer reviewed papers or is otherwise recognised as a thought leader and can provide direction at a business or geography level for that skill.

All employees are required to complete an assessment at least twice a year. The assessment is not complete until the employee's manager has reviewed the assessment. For each skill listed in the taxonomy for an employee's job role, the manager has three selection options.

1) Agree with the rating as suggested by the employee.
2) Set the skill for review, which triggers a meeting between the manager and employee to discuss the skill further before the manager can agree a rating
3) Disagree, which returns the full assessment back to the employee with the requirement to re assess the skill or skills in question.

The assessment is not complete or loaded to the system until the manager has selected the agree option for all skills listed. Some managers expressed a degree of scepticism as to whether the expertise assessment rating truly reflects the skills and capabilities of employees. They feel that Expertise Assessment has more to do with fulfilling corporate metrics than genuinely rating employees and helping them to close their skill gaps.

Corporate Programs

All succession candidates are mandated to complete corporate developmental programs. Post completion, each participant and their manager receives a detailed report outlining the strengths, weaknesses and possible developmental activities that candidates should complete to close any skill or capability gaps. Inside Sales provides a range of leadership development programs available to employees. The majority of managers cite the Leadership Development Centre (LDC) as being of particular value, due to the comprehensive nature of post-participation reports. However, an Operations 2nd line manager claimed that LDC reports must be "Taken with a pinch of salt" because the post participation report was based on observations made over the course of a day, and anyone can have a good or bad day". However, it is not possible to become a manager or succeed to a leadership position without completing the LDC.

The Business and Technical Leadership program (BTL) is similar in structure to the LDC accept that entrance program to the programme is quite exclusive and only for employees regarded as having the potential to succeed to Executive or C-suite managerial positions such as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Experiential evaluations

From a succession candidate evaluation point of view, managers in Inside Sales place great store on skills and capabilities demonstrated by candidates in the execution of their job role. Managers frequently mention the use of special projects to evaluate the performance of candidates. Project based, experiential work, has the added dimension of requiring cross departmental leadership and communication skill. Depending on the band level of the candidate, a cross business or geography dimension may feature. In addition to the developmental experience succession candidates get from participating on projects, mid and post-project performance reviews provide another data source that managers use to evaluate successors.

Some Operations managers lament the lack of time to participate in project based activities because their working day is largely consumed with the execution of their roles. Furthermore, they suggest that the Operations function is seen as a cost to the business, which places limitations on their ability to hire additional employees that could facilitate participation in developmental projects.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on how succession candidates are perceived by up-line management during business cadence reviews. In order to provide additional developmental opportunities to succession candidates, it is common practice for managers to delegate some of their "State of the business" reporting requirements to succession candidates. Weekly business cadence reviews require succession candidates to give status updates to 2nd or 3rd Line managers. Succession candidates receive feedback from their manager, relating to how 2nd or 3rd line managers perceive their presentation skills and ability to respond to questions in a professional manner.

In summary, there are many sources of data that managers can use to evaluate succession candidates. Both qualitative and quantitative data sources exist. Managers appear to place most value on experiential related metrics such as PBC year end review histories, actual business performance in their current role and project based activities.

However, in the absence of standard evaluation criteria, managers accept that such evaluations can be open to varying degrees of subjectivity.

4.5.3 Succession Planning Stakeholder Communications

This section deals with manager to succession candidate and manager to peer group communications on the subject of SP&M or succession candidate development. In the absence of a formal documented policy or process, the data shows that each manager adopts whatever communication strategy best suits their management style.

The Operations side of the business appears to have a more guarded and reactive communications strategy. Formal meetings to discuss succession planning are by their own admission more situational than adhering to any prescribed schedule. The following comments from 2nd Line Operations managers exemplify this approach to SP&M communications. In response to questioning about succession planning communications the Head of Operations put forward the following statement

> *I think we are loath to have, rightly or wrongly, were not inclined to have a very open conversations about succession planning, whether that's cultural or whether it's just human nature, or whether it's about ease about sharing that kind of information, I'm not sure.*

SOM1

On the subject of SP&M meetings they said "If I'm really honest I wouldn't do this on a regular basis" Another 2nd Line Operations manager made further comment on the subject of SP&M meetings describing them as being more situational then planned.

> *It's more in terms of if there is a potential move forward. We look at people and say they have been in that particular role for quite a long time now, what's the next potential move? Do we see them as a potential back fill for somebody if there was a promotion coming up? So, they are more dependent on whether there is potential movement within the organisation.*

SOM2

Comments from a 1st line Operations manager in relation to the requirement to hold scheduled succession planning meetings supports the contention that such meetings are situational as opposed to being planned.

No, there wouldn't be any….I suppose one thing that would initiate these types of conversations would be if I for example wanted to move or if I have a plan to move, then these conversations would be accelerated.

<div align="right">F0M2</div>

The Sales side of the business appears to have a more structured, albeit undocumented, approach to succession planning communications. The Senior Vice President describes succession planning as being a quarterly or three monthly process.

We're trying to run it as a three monthly process so every three months we do a succession planning update. We are working our way top-down and bottom-up, so we are looking at my immediate reports: how long they are in the role; how long they are likely to stay in that role and then we look at succession successors for them, and we have that divided in three categories, people are ready to replace them now people will be ready to replace them in a years time and people need to do something else before they would be ready to replace them.

<div align="right">SVP1</div>

This contention is supported by comments from the majority of Sales managers referring to scheduled quarterly succession planning or developmental meetings with their succession candidates. All managers from both the Sales and Operations sides of the business appear to be comfortable with having succession planning meetings with their listed successors. Furthermore, succession planning is seen as a key employee retention tool. One Sales manager describes succession planning conversations as being like gold in terms of driving employee engagement:

I would say to someone that you are absolutely standing out as a person who could possibly take over from me, but the things that you need to do are is this, this and this and I would look out for those things. So I would absolutely tell somebody that they were standing out from the crowd. But I wouldn't necessarily say that I had had a similar conversation with anyone else. But for me, absolutely; I would tell them, it's a massive motivator, especially if you understand it's what somebody really, really wants. It's like gold; I wouldn't understand why a manager wouldn't use it.

<div align="right">FSM1</div>

Conversely, succession planning communications appear to be less open between separate Sales brands because of fears that talented people, whom managers spent time developing and grooming, may be poached by others, who may not have invested similar efforts to develop their employees.

Comments from the Vice President of Software Group describe this scenario:

I wouldn't like to see more transparency because I think it is… It is very confidential and I also think you get screwed. Right….You share too much and the team has gone, Right!

<div align="right">TSM2</div>

It would appear that despite Inside Sales being one company, individual departments have a sense of employee ownership which may explain why succession planning communications are not entirely transparent across the company. The following quote from a 2nd line Sales manager illustrates this sense of ownership "I know why people don't share it because maybe they don't want to give away their good people" (SSM3).

In terms of the wider Inside Sales community's awareness of succession planning, managers suspect that most employees who are not part of the succession planning process do not know what succession planning is. The following comments reflect this view:

> *Some of them do, but I don't think there is the general consciousness of it. Now, certainly the managers know about it because they have to give input to me and I suppose it's up to the managers to have those conversations with their teams, but I suspect that there isn't a large awareness of it.*
>
> *Now I think…. Generally the guys hadn't really thought about succession planning in terms of the general population, but I suspect there is going to be some pressure on us to communicate on it a little bit more.*
>
> <div align="right">SSM2</div>
>
> *I think that to a great extent the reps do not know what succession planning is. They do not know and they don't know because nobody talks to them about it.*

<div align="right">FSM3</div>

In summary, the SP&M communications strategy employed by the Operations side of the business is guarded and situational. However, succession planning conversations between managers and successors are open and direct. Interestingly the ownership of resources issue that exists in the Sales side of the business does not appear to be reflected in the Operations business. The Sales business appears to have a more structured approach to their SP&M communications albeit undocumented from a process point of view. Manager to successor meetings have a regular schedule as do up-line manager to manager peer level SP&M meetings. However not all communications are entirely transparent as individual brands seek to maintain control over their talent.

The variance in approach to the evaluation and development of succession candidates may in part be a contributing factor to this lack of transparency.

In general terms, most managers believe that employees who are outside of the SP&M process have little or no knowledge of its existence in Inside Sales and agree that more needs to be done to at very least socialise the subject of SP&M with the general populace.

4.5.4 Developmental Activities

The following section, explores the range of developmental activities mentioned by managers during the course of the research. These activities are used to help succession candidates close any skill or capability gaps that they have to the execution of their current role and prepare succession candidates to avail of future promotional opportunities. These developmental activities are corroborated by the data in the evaluation section 4.5.2; in so far as they are mentioned by managers as being sources of succession candidate performance and promotion metrics. The developmental activities mentioned by managers are grouped under the following headings:

- Corporate Developmental Programs
- CareerSmart
- Delegated actions from their manager
- Experiential project based activities
- Coaching and Mentoring

Corporate Developmental Programs

The corporate developmental programs that managers mentioned are the LDC and BTL programs. The LDC (Leadership Development Centre) is a 3-day, highly standardised program designed to evaluate and develop the potential of Inside Sales professionals for future leadership roles. Enrolment for the LDC is by manager nomination only. The key objectives of the LDC are:

- A group of experienced Inside Sales managers identify and agree upon actions for an employee's future development and provide an independent perspective on the participant's readiness for a management role.
- Help participants to define personal Inside Sales competency development plans
- Improve line managers (observers) capability in objective observation and use of Inside Sales Competencies

AUDIENCE
- Future management potentials
- Top Talent
- According to selection criteria
- 1 year prior to appointment to a manager or leadership position
- Enrolled in Leading@Inside Sales (Web Based online Leadership education)

The Business and Technical Leadership (BTL) is Inside Sale's integrated talent management process. Through this process, the right leaders are placed into key positions to ensure leadership strength in Inside Sales. Planning, Identification, Development, and Placement are the four business processes followed to achieve this goal. These processes are managed by Business and Technical Leadership Partners (BTL Partners) and Human Resource professionals who support specific businesses on management and succession planning matters. Each BTL Partner acts as a single point of contact, providing an integrated view of the talent.

Planning the leadership capabilities needed by the business requires a detailed understanding of the business strategy and the diverse nature of the workforce. The Leadership Plans integrate the Spring and Autumn planning processes into business unit specific activities. Once plans are established, managers identify employees through the Leadership Acceleration Development System (L.E.A.D.S). Employee potential is the primary factor used to identify employees who should be enrolled in the Business and Technical Leadership program.

The development of employees relies upon Inside Sales CareerSmart, Expertise Assessments, Success Profiles, and the Inside Sales Competencies to identify and prioritize robust development activities. Success Profiles and the Inside Sales CareerSmart Framework are used to identify feeder roles for key leadership positions. Success Profiles summarize the responsibilities for key roles, known as Critical Gap Roles along with the skills and capabilities necessary to be successful, as well as suggested work experiences. Talent reviews facilitate the placement of talent across the lines of business. The BTL Partners manage the cycle of talent reviews and placement activities to place leaders in the right roles. The goal of this process is to help the Inside Sales organisation have the leadership talent to fill key positions, now and in the future.

CareerSmart

Inside Sales CareerSmart is the suite of Inside Sales employee development content and tools available to employees at Inside Sales. All content and tools are organized in a simple three-step model, resulting in an enhanced experience for all employees:

- PLAN your development
- GAIN skills and experience
- TRACK your progress

Inside Sales CareerSmart also presents employees with several employee development features. The first is the Inside Sales CareerSmart Framework, which is based on client-valued capabilities. It provides learning to help employees grow their careers in the framework; access to a network of Career Advisors, as well as streamlined web based tooling to support employee movement within the framework. Employees and managers access the Inside Sales CareerSmart website through a career portlet on the Inside Sales intranet. The website hosts the overall suite of career development components within three tabbed categories: PLAN your development, GAIN skills and experience, and TRACK your progress.

Within the PLAN category, employees can access the tools and resources needed to begin planning their development, including: PBC history, foundational and leadership competencies, enhanced career development guidance, and a personalized job matching tool which allows employees to compare their current skills and capabilities against the taxonomy of skills and capabilities of a different role.

The GAIN category includes resources employees can use to acquire skills and experience via the Inside Sales on line learning system (Learning@Inside Sales) and find a mentor or a coach to assist them.

The TRACK category includes the variety of resources people have to track their progress through tools like PBC history, online C.V and Learning@Inside Sales which keeps a log of all education accessed by employees.

Delegation

In order to test the skills and capabilities of succession planning candidates, managers routinely delegate some of their manager responsibilities. Furthermore, managers claim that in order for succession candidates to succeed them in practice, they must be well known to members of the Inside Sales 2nd Line leadership team and Brand leaders in

the wider Inside Sales organisation. The following statements typify the rationale for delegation as explained by managers:

> *Part of that then is standing in when I'm not here and try the job. So we see if they can do it, if they sink or swim. If they sink you find out why and help them develop so they don't lose confidence, if they swim, you see they are able to do it and you give them more. I would look at a lot of the things to make sure they are getting exposure to people and different businesses*
>
> <div align="right">SSM3</div>

> *What they really need to develop is the skill to make the right choices with less information. This is something that you build through practising these sort of things. You need to know the business, you need to have historical and statistical data in your mind in order to say okay, this is a similar situation to one which I had in the past and I know that if I take this decision it will be better than this other one etc. So, first of all sharing what you are doing with them, secondly delegating some decisions that they could take. But it's important that in delegating, even if you disagree with the choice once they have decided to do a particular thing let them do it. So long as the business is not at risk and also because maybe they are right.*
>
> <div align="right">FSM3</div>

The degree to which succession candidates perform delegated tasks is rated very highly by managers in Inside Sales. To a large extent, how employees perform these tasks is the defining element as to whether or not they can be promoted or achieve a high PBC end of year evaluation. Interestingly, despite the importance that managers attach to the performance of delegated tasks, the evaluation of this performance is inherently subjective as explained in sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3.

Experiential Project based Activities

Project based activities are similar to delegated activities, in so far as they require many of the same skills and capabilities. However, projects typically involve, cross departmental or for higher banded employees cross geography, communication and leadership skills. A further distinction between delegated activities, and project based activities is that delegated activities are still regarded as being very much the responsibility of the delegating manager, whilst project based activities are regarded as more the responsibility of the project owner. The following Sales manager statement typifies the kind of projects that employees may be asked to take on:

> *I have a leader for my small deals business which is any deal below $50,000. So they do the forecast they do the cadence and they interlock with me because I'm still responsible for it. But I expect my leader to talk to the reps to drive the business and highlight areas of non-performance and essentially, I can see from how they do it, what their potential might be.*

Now I challenge them on coming to me with ideas about how could we improve this business? Then I have my social media champion, who is also looking to develop so I give them that and see how they lead it. Then I have John who historically has done an awful lot of our reach back activity. Now if they do well, then there may be a promotion on offer. Then there is the area of the interlock with me. What do they present, what do they highlight, and indeed how do they interlock with the team.

<div align="right">FSM2</div>

The opportunity for Operations employees to participate in project based activities appears to be limited by the fact Operations employees numbers are tightly controlled which does not leave much bandwidth in terms of time to engage in projects. This contention was put to a Senior Operations manager whose reply affirms this limitation:

Yes I think so and I think because we're very much in execute mode all of the time. Sometimes you feel that you are constantly putting out fires or chasing your tail sometimes because the cycle of business moves so fast. So, what I try to do at least with my teams is to build some of those opportunities into the actual roles that they have today. So, perhaps through our team meetings, we might say we are going to do a half an hour session on this or an hour on that. At other times we might incorporate things into their actual role that might challenge them a bit or it may require them to learn something new in order to accomplish it.

<div align="right">SOM2</div>

In summary, project based activities provide additional opportunities for succession candidates to develop their skills and capabilities. The responsibility for projects are regarded as belonging to the project owner as opposed to delegated activities which are regarded as being the responsibility of the delegating manager.

Project based activities are for the most part, localised to the Sales side of the business because of tighter staffing controls in Operations. Similar to performance evaluations of delegated tasks, project based performance evaluations can also be of a subjective nature.

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and Mentoring are developmental opportunities where employees can be mentored in a specific skill or engage a trained coach to help them discover their own solutions to a multitude of issues that can arise for employees, working in the Inside Sales corporate environment. Inside Sales provides a Coaching and Mentoring intranet site to assist employees who wish to engage in a formal coaching or mentoring relationship with a trained Coach or Mentor. However, comments from the majority of managers suggest that coaching and mentoring in Inside Sales is of a casual and

informal nature. The following statement from a 2nd Line Operations manager describes this casual approach to coaching and mentoring:

> *I think we don't do it formally, it may happen where people illustrate lessons that they have learned when they say something to someone you know, whatever way they do it. In my own case, I would probably say something like, we need to make sure next time we do this, the numbers stand up and there's no questions about them or we need to make sure we can make the deadline or I kind of always tend to use the word we, but I guess in terms of formal coaching of people to get to the next level, I can't say it happens on a manager by manager level.*
>
> <div align="right">SOM1</div>

Similarly, a 2nd Line Sales manager offered the following comments in relation to coaching:

> *In terms of coaching, I find I don't do anything formal. I might take somebody aside and say, look, you're too negative when you're presenting, but you need to be more positive. Don't talk so much about your problems, challenges and risks. Instead, you might say were working to solve this or that issue something a bit more positive. To another I might be saying that you're not vocal enough, you need to communicate, you're not going to progress unless you're seen and heard by the 2nd Line leaders*
>
> <div align="right">SSM2</div>

Another 2nd Line Sales manager recommends engaging in casual mentoring with their employees as outlined below:

> *We have to spend more time to do it, may be drinking coffee together. Then we must recognise the people when they do something good, but also use a polite but straight talking way to communicate to the people, if they are not doing something good and suggest what they can do to do it better. Altogether, this can help any manager, second or first line, to have the right leadership and manage in the right way.*
>
> <div align="right">SSM3</div>

A 2nd Line manager recounted a recent situation where in an effort to promote mentoring as a developmental tool, the organisation tried to formalise mentoring engagements. However, this formalisation approach to mentoring had limited success for the following reason:

> *We had a re-launch of the mentoring program last year, we tried to match people with mentors, and I don't think it really got off the ground because it was probably a bit too prescriptive and there was reporting on whether you have picked a mentor, whether you hadn't picked a mentor, whether you had met them yet etc. So, I think people felt it was almost as though they were being policed*
>
> <div align="right">SOM2</div>

In summary, Inside Sales provides an array of web-based tools to support coaching and mentoring for employees. Attempts to make coaching or mentoring more prescriptive have not been successful as employees feel such relationships should be a matter of individual choice. Most managers have a positive view of coaching and mentoring and advocate participation to their employees.

Most managers recall coaching or mentoring their employees, but characterise these developmental engagements as being of an informal casual nature.

4.5.5 Manager Incentives

All participants agree that there is no formal recognition for managers who develop strong teams or enable the career growth and promotion of their most talented employees. The following 2nd Line manager statements from the Sales side of the business typify their thoughts in this regard:

> *There is no mechanism by which to recognise people for moving people on. But I do think that most managers get a personal sense of achievement which is motivational in itself to have people who are happy and are moving on to a role, even if they might suffer a bit in the short-term. I mean, I don't want to keep people working for me when they are unhappy and may be very good people. I would rather keep the person for Inside Sales than keep the person for me.*
>
> <div align="right">SSM2</div>

These quotes show a willingness on behalf of managers to suffer the loss of a strong team member in the interest of doing what they believe to be the right thing for that employee's career. Furthermore, they mention a personal sense of achievement from enabling the career growth of their employees. The following quote from another 2nd line Sales manager echo these sentiments:

> *But at the same time there is a sense of pride in seeing someone progress that you have coached and nurtured and I think that can be a motivation in itself. Honestly, at the end of the year performance in terms of numbers is the primary metric but we do absolutely look at what individuals are doing from a team perspective. You look at projects that they were involved with and how successful they are. But if they have low attrition and they have strong candidates in the team and they are involving themselves in activities across the business; that does help form an impression of that manager and that team.*
>
> <div align="right">SSM3</div>

Furthermore, this 2nd line manager points out that the ability of a manager to develop a strong team is considered when evaluating their end of year (PBC) performance.

However, comments from first line Sales managers suggest some confusion as to whether their capabilities in employee development are featured in their own evaluation:

> I would say that developing people would have been part of how they look at me. But I don't know this for a fact.

<div align="right">FSM3</div>

> Nobody is asking me how many people on my teams have been promoted? How many of them have got awards? And I think those questions should be asked of every manager. Now, the atmosphere is there, but perhaps it just needs a little bit more structure and focus

<div align="right">FSM2</div>

1ST line Sales managers regard their team building skill to be away to delineate their management performance from that of other managers and show an appetite to be evaluated in this way:

> I think it's never actually said, and nobody has ever said it to me, but there are a lot of rewards and recognition for sellers and I want to be the manager who constantly has a seller on the podium receiving awards. I want to be the kind of manager who has half of their team being recognised in top talent. Would the Senior Vice President notice? may be not because he has so many first line managers. But from my part I am quite ambitious and I want to be known for the right reasons. So, I believe that if you never have sellers from your team being recognised, that is not a good thing. So I know that the senior leadership team will decide who will be asked to join that team at some stage in the future. So, I want my team and my name to be associated with success.

> So, any opportunity that I have to put forward my people for awards or if there was a promotion board meeting coming up, I want to have my people represented.

<div align="right">FSM1</div>

Interestingly, this comment from a 2nd line Operations manager alludes to recognising a managers coaching and teambuilding skill.

> I can't say that that we would award people stars for having a crop of good people coming through and them being succession planning candidates in other teams, but I think we would at the same time recognise if a manager is spending more time coaching in their team and developing capabilities and so on. Not necessarily growing them to pass them on to somebody else, but just growing them. But I think we would recognise people who are successful at that and are confident at dealing with their teams and seem to get the best out of the people they have and I think we would be sufficiently detached to say X or Y is a very

<div align="center">76</div>

good people manager and has really worked hard to build skills and team to get their people as productive as possible and as capable as they can be.

<div align="right">SOM1</div>

However, this statement relating to manager recognition appears to be more of a personal reflection as opposed to a statement of fact.

In summary, managers are not formally recognised for their people or team development skill. However, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that a manager's ability to develop their employees does feature in how they are perceived by the senior management team and affects their PBC end of year rating.

Most managers mention feelings of personal achievement or pride in seeing their employees receiving awards or being promoted. The lack of formal recognition may be a contributing factor in relation to the confusion expressed by some 1st line managers as to whether senior 2nd or 3rd line managers value their teambuilding skills, and if so, to what extent. However, this lack of clarity does not appear to limit the desire of managers to do what they consider to be the right thing, from an employee career growth perspective, even if it might cause them to suffer in the short-term.

4.5.6 Barriers to Succession Planning

This section, explores the range of possible barriers to SP&M as identified by the research participants. Some of the barriers to SP&M, emerging from the research, are unique to either the Sales or Operations sides of the Inside Sales business.

Analysis of the barriers generated the following themes which are examined in detail.

- Succession candidate profiles
- Limited opportunities
- Hiring Process
- Availability

- Evaluation Consistency
- Succession Planning Awareness
- Role Specific Skills

4.5.6a Succession candidate profiles

When managers talk about candidate profiles they are essentially talking about the full gambit of employee information that describes their careers to date, including:

- Education record
- Job role history, including roles held prior to joining Inside Sales
- Corporate Programs
- Skills and capabilities

- CareerSmart submissions
- Expertise Assessments.
- PBC end of year ratings
- Awards history

All records are held in separate web enabled systems or databases in Inside Sales. Every employee has a record in some or all of these systems or databases. Managers have access to the employee information of their direct reports only. However, there is no one system that can link all of the information together to create a holistic employee profile.

Furthermore, managers explain how difficult it can be to rigorously compare one employee record to another. Managers regard these information silos as impeding their ability to execute SP&M effectively.

The following statements from both Operations and Sales managers epitomise their common concerns:

> *You know if you had profiling software available we may be better informed. Maybe you might still make the same decision based on extraneous factors that you felt weren't capable of being captured on a tool in all the way a person projects themselves, their interest in what's gone on around them, the way they're able to knit team together. Some of that may or may not be something that you could profile successfully, but I think it would be helpful to have some benchmarking base collective knowledge about people that we don't have today*

<div align="right">FSM4</div>

> *Now what do we do with that information? We probably give the feedback to a person's current manager, but if I'm looking for somebody where could I see that? But coming back to what you said before, if you had five new managers. How would you rate them? Do you rate them skill by skill?*
>
> *How do you rank things in order of importance? If you were to look at things purely in black-and-white who would be the strongest? We have no idea. Now it's very hard to put a price on things, but it is exactly that…… I have low visibility to the skills and capabilities of other people in this centre that are rated as future leaders. I don't know them from Adam.*

<div align="right">FSM5</div>

> *There does need to be an overall system that you could go in and see what people have done, you know, a central repository. I used to think when I started that Inside Sales had a HR file on everybody with everything from all of the awards people might have one etc, but that's not anywhere. There should be a virtual HR file on everybody in the organisation, which would include everything you know; there are start date, there CV, any awards, training and education, absence sickness, bands, how long we are in each band. So, from a succession planning point of view it would be good if there is a virtual HR file on everybody*

<div align="right">SOM2</div>

Managers agree that in the absence of a system to link all the various employee records, their evaluations of employees may be somewhat subjective. The issues of standard evaluation metrics and the absence of formal documentation or templates have been explored in previous sections. However, even if standard metrics and templates were available, the fact that employee records are distributed across separate and distinct systems, may render the use of standard employee evaluation templates impractical from a managers point of view.

4.5.6b Opportunity Limitations

Both the Inside Sales Operations and Sales sides of the business express difficulty in relation to developmental or promotional opportunities. The Operations business difficulties are compounded by low employee attrition rates, meaning that actual job role vacancies are infrequent. Furthermore, the Operations business is largely seen as a cost of doing business to Inside Sales. Consequentially, the ability to hire new employees is limited in comparison to the Sales side of the business. The following comments from 2nd line Operations managers support this contention:

> We don't have high attrition in Operations in the management population. We have limited opportunities. So, when attrition is low opportunity to progress becomes less.

SOM3

> You don't see as much movement within the Operations organisation. So, for succession planning, the people that we may identify as our potential successors don't move as quickly as it would in the Sales organisation

SOM2

Operations managers mention, the inability to partake in developmental project based opportunities, because of time constraints, as being another barrier to SP&M. The Sales side of the business, experience difficulties with opportunities in a different way. Comments from 2nd line Sales managers suggest a lack of transparency in relation to the advertisement of new job roles:

> Now, in terms of opportunities that are coming up in other brands, it depends. It's a combination of the Grapevine or sometimes it may be discussed at one of the core team meetings with the executives and then we may be told by our executive. So that would be one way that we would learn about opportunities.

SSM4

If I look at it independently, if I am a team leader and I want to be a manager and I am in Nordic ITS, I would have no idea that there may be a manager position coming up in software group Nordics, and a lot of the time, what happens is, in succession planning, when that person leaves we are going to move a team leader in or something like that.

But there could be other people who should be considered or at least have the opportunity to apply for that position and I think in Inside Sales at the moment, as a rule, there is a lot of secrecy about upcoming positions and that's fine because people want to put in the people that they have grown and groomed for it. And I agree with that, but maybe there could be good people from other parts the business. So, there is a lack of transparency about open positions for team leader, manager and second line manager. It should be mandatory that everything is posted on GOM, I think, so that everybody has the opportunity and then succession planning can be done almost at an organisational level

<div align="right">FSM3</div>

In summary, GOM (Global Opportunity Management) is the Inside Sales web based job role advertisement system. All managers have editor access to the system and can post new job roles to it. Internal and external employees can browse the available opportunities and submit their applications online. However, comments suggest that not all job roles are advertised in this way. The omission of job roles from GOM supports the *"Grapevine"* communications scenario. It would appear that to some extent, internal politicking in relation to job role advertisement is hindering the Inside Sales SP&M program.

4.5.6c Hiring and Recruitment

All managers from both the Operations and Sales side of the business express frustration with the hiring and recruitment process. The recruitment restrictions placed on the Operations side of the business, and the effects such restrictions have, in relation to participating in project based developmental activities has been discussed in previous sections. The Sales side of the business does not have the same recruitment restrictions as they are considered revenue generating. However, the main issues they have relate to the identification and hiring of employees with the right skills and capabilities for Inside Sales.

In particular, managers complain about inability of recruiters to identify suitable candidates. The following statements typify the feelings of Sales managers in this regard:

For instance, for project future there was a very short time span between telling me I needed to hire six people and asking me if I had hired them yet. Literally I was asked after only one week if I had hired people. So I said, you've got to be kidding do you know how many CV's and how many interviews need to be conducted in order to settle on six people. It could take up to 10 interviews to hire just one person and I may have read anything up to 100 CV's in order to decide on 10 people to call for interview.

<div align="right">FSM3</div>

In response to a probing question relating to whether recruiters understood the requirements of the Inside Sales business, the following response shows a certain level of frustration with recruitment personnel:

Oh my god, do they have the wrong lens. Could I say that any stronger? (laughter all). They are two black and white. They are not smart enough, can I say that? You know, they are saying you must have this, this and this. They might say, you have to have three years sales experience; three years sales experience with somebody whose job is marketing!! Then you worry about adding more criteria because that will only narrow it down even more

<div align="right">FSM3</div>

The following statement echoes the sentiments above:

I think it has been addressed with recruitment on numerous occasions. They are probably finding it frustrating too because Ireland is a hub for all of the centres and there is a lot of competition, which is possibly different to other markets. But investment needs to be made by them and they need to come up with some new ideas, because what they are doing currently is obviously not working. One of the key reasons or justifications for being in Ireland is that we can hire quickly and have critical mass etc.

But once you don't do it…… Like it could take us three or four months to get somebody, by the time you have posted it on GOM, interviewed them, have contracts issued, and they have given notice and then you can only start once every month, it's at least three months before you would get anybody and you just can't hire anybody quicker than that. Now we position ourselves as being dynamic and fast moving, but when it takes more than three months to hire. We are contradicting that straightaway.

<div align="right">SOM3</div>

From a succession planning point of view, the inability to identify, and recruit candidates expeditiously is a limiting factor. Managers express growing levels of frustration with the process and lament the inordinate amount of time consumed with screening CV's which they feel should be done by recruitment employees.

4.5.6d Candidate availability

All managers mention that in some cases they cannot appoint whom they regard as "the best person for the job", the reason being that if the ideal candidate has recently moved, it is not deemed good practice to move them again. Furthermore, if promoting the ideal candidate presents too many difficulties for their current team; the most likely decision will be not to promote them in the interest of protecting the business. The following comments epitomise these kinds of scenarios:

> *Succession planning is fine on paper, but you get to a point where we say , so, who's going to move into that newly vacated seat ? We can't really rip somebody out of a job that's been there six months and move them in there. Their time may come, but I think that's realistic as well.*

<div align="right">SOM1</div>

> *If I were to be replaced by an Italian team leader and six months later the Italian manager leaves then you can't move that person again.*

<div align="right">FSM3</div>

> *If I felt the team was going to just fall apart if someone left. It would probably colour my views on whether that was the right thing to do in that moment in time. There may have been decisions where I can think of where if you had two candidates, and if option A was going to create a chain of mayhem if they moved on and option B you could figure out how to create a new team behind them, you would probably go would option B rather than option A, which may be unfair but is probably being realistic.*

<div align="right">SOM1</div>

The barriers to succession planning as described above are for the most part a consequence of unfortunate timing as against being serious impediments to succession planning. If SP&M is implemented in full, occurrences such as that described in the third scenario should be less likely, as there would always be successors identified for incumbents of key roles.

4.5.6e Evaluation Consistency

There are many sources of data the managers can use to evaluate succession candidates. Both qualitative and quantitative data sources exist. Managers appear to place most value on experiential related metrics such as PBC year end review histories, actual business performance in their current role and project based activities. However, in the absence of standard evaluation criteria, managers accept that such evaluations can be subject to varying degrees of subjectivity.

4.5.6f Succession Planning Awareness

Most managers agree that general awareness of the SP&M process is limited. Whilst managers and succession candidates are aware, new talent coming into the Inside Sales organisation may struggle to drive their careers in the right way simply because of ignorance of SP&M as a process. Furthermore, managers agree that all Inside Sales employees should understand the process so that at very least they can make informed choices about how to grow their careers in Inside Sales.

4.5.6g Role Specific Skills

In section 4.5 the primary differences between the skill sets of Sales and Operations employees were explained. The Operations side of the business does not share common skill sets, except for higher order skills such as management or leadership skills. The Operations side of the business is departmentalised according to the unique skills required of each department such as business analytics, training and development, or tools and process. Unique role specific skills limit the number of succession planning pathways of Operations employees. The following statement from the head of Operations illustrates this barrier to SP&M

> *I suppose we have to look at the fact that there are multiple disciplines represented within Operations. So some succession pathways just don't work in our view, in the sense that it's unlikely that someone who is a business controls specialist would be able to readily move into an analytics role, we because they may not understand brio, or have deep analytical skills or even be that familiar with how to use spreadsheets or advance spreadsheet tools. So, it is quite an ask for them to move from a person who is perhaps used to enforcing a process which business controls pretty much is, too being able to deliver quality, on time, analytics to a wider framework. So that does tend to impact the succession planning logic, because not everybody is the same or not everybody is aiming to have the same set of skills*

> SOM1

The sales side of the business has a common core set of sales skills. Are we don't you Sales employees are departmentalised by brand and language proficiency. Therefore, it is not possible for Sales employees to succeed to a leadership position in another team unless they have native language fluency to match the geography that the team supports. In short, if a German seller wants to apply for leadership position on a Italian team they must be fluent in Italian.

The following statement from the Vice President of Software group clarifies this succession planning limitation.

> *In Italy, you have to have an Italian, France, you have to have French, Germany, you might get away with it, but I do believe you need German. For going out of the country you are gated by language. If you want a field job in Italy, you have to be Italian; you have to be able to speak Italian*

VPS2

In summary, there are several barriers to succession planning in Inside Sales. These barriers can be grouped or attributed to IT infrastructure, process, communications or operational issues. All managers express some frustration with the Inside Sales IT infrastructure. In particular, they lament their inability to collate the various sources of succession candidate records from disparate unlinked systems. Whilst CareerSmart does collate some employee data into one source, succession candidate to candidate comparison or benchmarking is not possible. Furthermore, managers can only see data for their own employees, so, a companywide search for candidates with specific education, skills and capabilities is not possible today.

From a process point of view, SP&M is mostly focused on replacement planning and lacks the structure to harness other employee development processes such as Talent Management, Coaching & Mentoring, Training and Development and Hiring & Recruitment. Similar to the Inside Sales IT infrastructure these processes appear to function as standalone elements.

The Inside SP&M program is largely undocumented and reliant on the institutional knowledge of tenured employees for consistency in terms of execution. A further issue that can be attributed to process is the problem of succession candidate evaluation. Succession candidate performance evaluations are subject to varying levels of subjectivity due to the absence of formal evaluation procedures or templates.

As a business function SP&M does not appear to have a coherent communications policy. Some senior managers believe that employees are aware of SP&M as a process. Conversely, other managers believe that in general employees are unaware of SP&M.

A sense of employee ownership prevails within the individual Brands in Inside Sales which may cause some employee career aspirations to be hampered by internal politics surrounding the socialising of available talent and promotional opportunities.

Succession planning and management barriers linked to role specific skills such as language or technical skill are more of an operational issue.

Apart from employees choosing to develop additional language or technical skills, it is unclear as to how modifying the SP&M program could address the limitations of role or skill specific succession pathways.

4.6 External Cross Case findings

The following section introduces the reader to external SP&M case study research collated by eminent authors in the field of succession planning.. The cross-case data analysis process is depicted in Figure 4.3. The combined works of Fulmer and Conger (2004) and Sobol, Harkins and Conley (2007) cite case study research from eight companies as being examples of best practice SP&M:

- Dell Computers   (Computers)
- Dow Chemical   (Chemicals)
- Lilly   (Pharmaceuticals)
- SONOCO   (Manufacturing)
- Pan Canadian Petroleum   (Oil)

- Merrill Lynch   (Banking)
- CIGNA   (Healthcare)
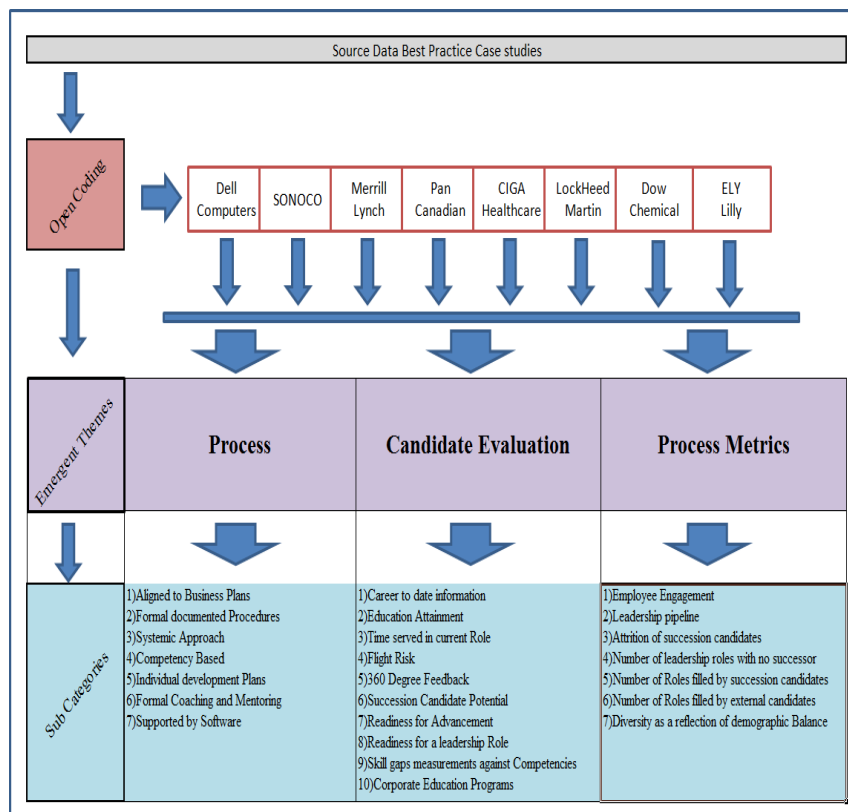- Lockheed Martin
    (Aerospace and Defense)

Figure 4.3

These particular case studies were chosen as they provide high levels of detail about the succession planning program in each company. Furthermore, more contemporary literature in the areas of talent management (Collings 2015) and succession planning (Hildebrand 2015) provide evidential support for labelling these programs as examples of succession planning best practice. These case studies not only provide detailed accounts of their succession planning programs, they also provide descriptive narratives relating to how each succession planning program came into being. The author found descriptive case studies of this kind almost absent from the succession planning literature.

Whilst the companies cited in these studies cannot be considered as similar to Inside Sales or similar to each other from a business prospective, they share some common elements, in so far as; all are multimillion dollar corporations competing in a global marketplace and subject to similar socio economic pressures. Analysis of these case studies shows that despite their disparate business function, their SP&M programs have many common features. Rothwell (2010) recommends that each company must develop an approach to SP&M, which best suits their business context. However, the commonality of features in their SP&M programs, suggests that Inside Sales could adopt some or all of the practices listed in these case studies. The cross-case analysis collates all the best practice features from each companies SP&M program. Each feature is explained and set in context with supporting quotations.

1) Succession Planning and Management Process
   Sub categories

- Aligned to Business Plans
- Formal documented Procedures
- Systemic Approach
- Competency Based

- Individual development Plans
- Formal Coaching and Mentoring
- Supported by Software

2) Succession planning candidate evaluation
   Sub categories

- Career to date Profile
- Education attainment
- Time served in current role
- 360 Degree Feedback
- High Potentials

- Readiness for Advancement
- Readiness for Leadership
- Skill gaps measured against Competencies
- Corporate Education Programs

3) SP&M Process Metrics
   Sub categories
   - Employee Engagement
   - Leadership
   - Attrition of succession candidates
   - Number of leadership roles with no successor
   - Number of Roles filled by succession candidates
   - Number of Roles filled by external candidates
   - Diversity as a reflection of demographic Balance

4.6.1 Succession Planning and Management Process

Aligned to Business Strategy

Almost without exception scholars in the field of SP&M emphasise the importance of aligning SP&M practices to the overall business plan of the organisation (Rothwell 2010, Fulmer and Conger 2004, Giambatista, Rowe and Riaz 2005). Similarly, all cited case studies in this inquiry concur with these scholars and make specific mention of aligning their SP&M programs to their business strategy. The following quotes exemplify this practice. PanCanadian talk about their SP&M as being:

> *Aligned with the business strategy, succession management is action oriented through continuous dialogue, risk mitigation, and follow-up work.*

> *Rewarding leadership, initiative, and diversity of thought were instilled within PanCanadian's values and the company's efforts for continuous learning and a shared responsibility for developing skills*

> (Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

CIGNA recall a series of preparatory meetings leading up to the definition of their SP&M program where talent optimisation and business strategy were discussed.

> *The purpose was to open another roundtable dialogue to discuss progress against commitments from the full review in October 2004 and to discuss other key people priorities pertinent to talent optimisation and business strategy*

> (Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)

Merrill Lynch includes the following questions to be asked about each succession candidate.

> *Who on the Executive Management Committee do they not know? Who across the enterprise should they meet? What client opportunities does the company want to leverage further?*

> (Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)

Discussing how the candidate should be socialised across the company and linking it to an overall discussion about its clients and related business opportunities clearly shows the link between SP&M and their business strategy.

4.6.2 Documentation

All companies refer to developing formal documented procedures in support of their SP&M programs. The development of standard SP&M documentation is driven by their desire to ensure companywide understanding of SP&M, from hiring and recruitment right through to C-suite level (Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Information Officer) candidate evaluation and selection. Furthermore, the use of templates ensures all candidates are evaluated and benchmarked against the same criteria, eliminating subjective evaluation elements where possible. The following quotes show that companies see formal documented procedures as being essential to their SP&M programs and one even goes so far as to attempting to formalise the language used when discussing talent. SONOCO state that HR provides clear instructions on to prepare for succession planning meetings:

> *HR provided the divisions with instructions on preparing the materials for the presentation, which they were asked to follow exactly. In this way, corporate HR tried to ensure that the materials were as consistent as possible.*

> (Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

Dell Computers provides two templates, the first of which depicts the current organisation chart and the second template, a twelve month forward looking organisation chart based on predictions which are a function of current organisation skill and market forces.

> *Two templates, a current organisation chart and a future organisation chart, are provided to the business units to help with needs assessment. The current organisation chart defines leadership presently in place and locates gaps in leadership. The future organisation chart displays what the organisation will need to look like in twelve months in order to handle growth and change in the markets. Business units pull data from their strategic objectives, business plans, and current business results to define their organisational needs*

> (Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

In addition to providing a common format for evaluation purposes, CIGNA allude to attempting to drive a common language for how talent is described and discussed.

> *An important factor regarding this format is that it not only became a guide for reviewing an employee, it also became a useful reference document to those who are unfamiliar with the individual. Additionally, by requiring some assessment of shared values and leadership behaviours, CIGNA was intentionally driving usage of a common language for how they "talk talent." (Each shared value and leadership behaviour is operationally described and documented in the performance review system)*

> (Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)

Formal documented procedures facilitate a systematic approach to the SP&M process. Ely Lilly describe their system in terms of how it enables HR and managers to drive the respective elements of SP&M for which they have direct responsibility.

> *The system also allows HR to download talent and metric reports. The output drives the succession plan, which is colour coded and easy to read and understand. For higher positions, the system shows the employee who currently holds the position as well as three potential successors. Lilly can also call up summary metric reports that show real-time data on a number of prescribed measurement areas. The system provides tremendous functionality and usability. With the ability to use multiple search criteria, Lilly's succession management team can view any cut of the organisation at a glance.*
>
> *The team makes sure its data is accurate, as invalid or inaccurate data is the fastest and easiest way to jeopardize or discredit the system.*
>
> *The team's goal in managing the Web site is for its decision makers to concentrate on outcomes, results, solutions, and placement, as opposed to questionable data or format.*
>
> (Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

4.6.3 Systemic Approach

All referenced case studies emphasise the importance of a having a systemic approach to SP&M. PanCandian stress the importance of systemic SP&M processes as being essential to the success of their program for SP&M.

> *Key elements to successful succession management seemed to include having a focused, systemic process linked to real-time business drivers and active participation of senior executives. With clear measures of success and clear standardised criteria for high-potential and high professional and technical nominations, succession management attempted to achieve standardised application throughout the organisation*
>
> (Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

4.6.4 Linked to Competencies

Another common feature of all the best practice SP&M companies is the use of competencies for the purposes of evaluating succession candidates. Rothwell (2010) describes a competency as the:

> *Underlying characteristics of an employee (i.e. motive, trait, skill, aspects of one's self image, social role, or a body of knowledge) that results in an effective and or superior performance in a job.*
>
> (Rothwell, 2010, pp.87-88)

Whilst competencies vary by company, all claim to have a defined list of competencies. Dell Computers describe their competency model as being embedded with their leadership qualities:

Leadership needs assessment focuses on forecasting how many leaders Dell will need to drive growth, as well as the qualities that are required of those leaders. The qualities are defined in a Dell competency model, and future requirements for successful leadership are embedded within the model

(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

Furthermore, they set out these competencies in terms of entry level leadership qualities, nine core competencies required of all leaders and a set of executive competencies. Five competencies were evaluated as entry-level requirements for leadership positions:

1) Functional/technical skills
2) Integrity and trust
3) Intellectual horsepower
4) Business acumen
5) Command skill

The following nine additional competencies are identified as success factors for all leaders:

1) Priority setting
2) Problem solving
3) Drive for results
4) Building effective teams
5) Developing direct reports
6) Customer focus
7) Organisation agility
8) Learning on the fly
9) Dealing with ambiguity

(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

4.6.5 Individual Development Plan

All companies describe the requirement for every succession candidate to have a documented Individual Development Plan. The plan comprises of their short to medium career goals, and a set of developmental requirements (educational or experiential) to help them bridge skill or competency gaps, identified as possible detractors to the plan. SONOCO mention delivering training to employees on creating and implementing development plans.

Furthermore, it is an expected outcome of SONOCO's succession planning meetings that individual development plans are in place for each succession candidate.

The following year, specific training was offered on creating and implementing a development plan. The team discusses the person's strengths, capabilities, and opportunities for development. However, the outcomes of this meeting are that successors are identified, a development plan for each individual is in place, and each successor is plotted on the matrix.

(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

Lockheed Martin's model shows the IDP (Individual Development Plan) as being integral to each step of their Talent Development program (See Figure 4.4).

The outcomes of 360 degree feedback, end of year performance reviews and employee career goals, all feed the creation of the candidate's Individual Development Plan. Once created the plans serves as the focal point for all developmental actions taken by the candidate. Managers, Coaches, Mentors, HR, Training and Education professionals perform as a multi disciplinary team who work with the succession candidates on the realisation of their IDP's.

(Source Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)   Figure 4.4

Apart from the IDP being integral to each step of Lockheed Martin's assessment and development process, the IDP is the linchpin that facilitates a systemic approach to SP&M.

4.6.6 Coaching & Mentoring

Lockheed Martin's use of Coaching and Mentoring for SP&M purposes also features in most of the other case studies explored in this section. Dell Computers talk about developmental action plans being tailored to the individual candidate and cites Coaching and Mentoring as being part of those action plans;

> *The development actions are highly individualized to meet the person's specific needs and can include many types of activities, such as:*
>
> - *Cross-organisational movements*
> - *Executive education*
> - *360-degree feedback*
> - *Mentoring*
> - *Project assignments*
> - *Coaching*
> - *Assessment centres*
>
> <div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

PanCanadian also make specific mention of Coaching and Mentoring as being included in their SP&M process;

> - *Internal, informal mentoring*
> - *Formal and informal coaching*
>
> <div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

4.6.7 Software Supported

Without exception, all case studies examined refer to the use of software to support their SP&M programs. There are many companies whose sole business is providing tools to support HR, Talent Management and Hiring and Recruitment processes. Many of these software tools have integrated data reporting modules which can generate customised standard reports in real-time. CIGNA Healthcare provides a detailed description of the talent search feature of their software enabled system and how it helps to identify suitable qualified candidates for open positions.

> *The Talent Inventory and CIGNA Internal Résumé; designed, tested, and launched in 2006 was an internally developed online talent management tool that enables a database search against employee résumés to create robust enterprise-wide, internal candidate slates, for open positions. The "Talent Inventory" is based on searching an internal résumé populated with searchable career data based on pre-CIGNA and CIGNA career information.*
>
> *The power of the Talent Inventory tool is that no longer will open positions be filled, based simply on whom a HR professional or hiring manager can source through their network. Furthermore, a "network" candidate is possibly at the exclusion of others who have had the requisite experience based on work long since forgotten or while at another employer. The Talent Inventory permits queries based on years of experience correlated to CIGNA's function and family career nomenclature, other career areas of interest, other business areas of*

interest (both which help to drive a cross-business/cross-functional development framework) and several other career factors. The ability to inventory and then search on all the skills and experiences of an employee while at CIGNA and prior to joining CIGNA could provide a sizeable boost to the talent pool. The Talent Inventory does not replace CIGNA's active online job posting system. Instead, its search capability serves as a catalyst to identify and facilitate into new roles people who typically do not scan the posting system. In many cases, this is found to be true of upper-level

<div align="right">(Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)</div>

Ely Lilly also mention their SP&M as being supported by SAP and Oracle software.

Lilly's succession management system is available on the intranet for company-wide HR use. Nardoni and Associates powered the first generation of software in the mid-1990s; but given the corporate goal of rigorous succession management, Lilly needed more room to store and query data.

Lilly now runs a SAP and Oracle database hidden behind a fully customized succession management Web site in a global or national environment. The database was conceived in-house and farmed out to a local software developer for fine-tuning. Lilly will soon further leverage its Web-based system to manage its succession plans.

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

The following list covers the full range of software mentioned in the case studies.

1) PeopleSoft 2) SAP 3) Access 4) Microsoft 5) Oracle 6) ExecuTrack

This concludes the cross-case analysis of the various features of SP&M processes employed in the eight best practice SP&M companies examined. The next section explores the various succession candidate evaluation methods employed by all the best practice companies.

4.7 Succession Planning Candidate Evaluation

The cross-case analysis reveals ten distinct evaluation methods used by these best practice SP&M companies as collated in the following list.

1) Career to Date Information
2) Education Attainment
3) Time served in current Role
4) Flight Risk
5) 360 Degree Feedback
6) Succession Candidate Potential
7) Readiness for Advancement
8) Readiness for a leadership Role
9) Skill gaps measurements against Competencies
10) Corporate Education Programs

4.7.1 Career to date Information

Career to date information provides critical information relating to previous roles, skills held and level of education attained by succession candidates. CIGNA Healthcare developed an on-line searchable *résumé* to capture all employee career to date information. CIGNA Healthcare's willingness to invest in the development of this tool demonstrates the degree to which they value the full range of skills or competencies of succession candidates, regardless of where or when they were developed. The following comment from CIGNA further explains their rational:

> *CIGNA Internal Résumé. Designed, tested, and launched in 2006 was an internally developed online talent management tool that enables a database search against employee résumés to create robust enterprise-wide internal candidate slates for open positions. The "Talent Inventory" is based on searching an internal résumé populated with searchable career data based on pre-CIGNA and CIGNA career information. The power of the Talent Inventory tool is that no longer will open positions be filled based simply on who an HR professional or hiring manager can source through their network.*
>
> *Furthermore, a "network" candidate is possibly at the exclusion of others who have had the requisite experience based on work long since forgotten or while at another employer*

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

4.7.2 Year end Review

One of the most common employee metrics employed by companies is the year end review. All of the companies examined in this section mention including the year end review in the evaluation of succession candidates, but do not expand on the review itself. However, given the systematic and systemic approaches of these companies to SP&M and evaluation in particular, it is reasonable to suggest that year end performance reviews in these companies are likely to be subject to similar levels of rigour and objectivity.

4.7.3 Time Served in Current Role & Flight Risk

Time served in the current role is another metric employed by all companies examined. The time served metric can trigger several actions in SP&M. If the candidate is regarded as being a high potential employee and has been in their current role for an excessive amount of time they could be classified as a "Flight Risk". This may drive accelerated SP&M actions to ensure a valued employee does not leave the company.

A comment from SONOCO exemplifies this scenario;

A challenge faced by Sonoco is, what to do when you have more people identified as exceptional performers, than you have positions in which to move them. This can be a critical issue. The company puts together action plans around that issue that included such possibilities as moving individuals to another division, giving travel assignments, or merely continuing to focus on their compensation and development.

(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

Furthermore, if their tenure in their current role is short, they could be classified as high potential but currently unavailable from an SP&M point of view.

4.7.4 360 Degree Feedback

Rothwell (2010) describes 360 degree feedback as a "Multi-rater" system whereby an employee's peers, managers, subordinates, or clients are solicited to comment on the employee's performance against set of competencies. Typically the parties involved give their feedback by way of completing an online survey.

Dell Computers describe their 360 degree feedback program as essentially being owned by the employee and used for development purposes only:

Dell's 360-degree feedback program is a survey process that collects detailed, behaviour-based data on an individual's job behaviour from his or her boss(es), peers, direct reports, and customers. Throughout the program, individuals identify gaps in their behaviour (i.e., assess their manager's perception) and then develop steps to improve performance. The data is owned by the individual and used for developmental purposes only. The individual is responsible for sharing his or her key learning's with the manager and jointly developing a plan to address them

(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

PanCanadian use 360 degree feedback as part of a succession candidate's performance review. Consequentially, all related data is owned by the company and subsequently fed back to the employee and their manager.

The 360-degree feedback program was used to support ongoing development of leaders in relation to specific leadership skills and PanCanadian's culture. PanCanadian began using 360-degree feedback as part of performance assessment in 2000. The program was developed with external consulting support. Based on the leadership competencies outlined earlier, the results were shared with the employee and his or her supervisor, who was accountable for feedback, analysis, and development plans.

The program was mandatory, and the scope included first-line supervisors and above (i.e., anyone with more than three direct reports). Every June, the results were received and provided the opportunity for aggregating survey results
(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

In summary, all companies mention the use of 360 degree feedback as part of their SP&M evaluation toolset. However, some mandate participation in 360 degree feedback for succession candidates whilst others take a less structured approach and leave it up to employees to decide whether or not to participate or share the resulting feedback.

4.7.5 Succession Candidate Potential

Succession candidate potential can be considered as measurement of "Whether individuals have what it takes to advance to positions of greater management responsibility or positions demanding greater technical knowledge" (Rothwell, 2010 p.225). Many of the companies examined in this section employee variations of a nine box system to plot each candidates potential. Merrill Lynch use the following dual axis nine box graph to plot the potential of their succession candidates (see Figure 4.5)
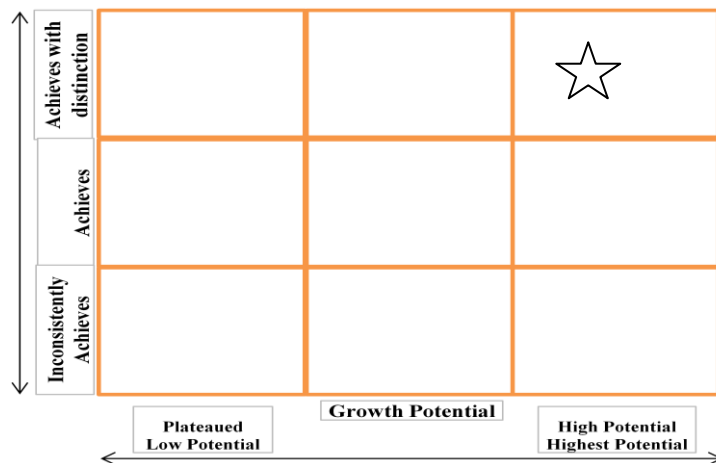

Figure 4.5

Candidates in the top right hand corner are considered High Potentials whilst those in bottom left are considered low potentials. Rothwell (2010) calls attention to the fact that employee potential is not fixed and employee actions can change their perceived potential at any point in time.

4.7.6 Readiness for Advancement / Readiness for Leadership

All companies include the concept of readiness in their evaluation of succession candidates. Typically readiness is measured in relation to how soon a candidate will be either ready for promotion or ready to assume a leadership role. CIGNA Healthcare examines their current organisation charts and rates each succession candidate in terms of being either ready now or one to two years away from being ready (See Figure 4.6).

<div align="right">
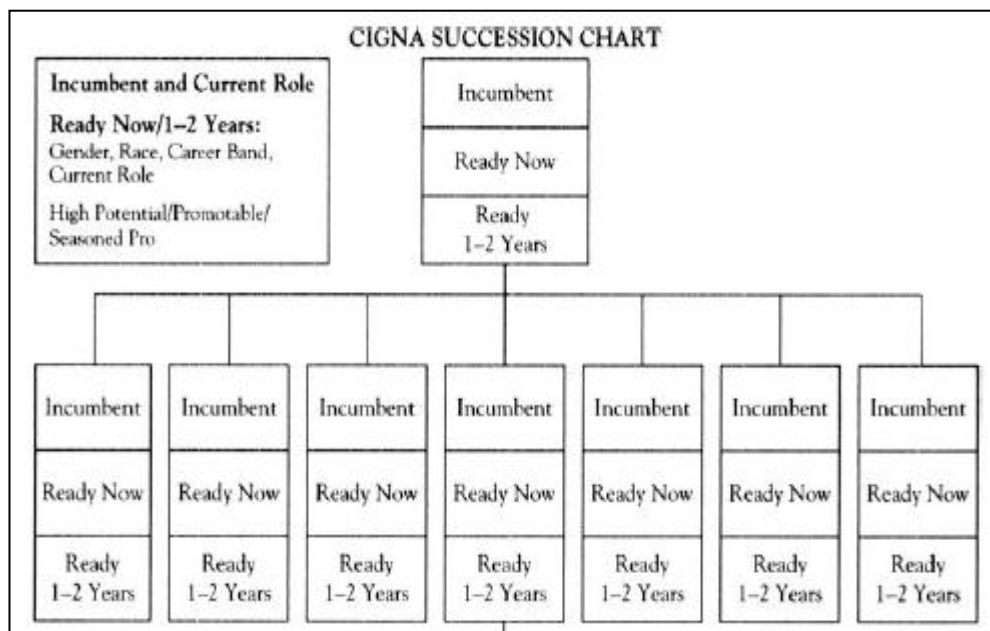
Figure 4.6

</div>

4.7.7 Skill Gaps Measurements against Competencies

All best practice SP&M organisations use competencies as a benchmark to determine competency or skill gaps of the succession candidates. Rothwell (2010) describes a competency as the:

> *Underlying characteristics of an employee (i.e. motive, trait, skill, aspects of one's self image, social role, or a body of knowledge) that results in an effective and or superior performance in a job.*

<div align="right">

(Rothwell, 2010, p.87-88)

</div>

SONOCO describe the process of determining the competencies and related behaviours against which their succession candidates should be measured.

> *A performance management process had already been initiated, and the team felt that it ought to be based on the core competencies. Concurrently, the HR Council approved a standardised performance management system across the entire corporation with common core competencies. The HR Council and line executive team agreed on the same set of competencies. The next step was to define behaviours for those competencies. Materials from DDI were used for this activity.*

Additionally, a group of approximately thirty senior managers in the company were interviewed about their success factors.

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

SONOCO used a combination of interviews with a group of senior managers and leadership literature developed by renowned Talent Management Consultants Development Dimensions International (DDI). PanCanadian also engaged the services of external consultants to assist in identifying their competencies. Notably, PanCanadian evaluates their competencies twice a year to ensure their list of competencies looks towards future leadership requirements as opposed to past successes.

Leadership competencies were evaluated biannually in preparation for the 360-feedback process. A combination of academic research, assessment of top performers, and future focus (strategic fit) was used to determine competencies needed for the future. Leadership competencies were originally developed with the help of an external consultant. The following leadership competencies were viewed as being applicable to all management levels

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

Dow Chemical takes the view that future leaders must perform above their current position against their eight core competencies.

In order to be selected, future leaders must have potential and perform at a level above their current position on selected competencies. Employee performance and potential is evaluated according to the eight aforementioned competencies.
In addition to the eight global competencies, each business group also uses another set of competencies that are function or business specific. Based on a combination of the global competencies and the functional competencies, jobs are profiled and employees can access the resulting competency profile, which details the role requirements and expectations.

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

4.7.8 Corporate Education Programs

All Best practice SP&M companies have their own corporate education programs. Many of them partner with one or more 3rd level Universities to provide highly focused courses conducted over a few days or in some instances up to a week in duration. In addition, many of these companies have their own MBA programs using 3rd level partners as the delivery method. Typically, the course curriculum is aligned to the leadership level of the employee.

Some corporate programs are designed to assist employees recently promoted to a manager or leadership position, whilst others are targeted at executive level employees only.

Performance on these programs is assessed and fed back to the succession candidate's up-line manager. Skills or competency gaps identified through participation on the programs are brought forward into the succession candidate's development plan. Lockheed Martin created an Executive Assessment and Development program targeted at director or vice president level employees. The program employs a blended learning approach to identifying the strengths and developmental needs of the participants.

> *Lockheed Martin's senior leadership acknowledged the need for a more proactive approach in identifying, assessing, and developing talent at the director and vice president levels. In 2000, former Lockheed Martin's CEO, made a commitment to enhancing the leadership bench strength of the corporation. He did this by working with human resources to create an accelerated development program for high-potential leaders called the Executive Assessment and Development program. The goal of the program is to identify high-potential directors and vice presidents who have the potential to be promoted one to two levels above their current positions or take on broader roles within the corporation. The program provides insight into strengths and development needs for the high-potential leaders. It achieves this goal through assessments, coaching, mentoring, developmental workshops, and action learning*

<div align="right">(Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)</div>

PanCanadian created a Centre of Excellence responsible for management development. Examples of the type of courses deployed by this centre are listed below:

- Executive MBA
- Online learning
- Conferences
- Management forum (PanCanadian's internal MBA program)
- Executive development programs

Dow Chemical lists a number of corporate developmental activities including University based programs.

> *All employees have access to mentoring, internal and external development classes, and the job announcement system to seek professional development opportunities; however, some executive development programs are restricted to future leaders. It is difficult for the employee to get involved in many special assignments without management intervention.*

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

Examples of executive development opportunities at Dow Chemical include:

- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Internal programs
- University-based programs
- Job assignments
- Special assignments
- Action learning

Some of the programs listed are open to all employees whilst the University based programs and Special assignments are open to executive level employees only.

4.8 SP&M Process Metrics

The following section introduces the readers to the range of process metrics employed by best practice SP&M companies. Each metric is explained and set in context with supporting quotations. Process metrics are used to ensure the SP&M process is delivering the expected outcomes set out by the organisations. Most of the process metrics listed below are employed by all of the companies cited in the cross-case analysis.

1) Attrition Rate
2) Bench Strength
3) Candidate Satisfaction
4) Diversity of Candidates
5) Representation in Succession Plans
6) Role Moves by Succession Candidates

4.8.1 Attrition Rate

In simple terms, attrition refers to measuring the rate of loss. From a SP&M standpoint, attrition measures the rate at which, employees who are named in the organisations succession plans, leave the organisation. Best practice organisations invest significant time and resources in developing their leadership (Rothwell 2010). If a succession candidate leaves the organisation this represents a significant loss in terms of money invested in the candidates education and development, not to mention the loss of a future leader. Dow Chemical revealed that their global attrition rate was 3.5% higher than their future leader attrition rate which they attributed to future leader satisfaction with their developmental opportunities.

> *Dow's global attrition rate for 2002 was 5 percent overall, while for future leaders the attrition rate was only 1.5 percent. This higher retention rate indicates satisfaction on the part of the future leaders in their opportunities for development. The level of agreement on future leader selection among members of the Corporate Operating Board is an additional measure of success. If the members agree on the selected candidates, their agreement indicates satisfaction with the level of the candidates' professional development and preparation for the position.*

> (Fulmer and Conger, 2004)

PanCanadian mention tracking the number of high potential employees who leave the organisation;

> *The result measures were identified and tracked, with the focus including (but not limited to) the number of high-potential employees who terminated their employment*

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

4.8.2 Bench Strength

Bench strength in SP&M terms refers to the number of positions with named successors. Typically a ratio of 3 successors for every leadership role is deemed healthy by the companies who use this metric. Dell Computers reports that bench strength is one of the primary metrics it looks at in terms of evaluating its SP&M process.

> *One of the primary metrics reviewed is bench strength. Each business unit is responsible for reporting the percentage of positions with a current successor and the percentage of positions with successors in the pipeline*

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

Similarly, Ely Lilly describes measuring the number of successors in their pipeline. However, they not only look at the number of successors but the number of "ready now" candidates.

> *Lilly has two key succession management measurements—the overall quantity of talent in its pipeline, and the number of succession plans where there are two or more ''ready now'' candidates. Both metrics play an important part in answering the question Do we have enough talent for both the near-term and the long- term?*

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

4.8.3 Candidate Satisfaction

Candidate satisfaction refers to how succession candidates feel about how their development is progressing. SONOCO is the only best practice company that specifically mentions using this metric.

Each division was asked to use the employee satisfaction survey index to provide a rank order listing from high to low of all of the plants in the division based on the percentage of favourability. Survey index history goes back to 1997, and the divisions included the latest data for all plants back to that date

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

Rothwell (2010) recommends the inclusion of succession candidate's satisfaction levels as part of any review of SP&M processes.

4.8.4 Diversity of Candidates

Without exception, all case studies examined mention the inclusion of diversity metrics in their SP&M processes. Broadly speaking the rational for the inclusion of diversity is twofold. Firstly, the leadership of the organisation should reflect the demographics of the organisation in terms of race, gender, nationality, and age. Secondly organisational leaders should reflect the demographics of their clients. Leaders who understand the cultural norms of their clients are more likely to make good business decisions. The following comment from Ely Lilly reflects this rational

> *Talent metrics look closely at the ratio between incumbents at a level and individuals with potential to that same level. There are specific goal ratios for each level of management (e.g., 3:1 for the director level). Additionally, both groups are segmented to specifically track diversity. Lilly tracks the percent of incumbents and potentials at each level for gender, race/ethnicity (US only), geographic origin and certain experiences (e.g., cross-functional assignments).*
>
> *Ely Lilly believes diversity is a critical element of business success in that if employees actually reflect the interests of customers, they are likely to make better decisions. They also purport that improvement of diversity of its ''potentials'' is a leading indicator of the diversity of its overall population. Querying the database allows Lilly to pinpoint these top successors and put development plans in place to reach its diversity and cross-functionality goals*

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

Lockheed Martin mention examining diversity during talent reviews in order to ensure that future leaders reflect the demographics of the organisation:

> *Talent reviews. During the talent reviews, new program participants are identified. It is at this time that a diversity assessment can be conducted to determine whether there is a diverse mix of candidates, they are at the appropriate levels, and they provide a good representation of different functions and parts of the business*

<div align="right">(Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)</div>

4.8.5 Representation in Succession Plans

Most of the best practice case studies have representation in succession plans as a primary metric. Candidates mentioned in more than one succession plan, demonstrates that their leadership qualities are being recognised by more than one business function or department. The replication of candidates across succession plans is considered as evidence that the SP&M process is creating the right kind of leaders.

Lockheed Martin contends that:

Representation in succession plans is another key metric because it shows that individuals in the program are, in fact, serious candidates for key positions within the organisation. In the first three years of the program, the representation of EAD participants in the executive office succession plan went from 44 percent to 61 percent, and it is still improving. This shows a commitment by executives to move to more of a developmental approach to succession planning rather than a replacement approach

<div align="right">(Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)</div>

Ely Lilly use similar metrics to Lockheed Martin, however, they advise caution in-cases where the same candidate is mentioned in more than three succession plans as this may be an indicator of the leadership pipeline being "Thin".

The succession plan metrics help the company understand the readiness of candidates and where gaps exist. Lilly understands how many ''ready now'' candidates it has for its top 500 positions. Similarly, it also understands where there are no ''ready now'' candidates and uses that information as a workflow trigger for executive recruiting activities. Additionally, analysis is done to understand how ''thin'' the pipeline might be. Metrics are gathered to determine how many individuals are on more than three succession plans as a ''ready now'' candidate

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

4.8.6 Role Moves by Succession Candidates

The final SP&M process metric uncovered in the cross-case analysis is role moves by succession candidates. Best practice SP&M organisations track the career moves of succession candidates. This kind of data can identify weaknesses in SP&M process. For example, if candidates careers appear to plateau at a certain point, it may indicate that candidates are not being properly developed for next level career moves. Lockheed Martin describes a longitudinal study identifying the kind of moves made by candidates over a four year period:

The final area, which is the most important, is looking at the progress of individuals in the program. Over the past several years, physical movement, lateral movement, promotions, and representation in succession plans have been tracked. In the four years since the inception of the program, there have been an average of 23 percent physical moves, 45 percent lateral moves (or expanded roles), and 40 percent promotions. Physical and lateral moves are important because they support growth by moving to a different assignment, and in some cases, to a different assignment in a different location, which can help to provide new or different perspectives for an individual

<div align="right">(Sobol, Harkins and Conley, 2007)</div>

Dow Chemical regards external recruitment for leadership roles as an internal failure of their SP&M process. They measure the success rate of succession candidate employees succeeding to open positions. Succession candidates being at very least shortlisted for open positions, is accepted as evidence that their SP&M is working

> *At Dow, an outside hire for a function-critical or corporate-critical role is an indication of a problem or failure with internal development. Dow believes that its internal talent is extremely competitive with external talent. As a result, Dow studies the hit rate of the succession plan—whether the person placed in the open job was on the list or pool—as a measure of success.*
>
> *The hit rate yields a 75 to 80 percent success rate and is the primary measure of success for the succession- planning program. The balance of the roles is generally filled by people identified as future leaders, but not necessarily as a ready now candidate for the open position.*

<div align="right">(Fulmer and Conger, 2004)</div>

4.9 Cross Case and In Case Matrix

The research findings conclude with a full cross-case and in-case SP&M feature comparison' depicted in Figure 4.6. The full listing of best practice SP&M processes, candidate evaluation and process metrics are compared to those employed by Inside Sales in their SP&M program. Each succession planning feature is categorised as follows:

- Used : SP&M feature is part of the company's current process
- Not used: SP&M feature is not part of the company's current process
- Available; SP&M feature is available to use but is not part of the company's current process
- Not Available; SP&M feature not available in this company
- N/A: SP&M feature was not covered in the case study research of this company

The cross-case and in-case matrix shows that SP&M in best practice companies share many common features. Of the twenty six best practice SP&M features listed, Inside Sales has nine features currently employed in their SP&M program. The Inside Sales SP&M program has some commonality with best practice companies. Notwithstanding the number of elements that the Inside SP&M program has in common with best practice, most interesting are the number of best practice features that are categorised as "Available".

If Inside Sales formalised the structure of their SP&M program, to include these "Available features" its SP&M program would have considerably more in common with best practice companies than current practice shows.

Company Name	Inside Sales	DELL Computers	PanCanadian	Merrill Lynch	SONOCO	Lockheed Martin	CIGNA Healthcare	Dow Chemicals	Ely Lilly
Succession Planning components									
Aligned to Business Plans	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Formal documented Procedures	Not Used	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Systemic Approach	Not Used	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Competency Based	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Individual development Plans	Not Used	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Career development Face-to-face Training	Not available	Not Used	Available	Available	USED	Available	USED	N/A	N/A
Formal Coaching and Mentoring	Available	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Supported by Software	Not available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Candidate Evaluation									
Career to date Profile	Not available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Education attainment	Not available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Time served in current role	USED	Not Used	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
360 Degree Feedback	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Flight Risk	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
High Potentials	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Readiness for Advancement	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Readiness for Leadership	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Skill gaps measured against Competencies	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Corporate Education Programs	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Business Results	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Succession Planning Process Metrics									
Employee Engagement	Not Used	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Leadership pipeline	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Attrition of succession candidates	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Number of leadership roles with no successor	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Number of Roles filled by succession candidates	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Number of Roles filled by external candidates	Available	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED
Diversity as a reflection of demographic Balance	USED	Not Used	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED	USED

Best Practice Succession Planning and Management Feautures

Figure 4.7

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Chapter Five
Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The desired outcome of this study was to tell the story of SP&M in Inside Sales, as uncovered through the lived experiences of the Inside Sales managers tasked with its implementation. Furthermore, this inquiry should bring to light opportunities to bring the Inside Sales SP&M program in line with Industry best practices.

The chapter commences with a brief overview of the Inside Sales case study. The research objectives, questions and data analysis process are revisited and summarised.

The author presents the central story of this case study in the form of conclusions drawn from the research data analysis combined with evidential support from the literature review. In particular, the conclusions are set against the emergent themes from phase 1 of the data analysis:

Theme 1: Supporting Documentation / Data Sources
Theme 2: Succession Candidate Evaluation
Theme 3: Succession Planning Stakeholder Communications
Theme 4: Developmental Activities
Theme 5: Manager Incentives
Theme 6: Barriers to Succession Planning

The chapter closes with a set of recommendations for the enhancement of SP&M in Inside Sales, along with recommendations for future scholars, wishing to advance the theory and practise of succession planning and management in an industry context.

5.2 Research Context and Population

This inquiry was conducting on site in the European Headquarters of a fortune 100 listed company, based in Dublin Ireland. The Irish based operation currently employs in excess of 700 employees, made up of Operations and Sales professionals. The Sales teams service clients in every country in Europe. The Operations team provide a full range of back office support services to the sales teams including, hiring, training and education delivery, business metrics, and customer satisfaction analytics.

In addition, they manage the deployment of education and training delivery for the Sales and Operations teams across Europe. The research population n=16 consists of Operations and Sales managers ranging in seniority from 1st line Sales manager up to Senior Vice President. The span of control or Influence of this population covers the entire Inside Sales workforce.

5.3 Research Objectives and Research Question

The objectives of this research are twofold. Firstly; the research must explore the lived experiences of Inside Sales managers tasked with implementing succession planning and management. Secondly; opportunities to improve the current succession planning and management process must be catalogued and explored by comparing and contrasting these experiences with the body of knowledge in the supporting literature review. In order to capture these objectives and give structure to the research the following research questions were proposed:

1) What is the lived experience of Inside Sales managers with the succession planning and management program?
2) What SP&M features or practices could advance SP&M in Inside Sales?

5.4 Research Data Gathering and Analysis

The data which informs this case study was gathered and analysed in 2 Phases. The research data was coded and categorised; emergent themes explored and sub categorised.

Phase one; involved gathering and analysing the data from the research participants. The data gathering instrument took the form of semi structured interviews which took place in the offices of participants. The interviews were recorded; transcribed and analysed using the Constant Comparative data analysis method (Glaser and Straus 1967). Nvivo 10 software was used as an aid to documenting and coding management, to give clarity to the coding and analytical processes. The analysis uncovered the experiences of research participants with the SP&M process in the Inside Sales organisation.

Phase two; involved the analysis of eight best practice Succession Planning case study submissions from external organisations, as cited by Fulmer and Conger (2004) and Sobol, Harkins and Conley (2007).

The data analysis method was replicated from phase 1. The analysis uncovered the best practices of SP&M in each organisation and grouped them under the headings of; 1) Succession Planning and Management Process, 2) Succession Planning Candidate Evaluation and 3) Succession Planning and Management Process Metrics.

Phase two concluded with an in-case and cross-case analysis; culminating in a table listing all the features of best practice SP&M from the eight case studies, compared to the SP&M practices employed by the Inside Sales organisation.

5.5 Research Conclusions

In this section the author presents the central data emanating from this inquiry. Based on the findings, and the supporting literature review, the author outlines final conclusions which expand on the significance of the findings. Phase one of the research analysis uncovered the following themes; through which the primary research question; what is the lived experience of Inside Sales managers with SP&M? is answered (see Figure 5.1)

Emergent Themes from Phase 1	
Theme 1	Supporting Documentation / Data Sources
Theme 2	Succession Candidate Evaluation
Theme 3	Succession Planning Stakeholder Communications
Theme 4	Developmental Activities
Theme 5	Manager Incentives
Theme 6	Barriers to Succession Planning

Figure 5.1

5.5.1 Theme 1 Supporting Documentation / Data Sources

Managers find the SP&M program in Inside Sales unsupported by documentation and reliant on the institutional knowledge of senior managers for its execution. However, that is not to say the no documentation exists. On the contrary, managers mention many forms of documentation that can be used as an aid to succession planning; however, the degree to which any of these are used is at the discretion of each individual manager. In the absence of any formal documentation governing the execution of SP&M, managers agree that some of the key pillars of succession planning such as candidate evaluation maybe open to interpretation, leading to varying degrees of subjectivity in relation to succession candidate evaluation.

The lack of formalised procedures prompted some managers to create their own documents such as diaries or spreadsheets for recording important details such as candidate performance or evaluation.

The absence of formal Succession Planning process documentation puts the Inside Sales SP&M program at odds with recommended best practices, as evidenced in the SP&M literature and best practice SP&M from the cross-case analysis. Fulmer and Conger (2004) and Rothwell (2010) refer to organisations hosting planning meetings relating to formalising their SP processes. Similarly, all eight best practice case studies show formal documented procedures for each feature of their succession planning programs.

In relation to candidate evaluation, managers cite a diverse range of data sources hosted on the Inside Sales Intranet. Broadly speaking, these data sources can be considered quantitative in nature, in so far as the succession candidate data tends to be in form of rating scales or otherwise numeric value denoting seniority, skill or expertise. The only exceptions being corporate education program post participation results and the CareerSmart database which host some qualitative employee data.

Managers lament the fact that these data sources are discrete and unconnected. In order to form holistic evaluations of their succession candidates, managers must access each system independently to retrieve a candidate's data and use their own judgement as to how to join these distinct data sources together. Furthermore, managers agree that in the absence of a system to link these discrete sources of employee data, their evaluations of employees may be somewhat subjective. Notwithstanding the problems managers express with manually marrying these data sources together, some managers question the integrity of some data sources, suggesting that they owe more to compliance with corporate governance metrics, as opposed to presenting an accurate reflection of an employee's true skill or capability.

Without exception, managers express the desire to have a system that could link these discrete systems to provide a holistic profile of their succession candidates. Furthermore, they desire a system capable of benchmarking or comparing several candidates' skills, capabilities and education profiles.

Rothwell (2010) provides a list of software vendors whose applications claim to address some or all of the candidate data retrieval and amalgamation problems cited by Inside Sales managers. In addition, guidance for practitioners of succession planning on the evaluation and implementation of succession planning software programs is offered. The best practice cross-case analysis shows all eight organisations as having software assisted SP&M programs. In particular, CIGNA Healthcare and Ely Lilly provide detailed accounts of the capabilities of their SP&M software.

In summary, the Inside Sales SP&M program is largely undocumented and relies on the institutional knowledge of more tenured managers for its implementation and continuity. Managers recognise that this is less than ideal and accept that the absence formal SP&M supporting documentation promotes inconsistency in the practice of SP&M and subjectivity in relation to succession candidate evaluation. Managers demonstrate a desire to rectify this situation as evidenced by their efforts to create evaluation templates for their own use.

Inside Sales managers have access to an array of web based systems hosting both qualitative and quantitative succession candidate evaluation data. However, these are discrete and electronically unlinked. Managers find the unconnected nature of these systems burdensome. They express difficulties extracting holistic succession candidate profiles from these systems and express the desire to have a unified system or vendor software to assist them. The Inside Sales managers show a genuine interest in enabling the career growth of their employee's but lament the fact that they are hampered by the current IT infrastructure.

The academic literature and best practice cross-case analysis present formalised procedures as an imperative for the effective implementation and execution of SP&M. Furthermore, without exception, the eight organisations examined recognise the need for software assisted SP&M. Given the projected growth of the Inside Sales organisation in size and complexity, it is reasonable to posit that as Inside Sales staff numbers grow, the current IT infrastructure may not be sufficient to sustain the SP&M program. Consequently, the desire expressed by managers for investment in new SP&M software may become an organisational imperative.

5.5.2 Theme 2 Succession Candidate Evaluation

In order to either recommend a successor or understand the current level of a succession candidate's skill or ability, managers are required to evaluate their succession candidates. As already discussed in the previous section there are a range of data sources that managers can use to aid their evaluation. However, how these sources are summated to aid successor evaluation is undefined. Consequently evaluative conclusions made by managers lack rigour and are by their own admission somewhat subjective. All Inside Sales managers agree that final evaluations are heavily biased towards more qualitative or experiential based activities such as:

1. PBC yearend reviews
2. Performance of delegated tasks
3. Performance of Special Projects
4. Performance ratings post participation on Corporate Leadership programs

Managers aligned to Operations lament their limited ability to allow their succession candidates to participate in special projects. They claim that Operations is seen as a cost of business and is subject to stringent hiring policies; as such the working day of Operations employees is largely consumed with the execution of their roles; leaving little time for succession candidates to engage in project based activities.

From an evaluation standpoint, managers accept that in the absence of standard evaluation criteria, evaluations can be open to varying degrees of subjectivity. As evidenced by the cross case analysis; best practice SP&M organisations use a range of succession candidate evaluation criteria:

1) Career to date profile
2) Education attainment
3) Time served in current role
4) 360 Degree Feedback
5) Flight Risk
6) High Potentials
7) Readiness for advancement
8) Readiness for leadership
9) Skill gaps measured against Competencies
10) Corporate Education Programs
11) Business Results

The evaluation of succession candidates in Inside Sales shares some common elements with best practice criteria, most notably:

5) Flight Risk
7) Readiness for advancement
8) Readiness for Leadership
10) Corporate Education Programs
11) Business Results

In summary, whilst it is questionable as to whether any metric involving human appraisal can ever be devoid of some level of subjectivity, the author believes that SP&M in Inside Sales could be improved by clearly documented procedures and evaluation templates. Furthermore, given that the primary function of SP&M is to identify and develop the next generation of leaders for the organisation; the possible negative ramifications of inconsistent succession candidate evaluation such as; future leaders being ill-equipped for leadership roles or enrolled in inappropriate education programs, should not be underestimated (Rothwell 2010).

The works of Guinn (2000); Fulmer and Conger (2003), Hills (2009) and Rothwell (2010) address the subject of succession candidate evaluation. The authors concur in their advocacy of defined evaluation criteria, aligned to organisational competencies. In addition, all best practice succession planning case studies cited in Sobol, Harkins and Conley (2007) and Fulmer and Conger (2004) describe their succession candidate evaluations as being competency based, supported by evaluation criteria and evaluation templates, designed to ensure a uniform approach to succession candidate evaluation.

5.5.3 Theme 3 Succession Planning Stakeholder Communications

SP stakeholder communications refer to any form of SP communications; examples include; SP&M program overviews for the general population, developmental meetings managers hold with successors or senior manager meetings where potential successors or developmental role changes may be discussed.

At organisation level, Inside Sales does not have a unified approach to SP&M communications. Most first line managers suspect that the general Inside Sales population has little or no knowledge of succession SP. This could have negative ramifications as employees may be less than sure of how to drive their careers to best effect.

The Operations side of the business has a more guarded and reactive communications strategy. Formal meetings to discuss succession planning by their own admission are more situational than adhering to any prescribed schedule. The situational nature of their communications may in part be a function of the historically low employee attrition rate of Operations staff and the fact that Operations staff tend to remain in the roles for long periods in comparison to Sales employees.

Whilst this does offer a practical reason for the reactive or situational nature of their approach to SP communications, it does not explain why Operations Senior managers are by their own admission, guarded around SP discussions. Conversely, first line Operations managers appear to be quite comfortable with having open and honest conversations with their own staff in relation to SP.

The Sales side of the business has a more structured approach to SP communications. Sales managers mention having quarterly meetings with succession candidates, which is supported by the Senior Vice present's assertion that he hosts senior leadership SP meetings every three months. Managers regard the identification of one or more successors as an invaluable employee retention and motivational tool and see it as an imperative that succession candidates are aware of their status as being part of the managers SP.

Conversely, succession planning communications appear to be less open between managers in separate sales brands. Managers express fear that talented people, whom they spent time developing and grooming, may be poached by others, who may not have invested similar efforts to develop their employees. These fears appear to be grounded in the inconsistent approach to employee evaluation; making it difficult for managers to be confident that should they let talented employees leave their teams; they could replace them with someone of a similar caliber.

The author finds specific mention of SP communications in literature. SP communications appear to be covered by sections addressing the initial launch of SP in organisations. Creating a shared vision for SP and communicating this vision to all employees is advised (Rothwell 2010). Cadmus (2006), Rothwell (2010) and Fulmer & Conger (2004) call for greater transparency in SP. They recommend that old SP systems, characterised by confidentiality and secrecy, should be phased out, in favour of new systems that encourage involvement of all SP stakeholders. The cross-case analysis reveals that organisations employing best practice SP&M have a defined "drum beat" which they adhere to, from the point of view of communicating succession planning requirements, scheduling succession planning meetings and conducting high level succession planning reviews.

Reviews are streamlined through the use of defined reporting templates, facilitating the rollup of all succession candidate information into individual, departmental, business unit, and geography level reports (Fulmer and Conger 2004, Sobol, Harkins and Conley 2007).

5.5.4 Theme 4 Developmental Activities

Managers in Inside Sales have an array of developmental activities, tools and programs which they can use to help succession candidates close their competency or skill gaps (See Table 5.1). In particular, managers mention the following developmental activities:

Table 5.1 Developmental Activities

Activity Name	Characterised as	Participation Requirement	Participation Authority
1)Corporate developmental Programs	Developmental	Mandatory	Organisation Level
2) CareerSmart profiling	Online developmental	Mandatory	Organisation Level
3) Delegated actions from their manager	Experiential	Mandatory	Manager Assigned
4) Project based activities	Experiential	Mandatory	Manager Assigned
5) Coaching and Mentoring	Developmental	Optional	N/A

Inside Sales mandate succession candidates to complete activities 1) Corporate developmental programs and 2) CareerSmart Profiling. Succession candidates cannot attain a leadership position or be promoted without completing developmental programs and having an up to date profile in CareerSmart. Some managers value the succession candidate post participation reports from these corporate developmental programs, whilst others regard them as being organisational prerequisites and of little value once completed. CareerSmart is a relatively new program to Inside Sales and requires candidates to provide supporting evidence of demonstrated skills or competency levels.

The CareerSmart online application helps managers make less subjective and more informed decisions about their succession candidates. However, managers lament the absence of a facility to benchmark, or compare the skills and capabilities of multiple candidates. Furthermore, CareerSmart does not give managers the ability to appraise the depth of candidate skill or competency at departmental or organisational levels.

Inside Sales managers place more value on activities 3) Delegated actions from their manager and 4) Project based activities. Firstly; managers have direct control of what activities they choose to delegate to their succession candidates and have a clear

understanding of what, to their minds, constitutes high performance as they would have completed many of these activities themselves.

Secondly; managers have a vested interest in the performance of delegated activities as managers still have ownership and responsibility for these activities. Project based activities are considered the responsibility of the project owner or succession candidate in this case. They give managers the opportunity to evaluate how candidates perform in cross departmental, cross cultural and depending on the seniority of the candidate, cross geography engagements. However, as there are no prescribed instructions or templates defining how these activities should be evaluated, consequently such evaluations may be open to subjectivity or bias.

Activity 5) Coaching and mentoring; is a service that succession candidates can avail of; participation is at the discretion of the candidate. In general, managers view coaching and mentoring as positive interventions; however, some appear less sure of its value. In the case of coaching, managers regard outcomes to be of a less tangible nature. The confidential nature of coaching engagements means that managers may not know who has a coach or what coaching goals the succession candidates have set themselves. In consequence, if succession candidates show improvement; coaching may not be considered as being a contributing factor, unless the candidates choose to disclose their coaching goals and relationships.

Managers regard mentoring as being of more value as the outcomes tend to be more tangible, immediate and practical in nature. However, an attempt to formalise mentoring engagements in Inside Sales met with less than favourable results. Both succession candidates and managers felt pressurised to have a mentor, whether they wanted one or not. The casual nature of coaching and mentoring in Inside Sales, finds managers unsure of its outcome. The author posits that, if managers and succession candidates identified specific developmental areas where coaching and or mentoring could provide more targeted help, perhaps the profile of coaching and mentoring as a service could be elevated and its contribution to SP&M more clearly understood and recognised.

The cross-case analysis reveals that organisations employing best practice SP&M have a range of developmental programs; both blended and experiential approaches are used and each organisation has its own corporate leadership programs.

In this regard, Inside Sales is for the most part in line with industry best practice. However, best practice organisations incorporate leadership competencies as a benchmark into their programs. This allows managers to evaluate more clearly the competency or skill level of candidates, post participation on these developmental programs. In addition, using defined metrics or competency statements facilitates the development of a common language among managers when talking about the depth of talent in the organisation or the skills and competencies of succession candidates.

Most notable among best practice SP&M organisations is the creation of Individual Development Plans (IDP) for each succession candidate. The plans incorporate all developmental activities and education requirements into one comprehensive development plan. The plans are unique to each employee's skill or capability gaps and developmental needs. The IDP serves as the defining document of record for each candidate's current capabilities and maps out their next developmental milestones.

5.5.5 Theme 5 Manager Incentives

All Inside Sales managers agree that there is no formal recognition for managers who develop strong teams and enable the career growth and promotion of their most talented employees. Managers mention feelings of personal pride and achievement from helping their succession candidates accomplish their career goals. Furthermore, managers show a willingness to suffer the loss of a strong team member in the interest of doing what they believe to be the right thing for that employee's career.

Senior managers allude to taking the team building skills of their reporting managers into account, when evaluating their performance or in matters relating to deciding future promotions. However, 1st line managers appear to be less than sure if this is the case and if so, to what extent their teambuilding capabilities influence these decisions. Furthermore, some 1st line managers desire to have their people teambuilding skills included in their evaluations and regard this metric as a way to delineate their performance from that of other managers.

The best practice case studies analysis found no specific mention of incentivising or rewarding managers for implementing and rolling out SP&M in their organisations; however, the role of managers in succession planning is mentioned in all case studies.

The Manager role is shown to have a range of responsibilities, from succession planning program design and implementation, to succession candidate identification, development and evaluation (Fulmer and Conger 2004, Rothwell 2010).

The author posits, that SP&M in Inside Sales could benefit by quantifying, the extent to which senior managers take the team building skills of their reporting managers into account, when evaluating their performance or deciding future promotions. Manager certainty in relation to their own evaluations may drive increased focus on employee development activities.

5.5.6 Theme 6 Barriers to Succession Planning and Management

Managers describe the following barriers to SP&M (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Barriers to Succession Planning and Management

1) Succession Candidate Profiles	5) Hiring & Recruitment
2)Evaluation Consistency	6) Candidate Availability
3) Limited Opportunities	7) Succession Planning Awareness
4) Role Specific Skills	

1) Succession Profiles: Managers attribute their difficulties in accessing holistic succession candidate profiles to the current Inside Sales IT infrastructure. The data required to create a full candidate profile is dispersed among many electronically unlinked discrete databases and intranet applications. From the best practice cross case analysis, it would appear that investment in customised succession planning software is an imperative to driving best in class SP&M programs and could resolve many of the problems Inside Sales managers have with the current IT Infrastructure.

2) Evaluation Inconsistency: Apart from resolving the succession candidate profiling issue, the adoption of customised software may in part resolve some of the issues managers have with evaluation inconsistency. The implementation of customised succession planning software requires the standardisation of evaluative measures and alignment of demonstrated succession candidate behaviours to competency statements (Rothwell 2010).

3) Limited Opportunities: The Operations and Sales sides of the Inside Sales organisation experience difficulties with limited opportunities in different ways. Operations managers claim that employee attrition in Operations is quite low in comparison to the Sales organisation.

Furthermore, Operations staff tend to stay in their roles for extended periods of time; typically five years or more. Consequently, job role vacancies or possible job role moves are infrequent; limiting the number of developmental opportunities.

The Sales side of the business experiences greater employee attrition than the Operations business; furthermore, the Inside Sales external trading environment could be characterised as dynamic and fast moving. Consequently, job role vacancies in the Sales business are frequent and to some extent mirror the trading environment.

Unique to the Sales side of the business is a sense of employee ownership. Managers describe a practice of concealing available opportunities and talent from other sales brands. Secretive practices put the Sales side of the business at odds with current SP&M literature which advocates SP&M programs characterised as open and transparent (Fulmer and Conger 2004, Rothwell 2010). The author posits that concealing talent and opportunities may hinder the Sales organisation from fully leveraging their available talent. Furthermore, it may foster perceptions of unfairness or favouritism, among employees in relation to how job role promotions or developmental opportunities are awarded.

4) Role Specific Skills: The Operations side of the business is departmentalised by job role and skill; limiting the number of natural succession pathways available. For example, Learning & Development and Business Analytics departments are unlikely to have many common core skill sets. Whilst it is not impossible for staff to develop new capabilities, they may not be considered a natural fit to their core skills or capabilities.

The Sales side of the business is departmentalised by language, product or service. Learning a new product or service is a regular requirement for sales staff; however, developing fluency in new languages presents a more difficult challenge; resulting in some succession pathways being gated by language.

5) Hiring & Recruitment: Managers describe varying levels of frustration with the hiring process in Inside Sales. In particular, managers lament spending an inordinate amount of time on the recruitment due to poorly screened candidates and curricula vitae. Managers attribute their frustrations to the failure of recruitment professionals to understand the Inside Sales business and over reliance on rigid job role requirements.

The author posits that given the recurrent nature of Inside Sales hiring requirements, perhaps the Sales organisation could benefit from closer ties with recruitment professionals.

Managers describe two instances where it may not be possible to promote or further develop their preferred candidates. The first being if a candidate has recently moved job role, it is not deemed good practice to move them again. The second instance relates to occasions where promoting the ideal candidate presents too many difficulties for their current team. However, occurrences of this nature could be viewed as a breakdown of the succession planning process, requiring investigation as to how the functional continuity of any one team became over reliant on any one individual employee.

6) Succession Planning Awareness: Inside Sales managers agree that knowledge of the SP&M is limited to managers and current succession candidates and agree that more should be done in this regard. Furthermore, 1st line managers agree that all Inside Sales employees should understand the SP&M process, so that they can make informed choices about how to grow their careers in Inside Sales. From the cross-case analysis, best practice organisations have defining SP&M policy documents and many refer to companywide communications informing all employees about SP&M.

Brookfield (1986) describes adult learners as being disposed to learning at varying stages of their lives. The author posits that similarly, employees are disposed to driving their careers at varying times their lives. In order to ensure that all Inside Sales employees know how to drive their careers to best effect, employees should at very least be aware of the Inside Sales SP&M program.

5.5.7 Summary of Conclusions

Managers describe succession planning and management as being replacement planning focused. The succession planning program is largely unsupported by documentation despite the existence of many forms of documentation that could be formally integrated into the program. The absence of formal documentation is at odds with current SP&M literature and best practice SP&M as evidenced in the cross case analysis. Disparate SP&M practices at manager and organisation level are grounded in the undocumented nature of the Inside Sales SP&M program.

Managers have access to many sources of employee data located in various databases and intranet sites. However, these sources are electronically unconnected. Managers find the retrieval and amalgamation of data from disparate systems to be cumbersome and time consuming.

Furthermore, they cite issues with data sources as being a contributory factor to subjective succession candidate evaluations. Both literature (Rothwell 2010, Fulmer and Conger 2004) and best practice organisations suggest the use of customised succession planning software is imperative to the resolution of employee data and reporting issues.

Managerial decisions, relating to succession candidate performance, evaluation or promotion, are by their own admission, largely informed by how candidates perform experiential action based activities. However, there are no defined criteria relating to how experiential performance should be measured. Consequentially, evaluations of succession candidates may be open to varying degrees of subjectivity. The Inside Sales SP&M program does find some commonality with some of the more quantitative evaluation criteria used by best practice organisations; however, these metrics are more attuned to replacement planning.

Inside Sales does not appear to have a uniform approach to succession planning communications. Succession planning communications in the Operations side of the business are guarded and situational. The Sales side of the business has a more structured approach; however, the desire of individual brands to maintain ownership and control of talent and promotional opportunities appears to foster inter-brand politicking and secretive practices among sales managers.

Managers are not incentivised in relation to their ability to develop strong teams or build organisational capability. However, managers show a genuine desire to help their succession candidates grow their careers, even if it results in some negative consequences for their teams. Senior managers allude to taking the employee development skills of their reporting managers into consideration when evaluating performance or awarding promotions; however, 1st line managers seem less than sure if this is the case and if so to what extent.

Managers mention several barriers to SP&M some of which have already been addressed in this summary. The remaining barriers appear to be of an operational nature and less to do with SP&M theory or practice. Managers claim some succession pathways do not work because of the unique skills or language requirements attached to some roles or departments. Whilst these problems are not insurmountable, they do represent significant challenges for employees wishing to progress their careers outside of more conventional career paths, attuned to their core skills or capabilities.

Relating the experiences of Inside Sales managers with Hiring and Recruitment, Inside Sales managers find the process unsatisfactory. Unsuitable candidates are frequently put forward for interview whilst more suitable candidates are screened out, because of failure to meet inflexible hiring criteria, as defined by recruitment professionals. It would appear both the Inside Sales organisation and the Recruitment function could benefit from cross training and or increased dialogue.

Finally, the lack of awareness of the Inside Sales succession planning program is at odds with the current literature and the best practice organisations. The author posits that preparing organisation wide communications, about the existence, purpose and nuances of a largely undocumented SP&M program, could be problematic. Furthermore, poor SP&M awareness may have some negative consequences for Inside Sales, as employees may be unsure how to drive their careers to best effect.

This section closes with this observation from the author. Inside Sales managers have access to a range of documents, data sources, developmental programs and supporting organisational functions such as; Talent management, Learning and Development, Coaching and Mentoring and Human Resources. What appears to be lacking from the SP&M program is a framework or focus to bring these documents, data sources and organisational functions together to create a supportive structure around SP&M.

5.6 Recommendations

Informed by the in-case and cross-case analysis, this section sets out a series of recommendations which addresses the second research question; What SP&M features or practices could advance SP&M in Inside Sales?

In addition, based on experiences with this case study, the author reflectively critiques this inquiry and closes with recommendations for scholars wishing to advance the theory or practice of SP&M in industry.

5.6.1 Documentation

The analysis has shown that SP&M in Inside is a largely undocumented process which is at odds with current literature (Fulmer and Conger 2004, Rothwell 2010) and the eight best practice SP&M organisations examined in the cross-case analysis. Whilst Inside sales managers demonstrate a conceptual awareness of SP&M, the implementation and continuity of SP&M in Inside Sales is reliant on the institutional knowledge of more tenured staff.

The absence of formally documented procedures has given rise to variance in succession planning practice between the Operations and Sales sides of the business and between individual managers. Whilst Inside Sales does have a list of one or more named succession candidates for each manager, how these candidates were identified, evaluated, developed or how their future learning and development requirements are defined, is less clear. In order to bring the Inside Sales SP&M program in line with current literature and best SP&M practice, the following recommendation is offered.

Inside Sales must add structure, rigour and continuity to the practice of SP&M by documenting the entire program from end-to-end. Informed by the in-case and cross-case analysis the author recommends that SP&M should be supported by, but not limited to, documents stating the following (See Table 5.3)

Table 5.3 Succession Planning Documentation

Process	Evaluation and Records
1) The purpose of SP&M	6) Evaluation criterion used to identify succession candidates
2) The expected outcomes of SP&M	7) Evaluation criterion of performance on action learning projects
3) The features of SP&M	8) Standard templates to record a candidate's current: skills, competences, capabilities, developmental progress and next steps
4) The SP&M Roles and responsibilities of managers and candidates	9) Standard templates to record post evaluation outcomes
5) Electronic Sources of employee data to be used as inputs to SP&M	10) Standard templates to record SP&M program outcomes
6) Existing documents to be used as inputs to SP&M	11) Defined SP&M program performance metrics

5.6.2 Features of Succession Planning and Management

Informed by the literature review and the cross-case analysis the author recommends the incorporation of the following features into the Inside Sales SP&M program. The recommended features are grouped under the headings of; Process, Evaluation and Process Metrics (See Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Recommended Features for the Inside Sales Succession Planning and Management program.

Recommended Features for the Inside Sales SP&M program		
SP&M Process	**SP&M Candidate Evaluation**	**SP&M Process Metrics**
1)Aligned to Business Plans	1)Career to date information	1)Employee Engagement
2)Formal documented Procedures	2)Education Attainment	2)Leadership pipeline
3)Systemic Approach	3)Time served in current Role	3)Attrition of succession candidates
4)Competency Based	4)Flight Risk	4)Number of leadership roles with no successor
5)Individual development Plans	5)360 Degree Feedback	5)Number of Roles filled by succession candidates
6)Formal Coaching and Mentoring	6)Succession Candidate Potential	6)Number of Roles filled by external candidates
7)Supported by Software	7)Readiness for Advancement	7)Diversity as a reflection of demographic Balance
	8)Readiness for a leadership Role	
	9)Skill gaps measurements against Competencies	
	10)Corporate Education Programs	

Whilst these features constitute key requirements for succession planning programs, they do not show how these features could be incorporated into a SP&M programme.

5.7.3 New Conceptual Model of Succession Planning and Management

In answer to the question of how best practice features can be incorporated into a best practice SP&M program, the author puts forward the following conceptual model of SP&M for consideration (See Appendix F). The model is divided into three sections.

The first section of the model shows the job role responsibilities of succession candidates changing as their careers progress. At the outset, candidates' career responsibilities are primarily to themselves. As their careers advance, they take on greater levels of responsibility, eventually being responsible for the performance of multiple geographies or regions. In line with increasing levels of responsibility and career growth, this section shows the balance of skills required shifting from mainly technical job role skills to more leadership orientated skills and competencies.

The blended developmental mix for succession candidates informs the second section which sets out the candidates Individual Development Plan and candidate evaluation criteria.

The second section of the model shows the employee and their manager working together to create the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP). This collaborative approach; allowing employees to have input to their developmental plan speaks to the self directed nature of adult learners (Knowles 1980, Brookfield 1986). The author regards the IDP to be the vehicle with which succession candidates can drive their careers forward and the unifying element for all the support functions. Uniting the support functions on the achievement of a common goal; in this case the completion of the IDP, brings focus to their interactions with succession candidates and each other. The content of the IDP is informed by; the organisations business plan, developmental mix aligned to the employee's career progression, recommendations from supporting functions and the succession candidate's skill or competency gaps, as suggested by the succession candidate's performance evaluation.

As the succession candidate works to complete their IDP and we downed close their skill or competency gaps, the candidate may draw upon the resources of the support functions for assistance. The support functions are informed by and have input to the Individual Development plan ensuring its contents are in line with business requirements and the developmental needs of the succession candidate. With regard to the cross-case analysis, the performance of the succession candidate is evaluated against their IDP. The actual evaluation criterion is informed by the recommended candidate evaluation features from Table 5.4.

The third section of the model shows the evaluation of the SP&M program. As evidenced by the cross-case analysis, best practice Succession Planning organisations use a range of metrics to ensure their programs deliver the expected outcomes for the organisation and its succession candidates. The metrics are informed by the recommended SP&M process metrics from Table 5.4. The model shows Succession Planning program evaluation, being informed by and having input to, the evaluation of succession candidates. If the program fails any of the metrics, remedial actions from the support functions may be required to ensure that Individual development plans are delivering the correct business outcomes.

Furthermore, benchmarking the SP&M program against current academic literature and practices in similar organisations ensures the program design is kept current and less subject to introspective practices.

The author posits that this conceptual model provides the required framework and unifying elements absent from the current Inside Sales SP&M program. The author recommends redesigning the current Inside Sales SP&M program, using this conceptual model to underpin the effort. Furthermore, redesigning the SP&M program and supporting the program with the required documentation would do much to elevate the practice of SP&M in Inside Sales to a best practice standard.

5.7 Critique of this Case Study

The author was advised at the outset of this inquiry that there would little or no opportunity to re-interview the research participants, due to their heavy workloads and business travel requirements. Cognisant of this limited opportunity to get rich data; the author chose to afford the research participants some opportunity to prepare for the interview and call to mind their experiences of SP&M, by circulating the interview questions in advance. This was deemed an acceptable risk, as opposed to the possibility of conducting interviews which yielded little in the way of usable data.

Whilst the emergent interview data showed no indication of participants giving rehearsed answers to interview questions, the possibility of the data being somewhat tainted by a level of rehearsal must be acknowledged.

The author has put forward this case study as a faithful representation of the case study research method and analysis; the outcome of which is firmly grounded in the research data. However, absent from the source data are the experiences of succession candidates with the Inside Sales SP&M program. Whilst all the research participants are both administrators and candidates of succession planning, the data sought was limited to their experiences of administering the program. The primary reason for this limitation is the confidential nature of succession planning information. Senior Inside Sales leaders were uncomfortable with the idea of disclosing a list of named successors. Nonetheless, the author believes that including the experiences succession planning candidates would have given a wider perspective to the source data.

Moreover, given a wider perspective, based on the experiences of succession candidates, the subjects of Succession Candidate Evaluation and Individual Development Plans could have been explored in greater detail.

The use of the semi structured interview as the primary data gathering instrument presented some challenges from a data analysis point of view. The author used the data gathering instrument as a guide for the interviews as opposed to being a rigid list of interview questions that must be asked of each research participant. Whilst this allowed the interview dialogue to flow in a more natural way, it made the comparative analysis of interview responses more challenging. Whilst the research outcome is truly grounded in the source data, the coding of the source data required a degree of researcher interpretation. On reflection, a more skilful conduct of the semi structured interviews may have produced a dataset requiring less researcher interpretation.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Studies

Given the context of conducting research in multinational organisations whose operating environment is subject to constant change the author advocates less rigid qualitative research approaches such as the case study (Stake 1995, Simmons 2009 and Yin 2009).

Given the personal and confidential nature of succession planning data to organisations, management staff and their employees, the author recommends using interview as the primary data gathering instrument to facilitate a more personal elicitation of research data. As previously stated the author finds succession planning literature to be overly reliant on case studies written from the perspective of the HR practitioners or consultants who developed and implemented the processes.

With regard to the cross case-analysis in this study and the writings of scholars such as Fulmer and Conger (2004) and Rothwell (2010), the importance of the senior leader role in succession planning and the actions of succession candidates are clear. The author recommends that including perspectives from these two key stakeholder groups in future research, may present rich streams of data for future inquiries. Whilst this inquiry does much to address the dearth of succession planning literature including senior leader perspectives, the perspective of succession candidates in succession planning literature remains largely unknown.

In relation to the practice of succession planning this inquiry provides a solid foundation and guidance for those involved in implementing succession planning in organisations. Whilst the research context was limited to one organisation, the in-case and cross-case analysis from eight best practice organisations suggests a certain level of transferability to the findings. However, in order to create the required succession planning documentation, evaluation templates and benchmarking instructions to underpin SP&M programs, the author recommends using an action research approach as espoused by scholars such as Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, (1985) and Gilmore, Krantz & Ramirez (1986).

The inclusion of all stakeholders; HR, Talent Managers, Learning and development, senior managers and succession candidates in the design of Succession Planning programs and soliciting their input regarding supporting processes and evaluation practices, would do much to deliver the open, systemic, systematic, whole company approach to Succession Planning and Management, as called for in the literature.

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Appendix A

Introduction to the Research Study

Research Study Title: Succession Planning in Industry

University: Dublin City University (DCU), School of Education Studies.

Principal Investigator: Dr Gerard McNamara. Telephone: 01 700 5886 or email gerry,mcnamara@dcu.ie

II. **Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require**

This project involves taking part in semi-structured interviews and or completion of a survey. These interviews will be audio taped, and seek to gather information on your experience of SP&M process in Inside Sales.com. Questions will be directed towards your thoughts on the current operation of the process and how you believe it could be improved to better match the needs of the organization and staff. It is estimated that these interviews will take no longer than 60 minutes to complete. Participants will be offered a copy of their interview transcripts for validation purposes.

III. **Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)** I do not anticipate any risk to participants as a result of involvement in this Research Study.

IV. **Benefits (direct or indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study**

The objective of this Research Study is to gain new knowledge that will enable the Human Resources/ Learning and development functions to develop new strategies that are more aligned and attuned to the organizational needs of the Inside Sales organisation. This Study may therefore be of benefit to you by providing you with the opportunity to contribute to the development of these polces so that you and other staff may benefit from improved developmental opportunities.

V. **Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of participants. Participant names will not be recorded, as all participants will be assigned a code. The taped interviews will be downloaded to a password controlled computer, and typed transcripts will be held within password controlled documents. Audio tapes and hard copies of transcripts will be held in a locked filing cabinet. Biographical details and mention of INSIDE SALES will be omitted in the final report to protect participant's identity. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

VI. **Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period**
Audio tapes will be destroyed on the successful completion of the Doctorate in Educational leadership..

VII. **Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

Involvement in this Research Study is voluntary. Invited participants relationship with INSIDE SALES will not be affected in any way should they decide not to take part. Participants who decide to take part may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin 9

Name: Inside Sales Vice President Brand Sales

Name Inside Sales Centres - Delivery Excellence Manager

Name Inside Sales, Human Resources Partner

Name Inside Sales Talent Manager

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I. **Research Study Title :** Succession Planning & Management in Industry

University: Dublin City University (DCU), School of Education Studies.

Principal Investigator: Dr Gerard McNamara. Telephone: 01 700 5886 or email
gerry,mcnamara@dcu.ie

II. **Clarification of the purpose of the research**

The aim of this research is to understand the current operation of Succession Planning and Management (SP&M) in this centre. In addition, through a combination of the latest research into SP&M, and Staff input make recommendation for further development of this process.

III. **Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement**

This project involves taking part in semi-structured interviews and or completion of a survey. These interviews will be audio taped, and seek to gather information on your experience of SP&M process in INSIDE SALES Inside Sales. Questions will be directed towards your thoughts on the current operation of the process and how you believe it could be improved to better match the needs of the organization and staff. It is estimated that these interviews will take no longer than 60 minutes to complete. Participants will be offered a copy of their interview transcripts for validation purposes.

Every attempt will be made not to interfere with normal business operations, as such interviews and or surveys will not be conducted at month or quarter end.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement

    Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided?

    Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

    Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?

    Yes/No

Are you aware that interviews will be audiotaped?

    Yes/No

IV. **Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

Involvement in this Research Study is voluntary .Invited participant's relationship with INSIDE SALES will not be affected in any way should they decide not to take part.

Participants who decide to take part may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of participants. Participant names will not be recorded, as all participants will be assigned a code. The taped interviews will be downloaded to a password controlled computer, and typed transcripts will be held within password controlled documents. Audio tapes and hard copies of transcripts will be held in a locked filing cabinet. If participants unwittingly make mention of other staff by name, such names will be substituted for a fictitious name in the final report.

VI. <u>Signature:</u>

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Appendix C

Semi Structured Interview Guide to establish the current state of Succession Planning and Management . (1st / 2nd line Managers)

In your organization, would you say that SP&M:

<u>Priority Assessment ?</u>

1. How would you describe the current state of succession management in your organisation?

   <u>Implementation ?</u>

2. Can you describe how succession planning and management is implemented in your organization?

   Selection criteria

   Documents

   Metrics

   Stakeholder communications

   <u>How?</u>

3. Can you discuss what kind of exposure succession candidates get to current leadership issues or challenges in your organization

4. How do succession candidates receive feedback in relation to their level of readiness to move to the next level.

   <u>Supporting Procedures / Programs ?</u>

5. What programs or procedures support succession planning and management?
   Eg.Managers incentivized to promote their best employees

   Promotion from within favoured as opposed to recruiting from outside the organization.

   <u>Change or Retain ?</u>

6. What if anything would you change about succession planning and management in your organization.

Appendix D

Wording for solicitation of research participants

<div align="right">

Name:
Organisation:
Department:
Title:

</div>

Dear X.

My name is Garrett Ryan European Learning Consultant for inside Sales reporting to NAME :
Title.:

I am currently completing a Doctorate in Educational Leadership with Dublin City University, as part of this course I am conducting a research study into the operation and future development of Inside Sales Succession Planning and Management program. I have received approval for to conduct this study from Dublin City University and NAME, Inside Sales Vice President**.**

I am inviting senior managers and across multiple disciplines in this centre to participate in this study. This involves a combination of (60 minute) semi-structured interviews and or survey. I have enclosed for your attention the Plain Language Statement, and an Informed Consent Form.

I confirm that I will not conduct interviews during month end or quarter end so as to minimise any disruption to normal business operations.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please contact me by email at ryangrth@ie.insidesales.com Jan 20th 2014. In the interim, I will be happy to answer any questions you might have by phone or if preferable I can arrange to meet with you.

Yours sincerely,

Garrett Ryan MSc BEng
Learning Consultant

Appendix E

POSITION REFERENCE GUIDE

FACTORS:	BAND 06 (Focuses on Individual/Team Objectives and Developing Professional Effectiveness)	BAND 07 (Focuses on Individual/Team/ Department Operational Objectives)	BAND 08 (Guides Functional Objectives or Technologies)	BAND 09 (Influences Functional Strategy)	BAND 10 (Leads Functional/Business Unit Strategies)
SKILLS: *Environment*	Professional knowledge related to incumbent's position, team, and department. Requires ability to absorb professional knowledge quickly and develop skills.	Professional knowledge related to incumbent's department or function.	Professional knowledge related to incumbent's function/business unit and it's processes.	Professional knowledge of function, business unit or country operations. Understands organisational resources, priorities, needs and policies.	Business unit, country, or international professional mastery related to operations, strategies, and objectives in leading edge or critical situations.
Communication/ Negotiation	Draws upon professional concepts to collaborate with others to carry out assigned duties.	Engaged as an independent professional. Ability to articulate and compare alternative approaches.	Advises other professionals. Effectively utilize group dynamics.	Guides other professionals.	Teamwork at the highest levels.
	Negotiation is required.	Negotiates with specified objectives.	Negotiates to define approaches and goals.	Adapt communications and approaches to conclude negotiations with various partners resulting in common agreements.	Plans and conducts complex negotiations reaching lasting agreements and commitments.
	Provides advice to management.				

FACTORS:	BAND 06 (Focuses on Individual/Team Objectives and Developing Professional Effectiveness)	BAND 07 (Focuses on Individual/Team/ Department Operational Objectives)	BAND 08 (Guides Functional Objectives or Technologies)	BAND 09 (Influences Functional Strategy)	BAND 10 (Leads Functional/Business Unit Strategies)
Problem Solving	Recognizes job-related problems involving multiple variables that may be related and/or unrelated.	Recognizes problems related to project objectives.	Recognizes complex problems related to functional objectives.	Analyze complex/new situations, anticipate potential problems and future trends, assess opportunities, impacts and risks. Develops and implements solutions.	Anticipates, creates and defines innovative and visionary concepts in a strategic environment.
	Analyzes causes using existing techniques or tools.	Applies creativity and judgment to professional, technical, or operational problems.	Applies creativity and judgment to developmental work on different projects within the business environment.		
	Prepares and recommends solution alternatives. Recommendations need not be final.	Independently generates solutions, based on analytical skills and business knowledge.			
	Challenges the validity of given procedures and processes with the intent to enhance and improve.		Analyzes situations and implement solutions, or develop new system elements, procedures or processes.		
	Develops resolution to problems of limited scope. Independently handles non-routine actions/problems.	Challenges the validity of given procedures and processes to enhance and improve or develop complementary adjustments/ solutions.			

FACTORS:	BAND 06 (Focuses on Individual/Team Objectives and Developing Professional Effectiveness)	BAND 07 (Focuses on Individual/Team/ Department Operational Objectives)	BAND 08 (Guides Functional Objectives or Technologies)	BAND 09 (Influences Functional Strategy)	BAND 10 (Leads Functional/Business Unit Strategies)
CONTRIBUTION / LEADERSHIP	Works on professional level projects; work is often reviewed for developmental purposes. Contributions are usually limited to assignment related activities.	Works on special projects, or leads small teams, or manages routine technical/operational activities or departments (national or international).	Provides ongoing technical/operational guidance to lead professional work teams, conducts special projects, or manages department(s) (national or international).	Leads multi-functional teams, or conducts special projects, or manages department(s).	Leads business unit, country, or international teams, conducts special projects, or manages functions or strategic departments.
	Understands the standard mission of the professional group and vision in own area of competence.	Understands departmental mission and vision.	Understands department/ functional mission and vision.	Has vision of functional or unit mission.	Has vision of overall strategies.
	May directly influence people in own project. Investigates and resolves issues on behalf of management.	Provides advice in technical/operational domain of specialization.	Utilizes expertise to directly influence people outside department or function. Sometimes no precedent exists.	Influences people and organisations, including executive management, when issues are complex/difficult and require considerable diplomacy. Recognized as an expert in their field. Often no precedent exists.	Recognized as an expert and leader by members of a field, related functions and multi-country organisations.
	Position may require coordination of activities of less experienced or less knowledgeable team members.	Generally controls own work priorities and methods requiring tradeoffs.	Defines and decides objectives within specified business concept or project and may have responsibility for tools and assigned resources.	Has considerable latitude in responsibilities to define and decide on tools, processes, priorities and resources following general business unit directives.	Develops and implements product, market, business, or technology strategies with executive review. Contributes to policy making.

POSITION REFERENCE GUIDE

FACTORS:	BAND 06	BAND 07	BAND 08	BAND 09	BAND 10
IMPACT ON BUSINESS/SCOPE	Accountable for individual or team results.	Accountable for individual, team, or department results, and for the impact of the results on functional activities.	Accountable for department results and for activities and/or projects involving multi-functional teams.	Accountable for projects or programs involving multi-functional, country-wide or regional teams.	Accountable for business unit, major country, or international projects or programs.
	May contribute by supporting activities that are subject to business measurements, impact customer satisfaction, or impact immediate costs or expenses.	Contributes by supporting activities that are subject to business measurements, impact customer satisfaction, or impact immediate costs or expenses. May have budgetary responsibility. Participates in overall departmental program planning.	Activities are subject to business measurements, impact customer satisfaction, and impact project costs or expenses. Regularly participates in overall functional program planning.	Activities are subject to business measurements, impact customer satisfaction, and impact functional, business unit, or country costs or expenses. Responsible for overall functional program success.	Responsible for committing multiple resources and achieving customer satisfaction, cost, expense, revenue and other business measurements of critical importance. Responsible for quality output/value add for highly visible products, services and future business development.
	Regularly demonstrates discretion and independent judgment in matters of significance	Regularly demonstrates discretion and independent judgment in matters of significance to	Regularly demonstrates discretion and independent judgment in matters of significance	Regularly demonstrates discretion and independent judgment in matters of significance	Regularly demonstrates discretion and independent judgment in matters of significance

POSITION REFERENCE GUIDE

Appendix F

SUCCESSION PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT CONCEPTUAL MODEL