



## Human Flourishing Through Succession Planning: An Owner, Successor, and Organizational Journey of Growth Through Coaching Initiatives

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### Abstract

Most small businesses in America fail, because when a person achieves a certain level of skill and proficiency in a trade or concept, they believe that talent and proficiency will transfer into a successful business. While this business owner proved to be an exception, he made up for his lack of business acumen and competencies by building trusting relationships with his clients. He was known for his resilience, quality workmanship, and ability to take on the most challenging projects others said could not be done. Enter the hurdles, hardships, and blessings of succession planning. In the case of this business enterprise, the motivators, leadership style and communication methods of the owner and successor do not align, creating a mismatch in the transition of power. Additionally, the owner lacks communication skills, the discipline to hold others accountable, and the knowledge to act as a mentor to the successor. This value misalignment between the owner and the successor and lack of an intentional succession plan has created a sticking point, bringing the organization's forward progression to a halt. This organizational case study serves as a guide to facilitate a triumphant succession transition that develops and nurtures life-long partnerships while establishing best practices in communication and leadership that honor not only the subcontractor industry and concrete profession, but also the employees, their families, and their communities, leaving behind a legacy for generations to come. It is through coaching that true human flourishing will carry the organization through the succession process.

*Keywords:* human flourishing, executive coaching, succession planning, competency gap

### Introduction

The transition from master craftsman to business owner was an arduous one. The owner's resiliency was on full display as he got a crash course in starting a small

business from the ground up with nothing but a pickup truck and a few men from his home garage. Through grit, determination, and the relentless pursuit of success, he refused to quit. With the spirit of an entrepreneur refusing to fail, he sacrificed everything necessary to become a successful business owner. With no formal business-related education, he learned every lesson imaginable the hard way, yet he persevered. Nineteen years later, he finds himself ready to focus on his family. Now, as a successful owner of multiple organizations, he is prepared to withdraw from business ownership's day-to-day, hands-on tasks.

Enter the hurdles, hardships, and blessings of succession planning. Research tells us that most small businesses in America fail because when a person achieves a certain level of skill and proficiency in a trade or concept, they believe that talent and proficiency will transfer into a successful business (Gerber, 1995). Unfortunately, studies have shown that most small business start-ups in the United States fail for many reasons, including, but not limited to, a lack of business acumen, practical leadership skills, and other deficient competencies (Gerber, 1995; Haltiwanger, 2022). While the owner proved an exception, he made up for his lack of business acumen and competencies by building trusting relationships with his clients. He was known for his resilience, quality workmanship, and ability to take on the most challenging projects others said could not be done.

While the owner has grown personally and professionally, stepping back from the business requires proficiency in many competencies that he has not yet focused on. While his growth has been an honor to watch, support, and facilitate, specific fundamental leadership and communication challenges are plaguing the succession process. A successor has been identified through organic means. Yet, the owner's ability to effectively communicate his expectations to his successor is causing significant hardship and exhausting frustration that continues to impact morale. Fundamentally, the owner is driven by and focuses on building relationships with those he comes into contact with, while his successor is task-oriented and manages with a more dictatorial style, versus the owner's influential approach through serving others.

Using psychological assessments, such as TTI Success Insights, leadership questionnaires, skills inventories, values assessments, 360 surveys, and others, the data validates the painful hurdles and hardships the entire organization feels from the disconnects in leadership and communication style in the transition from the owner to his successor. The blessings the owner and the organization long for will only come to fruition with bilateral coaching for the owner and his successor, as well as a team coach to bring it all together. This case study describes the desperate journey of a master craftsman-turned-successful entrepreneur who longs to enjoy raising his family while participating at a distance as his organizations continue to thrive.

This Midwest subcontractor (MS) is a single member limited liability corporation who established the organization from his residence in 2007. Collectively, with a group of five other craftsmen, he began his business as a master craftsman. He founded his organization with grit, hard work, dedication, determination, and the relentless pursuit of meeting his clients' needs while exceeding their expectations. As he expanded the organization, his success led to the birth of two subsidiaries: both MSs in the construction industry.

The owner has not limited his enterprise to the construction industry. With continued success, he established multiple rental and commercial real estate property entities to use as investment opportunities. He has taken his success through the pursuit of excellence and amassed an enterprise worthy of emulation, establishing himself as an industry-leading, community-minded contributor who has overcome adversity both personally and professionally. He and his staff take pride in wearing the company's logo that is well-earned by those it adorns. This MS has grown to be a highly competitive organization, leading the industry in the local and surrounding areas.

In the following case study, I will share the trials and tribulations of a successful organization's journey through the succession planning process. While the days remain long and burdensome, there is much to be said for the blessings of facilitating and witnessing human flourishing, even when the challenges seem unmanageable and overwhelmingly insurmountable.

Leaning into my Christian faith and lessons learned from my doctoral journey at Regent University, the relentless battle is being won, a transition of power is being successfully conducted, and my faith grows more profound as I enjoy the hardships and sleepless nights guided by God's patience, faith, and love for me and my entire organization. This case study serves as a reminder that, at times, the path God lays before us is not always guided by easy-to-understand directional signage. Frequently, the path is intentionally barely illuminated and without "turn here" neon lights.

Success on this journey has required a deeper level of faith than most have – a belief in what cannot be seen and cannot be explained. This experience has required soulful self-reflection and a piercing hope of what I intuitively believe is possible, even when the facts do not support common sense. Overwhelming faith in other human beings who likely do not share the same faith or vision is required. In pure servanthood to my stakeholders and employees, leaning on brilliant professors, subject matter experts, God, his Son, and the Holy Spirit, this case study makes sense of the illogical. In sharing this case study, I hope other professionals find comfort in the unknown, learn to appreciate that some hopeless endeavors are possible to achieve, and that this journey inspires a deeper level of love for others when facilitating the seemingly impossible through faith, love, and a servant's heart.

## Organization Overview

This MS serves the needs of clients in the local vicinity and surrounding states. The MS does not chase work, but instead chooses to tend to its repeat clients' needs. The MS specializes in concrete industrial projects. Tearing out, then pouring back inside industrial facilities is their specialty. It is exceptionally well diversified with its ability to take on any challenge that includes multiple scopes of work.

Their list of clients is extensive. An analysis of their repeat clients shows that they perform exceptional work and have established a reputation worthy of note. Risk-taking remains in the blood of the MS. Recently, the organization took on a substantial project for the Army Corps of Engineers, which included a multistory elevator shaft. The MS does not appear to be self-limiting but rather takes calculated risks to evolve as their clients' needs change.

The enterprise's mission is "to meet the industrial concrete and tear out/pour back needs of the local and surrounding area, because we love a challenge and take pride in honest work." Assessment results and other traditional appendices have been removed to honor the confidentiality of the organizations involved.

## Background

In 2016, the successor was hired by a subsidiary of MS. While the successor had no experience with this type of work, he showed great discipline and began to thrive. An organizational coach was called to assess the organization and felt the successor was a great asset. Approximately 18 months into the successor's time with the company, he transitioned into a new position as a project manager for MS. Without administrative experience, the successor entered the office setting and quickly became the go-to for the other office personnel and the owner. As time passed, the successor longed for more structure within the office team. Due to his ability to multitask and solve problems, the successor became the employee who relentlessly pursued solutions to ongoing challenges and became the one that others looked to for guidance. Strong in character and common sense, the successor thrived in task management, and the owner began to lean on him for daily management of employees and decision-making.

Years passed, and the successor grew to understand the MS's ways. In 2020, I joined the team to fill the role of office manager. The owner and the successor expressed specific concerns about removing the gray areas in decision-making and longed for the additional structure that would automate and alleviate some of their most common frustrations. I quickly realized that the most pressing needs were basic and simplistic. Eighteen months were spent generating updated human resource policies and many other essential means and methods that had not been formally documented. While

transitioning to a well-defined handbook was challenging, once implemented, there became a deep respect for the newfound boundaries, and most thrived within their respective roles. Starting the organization from his garage created a massive void in infrastructure, where a traditional start-up would likely begin with most of these processes already established.

Subsequent months were spent identifying administrative and field processes, job descriptions, and other significant procedures that were put in place to protect the employees, the organization, and our clients. Employees received well-defined lanes, an organizational chart was identified, and organizational values were reestablished to ensure they aligned with the company's core values. In 2022, the owner announced that he was ready to take a step back from the day-to-day tasks of ownership. With this step back came a flurry of challenges, miscommunications, and frustrations that began to wreak havoc on the organization.

## **Key Players**

### **Owner, Midwest Subcontractor**

Responsible for the overall success of the entire enterprise, which includes 12 limited liability companies. The MS and two other subsidiaries comprise the three most active organizations. The owner has transitioned from master craftsman to business owner and is looking to step back to a limited role, attending bi-weekly meetings and relinquishing the daily decision-making to those in key leadership roles.

### **Successor, Midwest Subcontractor**

The successor serves as leadership liaison between the owner and members of all organizations. His primary focus is the day-to-day operations of the MS. His immediate reports include project management personnel, shop/maintenance teams, and field superintendents. Secondary to MS is his supervision of the two other construction-related subsidiaries.

### **Administrator, Midwest Subcontractor**

In my role as the administrator, I serve as CFO and HRO across all organizations within the enterprise. My immediate reports are the three office managers representing the MS and two other construction-related subsidiaries. My other responsibilities include onboarding, participating in all safety-related incidents, and leading miscellaneous projects as determined by the owner. I work hand-in-hand with the organization's accountants, attorneys, and other subject matter experts the enterprise relies on for specialized needs.

## Problem Statement

The challenge is multifaceted. The successor's motivators, leadership style, and communication methods do not align with the owner's, creating a mismatch in the transition of power from the owner to the successor. The owner lacks communication skills, the discipline to hold others accountable, and the knowledge to act as a mentor to the successor. There is a value misalignment between the successor and the owner. No intentional succession plan has been created to assess the successor's ability to take on the role, but instead, he has been elevated to his current position by default.

The owner finds comfort in what he is familiar with and fears the unknown. Although he recognizes the hurdles facing the organization's succession planning and his exit strategy, the owner admits that he struggles with the "MS Bermuda Triangle" the organization is in with the leadership mismatch and the seemingly endless cycles that have continued for the past 18 months of an organizationally productive week, giving him faith and promise followed by two weeks of hardships and head-scratching moments. Furthermore, the organization and enterprise are beginning to experience the long-term effects of the incongruence between leadership style and competency gaps of both the owner and the successor, causing continual turnover and the loss of repeat clients.

## Organizational Goals

The problem impacts multiple organizational goals. The company was founded on and has continued to thrive through pandemics and other economic highs and lows because of repeat clients and the strong relationships the owner has built. To strengthen neglected and strained relationships, the organization requires a change in mindset, focusing on serving their clients and maintaining the connections to allow time to renew their commitments throughout their entire client base.

The organization's leadership wants to mitigate the incoming wayward traveling competition by saturating the market and solidifying the organizational ties as the go-to contractor of choice. The solution must include a heightened sense of brand recognition in the community through investing in and contributing to the betterment of residents, business owners, and others the organization serves. This should include showing appreciation to employees to renew and restore their faith and loyalty to the organization.

The organization's niche in the industrial sector must continue to grow through safety, teamwork, excellence, and passion—all staples of the organization's values. These traits, however, require the leadership's ability to influence the employees. This influence will only occur with strong and trusting relationships throughout the enterprise. Growing

the organization's industrial market sector must become a top priority. Ultimately, a heavy reliance is being placed on ownership to establish short-term, midrange, and long-term goals so that leadership can create a game plan on how the organization will achieve its goals.

The biggest challenge facing the enterprise is the lack of organizational goals. Recall that the owner began the company as a master craftsman without formal business experience. His initial efforts were all focused on survival, and goal setting was not a consideration, nor was there an understanding of its significance. While the organization has succeeded for 19 years, this is where the lack of business acumen, practical leadership skills, and other deficient competencies can no longer be overcome.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Nineteen years into successful business ownership of multiple organizations, the owner is ready to focus on his family and is prepared to withdraw from business ownership's day-to-day, hands-on tasks. He has worked diligently to ensure he has solidified trusted experts, employees, and a deep pool of repeat clients but has not initiated an intentional succession plan. Assumptions were made that the current operations manager could fill the role; however, this employee was elevated to his current position by default based on previous organizational circumstances.

#### **Ownership's Leadership Style, Strengths, and Areas for Opportunity**

The owner's primary leadership style is transformational; however, he exhibits an eclectic group of leadership behaviors encompassing many facets of several other leadership styles. Although his leadership behaviors are primarily based on his ability to influence others to accomplish above and beyond what they thought possible, his technical expertise, in conjunction with his task orientation, empowers those he leads to excel. In addition, his ability to self-regulate based on his strong moral values and ethics encourages followers to view him as authentic. Therefore, he can communicate candidly, which facilitates an honest and transparent relationship with his employees.

When assessing his specific behavioral attributes, it is apparent that the center of his attention is typically on goal accomplishment and exceeding expectations for his clients. He goes out of his way to make others feel comfortable around him, with one another, and in different situations. His tendency towards transformational leadership means he encourages creativity, acknowledges innovative suggestions, and has successfully crafted the organization's path. He inspires others as he engages with them, generating a connection that increases their motivation. He is highly charismatic, which produces a substantial following from those he comes into contact with.

He has successfully found balance with these leadership behaviors and continues strengthening bonds with existing relationships while developing new connections. This general review of his leadership style helps explain the basis for his personal and organizational success. His list of clients is extensive. His organizations do not appear to be self-limiting; instead, he takes calculated risks to evolve as his clients' needs evolve. His enterprise's efforts to continue long-standing client relationships are a testament to the success of his leadership style. Between 2022 and 2024, the owner completed four unique leadership questionnaires, each focusing on a specific facet of his leadership style.

### **Authentic Leadership Questionnaire**

The Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) was established in 2008 by a group of scholars led by Fred Walumbwa, et al. The questionnaire aims to determine how authentic and bona fide one's leadership skills are and whether one's leadership behaviors are perceived as trustworthy. The owner's ALQ assessment showed he has a high internalized moral perspective and high relational transparency. He has a strong understanding of his moral standards and does not easily allow others to persuade him. He consistently behaves in a manner that aligns with his beliefs and morals. This creates the perception that he is authentic and worthy of his followers' attention. He presents himself genuinely to others, and they perceive his transparent behavior as authentic. He often expresses his core feelings and motivations with others healthily. He reveals both his positive and negative attributes without filtering them. He communicates openly and is very real in his relationship with others.

### **Leadership Behavior Questionnaire**

R. M. Stogdill established the Leadership Behavior Questionnaire (LBQ) in 1963 to determine whether leadership behavior and conduct aligned more with a task-focused or relationship-focused approach. Task-focused behaviors tend to center attention on goal achievement, while a relationship-focused approach prioritizes relationships with followers. The owner's LBQ assessment tells us he has a well-balanced focus on task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors, although he does slightly prefer task orientation. He successfully utilizes both approaches in his leadership style. He can shift dynamically between the task and the relationship, quickly changing focus as the situation demands. When he comes into a situation where his followers need guidance and significant direction, he is able to give precise instructions to achieve the goal at hand. Likewise, he is able to approach another person in need of guidance and determine if the needs are relational, then effectively redirect the person with a relational touch.



## Skills Inventory

Robert Katz established the Skills Inventory (SI) in 1955. In this three-skilled perspective, this assessment focuses on three unique skills that emphasize the leader's capabilities, comprehension, and technical skills to determine one's ability to be an effective leader. The owner's SI assessment expresses a very high aptitude for his general technical knowledge in concrete and construction. The evaluation does show areas of opportunity with both his human and conceptual skills. He is highly proficient and should be considered a subject matter expert. He holds extensive knowledge regarding tooling, hands-on techniques, processes, and products.

An opportunity that arose from the owner's SI findings shows he has substantial room for development in both conceptual and people skills. He finds it difficult to work with others when he is required to work as part of a team to achieve a common goal. He is not sensitive to the needs of others, nor does he consider their needs in his decision-making. There may be times when he finds it difficult to get along with others. His ability to manage ideas and concepts should be a focus for future improvement. Working with abstract ideas and hypotheticals, primarily mental work, can be very challenging.

## Transformational Leadership Inventory

The Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI) questionnaire intends to determine one's preferred leadership style. It establishes whether he leads by transforming his followers using influence or focusing more on one-on-one transactional exchanges with them. This leadership inventory was created in 1990 (Podsakoff, et al.).

The owner's TLI questionnaire findings express that he is more of a transformational leader than a transactional one. He does, however, show transactional tendencies at a much lower rate than his transformational behavior. The owner is a highly charismatic man, and this unique gift allows him to achieve extraordinary things. His behavior is enhanced with this charismatic gift that impacts his followers incredibly and is motivational. He has a strong desire to influence others. He is confident and has a solid foundation, allowing others to see him as a robust role model. He communicates high expectations that his followers often adopt and consistently exhibits confidence in his followers' abilities to meet his expectations.

## Successor's Leadership Style, Strengths, and Areas for Opportunity

Based on a 360-Degree Feedback Assessment, a summary of the main categories reflects several findings worth mentioning. While the successor's self-ratings were high in problem-solving and leadership skills, his direct reports perceived those skills with a much less favorable rating. Alternatively, the successor rated his interpersonal skills

much less favorably than did his direct reports. The successor's self-rating for his personal qualities, such as integrity and humility, were in direct alignment with his direct reports. It is clear that he sees a need for growth and improvement in building and nurturing relationships with those he leads, while a blind spot exists in the way the successor's direct reports perceive his abilities to solve problems. These findings are reinforced through the collective comments provided by his raters: "The successor is a great leader, planner and communicator. If there was one thing he can work on it is how he delivers those ideas." "He is young and has a ton of potential." "The successor's strengths are confidence, ability to help others, and thoroughness."

- **Personal Qualities:** The successor's self-ratings for each competency represented in this section reflect relative ratings to his direct reports. The most significant area for improvement is associated with a willingness to admit mistakes and learn from others. The successor is service oriented and performs with integrity, yet his raters find self-awareness as an area for growth.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** The successor's direct reports agree that he facilitates discussions effectively and encourages participation. Furthermore, the successor is seen as an effective communicator and listener. He is also perceived as successful in managing conflict and being sensitive to diverse cultures and viewpoints. The successor rated himself as lacking skills associated with conflict management, while his direct reports gave that competency the highest score of the entire grouping.
- **Problem Solving:** While the successor perceives his problem-solving skills as the highest of all competencies, his direct reports are not in agreement. They perceive his problem-solving skills as 34% (on average) lower than the successor rates himself. While the successor's systems thinking is viewed as a strength, his decision-making, ability to understand the depth and extent of the problem, and ability to drive change are all seen as areas of opportunity by his direct reports. A unique finding in the problem-solving category shows that his supervisor greatly appreciates the successor's ability to make decisions and commitment to driving change.
- **Leadership Skills:** While the successor's direct reports and supervisor align with his personal rating for consensus building and execution, a stark contrast exists between his direct reports and himself based on feedback associated with his ability to inspire a shared vision and develop a strategic plan to achieve specific goals.
  - "The successor is a hard worker and knows how to get things done - FACT"
  - "When planning or creating change there are times that a quick fix is made, the immediate problem is solved, but they feel unfinished at times, creating a different challenge or confusion."

While the successor rates his most significant areas for opportunity in practicing humility and conflict management, his direct reports only agree on the humility rating. Alternatively, while the successor rates himself low on his ability to manage conflict, his direct reports identify conflict management as one of his strong suits. The successor's supervisor shares his enthusiasm for the ability to make decisions and strives for continual improvement. The successor's supervisor perceives areas for improvement with strategic planning and conflict management.

The successor participated in a TTI Success Insights Assessment. The successor is goal oriented and driven by results. He is the team member who will try to keep others on task. Many people see him as a self-starter dedicated to achieving results. He needs to learn to relax and pace himself. He may expend too much energy trying to control himself and others. He has the ability to come up with new ideas and follow them through to completion. The successor is deadline conscious and becomes irritated if deadlines are delayed or missed. He likes people but can be seen occasionally as cold and blunt. He may have his mind on project results and sometimes may not take the time to be empathetic toward others. He establishes many standards for himself and others. His high ego strength demands that his standards will be met. He is a self-starter who likes new projects and is most comfortable when involved with a wide scope of activities. The successor likes to be forceful and direct when dealing with others. His desire for results is readily apparent to the people he works with. He is a creative person and uses this creativity to solve problems.

The successor likes setting the pace in developing systems to achieve results. He refrains from getting emotionally involved in decision-making. This allows him to make objective decisions. He likes the new and the unusual. He prefers to discover his solutions to problems. He sometimes gets so involved in a project that he takes charge. The successor has the unique ability to tackle tough problems and follow them through to a satisfactory conclusion. He should realize that, at times, he needs to think a project through, beginning to end, before starting the project. He can be direct in his approach to discovering the facts and data. He maintains his focus on results and is logical, incisive, and critical in his problem-solving activities.

The successor is skilled at asking informed questions and extracting information, but for some people, he may need to phrase his questions more tactfully. Sometimes he can become so involved with his work that he appears cool and aloof to others. He may lack the patience to listen and communicate with slower-acting people. He does not seek out conflict but will confront those who stand between him and success. He likes people who give him options, as compared to their opinions. The options may help him make decisions, and he values his own opinion over that of others. He is not influenced by people who are overly enthusiastic. He could improve his communication with others by being more flexible and showing a sincere interest in what they are saying. He may

benefit from exhibiting more patience and asking questions to ensure that others understand what he has said.

Based on a combination of assessments, the successor shows a preference for the following communication methods:

- Provide systems to follow
- Place goals and projects in writing with specific deadlines
- Specificity is key, so leave nothing to interpretation
- Be precise and clear
- Motivate using objectives and results
- Prefers a supervisor who makes quick decisions

Over the past 18 months, multiple challenges have surfaced. The successor's values, motivators, leadership style, and communication methods do not align with the owner's, creating a mismatch in the transition of power from the owner to the successor. The owner lacks communication skills and the discipline to hold others accountable. Additionally, he is unable to act as a mentor to the successor to ensure a smooth transition during the succession process. Furthermore, the organization and enterprise are beginning to experience the long-term effects of the incongruence between the owner and the successor's leadership styles and competency gaps.

The successor has many strengths and unlimited potential. His willingness to modify his behavior and thought processes to improve his leadership and communication skills is admirable. He is humble in one-on-one situations and can adjust to changes if they yield tangible results. The most significant challenge for the successor appears to be his inability to be consistent with his approaches. His work environment makes consistency challenging due to the constant onslaught of questions, alerts, and disruptions.

### **Possible Solutions**

There are several possible solutions. While many of them will likely contribute to improving the problem, it is plausible that the most successful solution will include a combination of the suggested options and may include some considerations not listed. Possible solutions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Ownership may sell (whole or in part) the enterprise
- Terminate the successor and strategically replace with a successor who has appropriate competencies
- Relocate the successor to a position that is well suited based on his skill set
- Hire executive coaches for both the successor and the owner
- Hire a consultant to facilitate the goal-setting process

- Hire a team coach for the combined leadership team
- Take no action currently

## Recommendations

In consideration of faith in the things we cannot see, the good we know exists inside us all, and our love for one another, the recommended solution should be a combination of nurturing our talents, supplementing our weaknesses with others' strengths, and growing our faith in our clients and employees. For this reason, my recommendations include the following:

- Hire two executive coaches to work with the owner and the successor to focus on enhancing their communication skills and improving areas of opportunity in leadership competencies
- Hire one team coach to facilitate the collective group's effectiveness
- Begin the strategic search for a consultant to facilitate the goal-setting process and evaluate the enterprise's preferred organizational culture and values

These recommendations should be considered due to the urgency and opportunity at this pivotal time when the enterprise is at one of its lowest points since inception. We are frequently more open to suggestions and change when we are most vulnerable and have nothing to lose. The humility is palpable, and while there is recognition that change is required, the data continues to show a level of urgency that the enterprise readily feels.

While firing the successor or selling the company appears to be the quickest path to change, there remains a deep level of respect for one another and the loyalty that each has after years of service within the enterprise that makes those options less palatable and the very nemesis of what we, the enterprise's leadership, are trying to accomplish. The employees are not just employees. They have become part of our lives and deserve the best we can give them. We cry together, get angry together, and love one another even when we act unlovable; these colleagues are anything but the typical employees. They, too, deserve to feel loved, cared for, and served so they can go home each night to serve their families, their communities, churches, and friends. Selling out or firing an employee would be a last resort.

Both the owner and the successor have shown immense growth in the past 18 months. While neither has been able to solve the challenges at hand, both have experienced intentional growth and improved the enterprise's state. Both acknowledge their professional shortcomings and areas of opportunity, which shows tremendous humility. A mutual willingness to continue the momentum of growth and development makes this an ideal time for human flourishing. My doctoral journey in strategic

leadership and personal and professional life experiences, combined with my Christian faith, creates a tremendous opportunity for me to act as an internal coach, as described by Hunt and Weintraub (2004) in *The Coaching Organization: A Strategy for Developing Leaders*. There are inherent limitations to acting as an internal coach, which emphasize the need for external executive and team coaches.

## Plan

This plan takes time. Not days, weeks, or even a month or two. This plan requires a multi-phased approach, assuming the parties are willing to participate as readily as I hope. While bringing out the best in each other and the enterprise requires diligent effort and extreme awareness, there will be hesitation, pushbacks, and those unwilling to put in the time or effort. Those individuals will likely slow the process, yet that is to be expected. Change is difficult, at the least. Personal reflection and intentional interpersonal change are even more challenging to achieve.

Coaching helps others improve their performance and become their very best selves. The very core of coaching is genuine, unconditional listening, and from that comes a relationship. A coach works to build trust through supportive, strategic measures that facilitate the necessary changes to enhance leadership behaviors and should not be mistaken for solving problems. A coach works alongside the coachee to identify the root causes of the challenges, suggest options that maximize the coachee's strengths, and facilitate lifelong transformational behaviors. The coaching process is conversational and focuses uniquely on the content at hand. A coach's goal is to encourage a relationship with the coachee that includes a high-commitment, professional, growth-oriented focus with clear written goals and expectations.

Coaching increases an enterprise's value by accelerating personnel development. Furthermore, as the coach/coachee relationship deepens, the value becomes evident as the coachee adds skills to their day-to-day interactions, creating more efficient and effective leadership (Anderson & Anderson, 2005). With many tools at their disposal, a coach may select any number of tools to facilitate a coachee's development.

During an interview discussing team coaching and its importance, Dr. Kelly Whelan highlighted one of the most significant differences between a team coach and an individual coach (Bocarnea et al., 2023). Whelan identified a challenge that all team coaches face; they must be able to immediately coach in the moment. Individual coaching allows a coach to return to a situation after reflection, whereas a team coach is expected to intercede effectively and immediately on the spot. During the 2023 Regent University Research Roundtable, participants identified individual coaching as a one-on-one experience where the client directs each facet of the coaching engagement, and

the process is highly individualized, whereas team coaching requires multiple coaches and focuses on a shared approach and objective (Bocarnea et al., 2023).

Like many professions, the coaching industry offers opportunities for its professionals to achieve certification, which shows a higher level of standards and practices that can enhance the experience a coachee or organization may have due to the accreditation process. The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), the International Coaching Federation (ICF), and the Board-Certified Coach (BCC) are all certifying organizations that have enhanced the coaching profession through their respective accreditation process.

A consultant can help the enterprise modify its culture without compromising its ethics or values. Cameron and Quinn (2011) encourage us to pay close attention to ensuring consensus throughout the organization. As we work with a consultant to implement change, it is fruitless without employee buy-in and overall agreement about what cultural aspects will remain unchanged, which will be added, and which will be removed (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Weiss (2011) states the fundamental purpose for consultants is to enhance the position of the client, leaving them in better condition once the goals are achieved. As such, the organization needs a consultant to establish strong relationships built on trust. The organization's needs are unique, and so are the methods a consultant can use.

Consultants must act ethically, recognize that someone is always watching, and extend enormous energy to the organization. The power a consultant wields requires trust built on the vulnerabilities inherent in human nature; hence, a consultant must constantly be ethical and uphold the values of the organization. A consultant must be mindful of each interaction, intentional about their word choice, and honor the organization's employees and beliefs. Northouse (2013) reminds us that situational context is intertwined with inclusivity. The organization's leadership must learn to focus on creating an atmosphere that heightens awareness of unique differences, values, and beliefs to harness the creativity and innovation that arise in challenging situations (Northouse, 2013). A consultant must consider each situation and the context in which it is occurring to facilitate organizational goals.

- **Phase I:** Identify two executive coaches and one team coach. Begin sessions as soon as possible with the successor and the owner to gain a clear understanding of the enterprise's needs and help establish the coaching goals. Identify a team coach to begin interviewing and working with team members to establish effective communication and expectations of the team. Have all coaches establish a suggested timeline and strategize on focus and next steps.

- **Phase II:** As coaching sessions begin, a consultant should be selected. The consultant should have extensive experience in problem-solving facilitation and knowledge of the construction industry.
- **Phase III:** While the team and executive coaching continue, the consultant should begin using whatever means and methods, such as organizational assessments, etc., to determine how he/she can best facilitate the brainstorming, conversations, and required next steps to establish a plan regarding the goal-setting process and evaluate the enterprise's preferred organizational culture and values.
- **Phase IV:** Executive and team coaching should continue as the consultant's suggestions are finalized and implementation occurs. A timeline should be established for the consultant's periodic check-in and to ensure the over-arching progress is successful. Continuing the executive and team coaching will be paramount until the enterprise's effectiveness becomes such that additional internal coaches are identified and there is stability throughout the enterprise.

## Conclusion

With the spirit of an entrepreneur refusing to fail, the owner sacrificed everything necessary to become a successful business owner. With no formal business-related education, the owner learned every lesson imaginable the hard way, yet he persevered. Nineteen years later, he finds himself ready to focus on his family. Now, as a successful owner of multiple organizations, he is prepared to withdraw from business ownership's day-to-day, hands-on tasks.

Using psychological assessments such as TTI Success Insights, leadership questionnaires, skills inventories, values assessments, 360 surveys, and others, the data validates the painful hurdles and hardships the entire enterprise feels from the disconnects in leadership and communication style in the transition from the owner to the successor. Succession planning is one of the most difficult challenges an organization can face. When multiple key employees share a gap in leadership and business competencies, the difficulty in a successful transition becomes nearly impossible without outside expertise.

Coaching and consultants help others become their very best selves and perform better. As such, any tool that adds value towards accomplishing those fundamental goals should be considered. Both coaching and leadership require core competencies. Some of these appear to overlap, while others do not. Depending on the audience, a leader may deploy many leadership styles to achieve the organization's overall goals. One striking similarity between a coach and a leader is the opportunity to influence through whichever means their followers or coachees need to be successful. Coaches and leaders alike are more likely to achieve successful outcomes by developing relationships with



their coachee/followers to the extent they comprehend what drives the individual to perform at a higher level.

Through my research, the most influential coaches have all the qualities of a successful leader but have additional skills, such as a deep understanding of their core values, worldview, and powerful listening abilities that allow them to be in the moment and ask significant questions that lead to the coachee's self-efficacy, ultimately improving their quality of life through harnessing the potential that lies within. ICF competencies dictate that a coach empowers the client/coach to become their self-coach through the use of many applications, processes, approaches, and other applicable means to achieve human growth.

This organizational case study serves as a guide to facilitate a triumphant succession transition that develops and nurtures life-long partnerships while establishing best practices in communication and leadership that honor not only the subcontractor industry and concrete profession, but also the employees, their families, and their communities, leaving behind a legacy for generations to come. Adding a consultant to the process ensures the organizational values and culture are in alignment with the goals being set.

The challenge at hand is multifaceted. The disconnect and misalignment in leadership style, motivators, and values between the owner and the successor have wreaked havoc and do not allow the owner to proceed with the original succession plan. The owner and the successor lack the competencies to help realign the enterprise. With identified root causes and a multi-phased approach laid out, the owner has chosen to move forward as suggested.

The excitement is palpable, and many are thrilled at the thought of flourishing through this process in lieu of the alternatives. The sound guidance of third-party certified professionals who specialize in their fields will allow day-to-day tasks to continue while growth and development occur in the background. At the same time, small modifications will begin to enhance organizational culture so a mindset shift can occur across the enterprise. Industry and institutional knowledge are invaluable, and with guided professionals coming alongside leadership, the enterprise will persevere. With the same diligence, grit, and determination on which the owner built this enterprise, the employees will flourish and enhance the organization in a way that makes it the most sought-after subcontractor in the industry for generations to come.

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### **About the Author**

Brandi Humphries has worked in human resources for more than 20 years. She is a Senior Certified Professional through the Society for Human Resource Management. Dr. Humphries has a passion for serving those she encounters through empowering

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