



What is Workforce Planning?

6 Strategic Steps for Success

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In many regions of the world, labor markets are under pressure. To address this, strategic workforce planning is necessary. This process evaluates a company's current staffing levels and anticipates future needs, impacting recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, and turnover policies. It also impacts learning and development programs. Workforce planning is ultimately about fulfilling the company's strategic goals while addressing its needs at a tactical level. It requires close collaboration between HR managers and other business units. Here are six strategic steps for successful workforce planning:

ONE: Define Company Competencies

Successful organizations have a solid plan of action for sustaining both their current business model as well as plans for future growth. A first-step element should be to clearly define your organization's competencies. This means understanding what skills staff members have, their levels of expertise and whether these skills align with company goals. Defining current company competencies and what competencies you aim to grow in the long-term is an activity that can help align upper management and clarify your goals as an organization.

The ease of defining company competencies really depends on the size of your organization and whether you've been tracking employee skills up until this point. If you're starting from scratch, it's going to take some time to sit down with managers and plan out the best way for collecting this data.



TWO: Identify Skill Gaps

After defining your company's competencies, or what competencies you would like to acquire in the near future, it's important to understand what skills your organization is lacking overall. If you want to be known as industry experts in your field, your employees need the skill sets and proficiencies to back up that claim.

Assessments are one useful tool for identifying skills in your organization, and even more critically, skill gaps. Once you know exactly where the most important skill gaps lie, you can make informed decisions about how to address them: either by training your existing staff to improve the necessary skills, or by hiring new staff who have the skills that your organization needs most.

There are different types of assessments. Which kind you should administer really depends on the structure of your company and the data about competencies you've already collected.

THREE: Collect Data and Analyze

If your organization doesn't already use some type of skills analysis to define attainable company goals, there is little chance for efficient growth. In order to begin activities that prepare staff to meet company goals effectively, managers and other leaders need the knowledge and tools to keep everyone on track. It's important to have an ongoing record of each employee's current skill set, continued learning activities and progress in order to analyze the effectiveness of continued learning activities.

FOUR: Align Training with Corporate Goals

Once you have clear data about the skills of your workforce and the skill gaps that exist relative to your company goals, you can create a plan for training and continued learning initiatives that makes sense. In order to grow your organization's core competencies, you'll need a successful competency-based training program. There are several ways to bring staff up-to-date on skills, but it's important to choose a learning structure that is sustainable for the various types of employees within your organization.

Most employees work full-time, have families and other responsibilities. Many times, in-person courses or other types of learning environments that may work for someone like a college student are simply out of the question for staff members. One of the most logical and easy ways for employees to learn new skills is by implementing an e-learning platform.

With a competency-based learning system, staff can learn at their own pace and meet realistic goals. An online learning platform that is accessible from any device is a flexible option that will provide the best user experience possible. This alternative to traditional learning will keep employees motivated to learn and progress.

FIVE: Plan for Retirement and Succession

An important piece of workforce planning is anticipating promotions and departures. Keeping the right people and the top talent is a huge factor in an organization's success. It's important to sit down with key staff who exhibit [leadership skills](#) and talk with them frequently about their future with the company.



Depending on their job type, staff are more likely to work harder and more efficiently toward company goals when:

- They feel like they can expect a raise in the near future.
- They feel like they're on track to be promoted.
- They are given added responsibilities or a team to manage.

In addition to locking in top talent, it's also important to plan for new hires to fill skills gaps and to replace the positions of those who are promoted.

SIX: Develop a Customized Strategy

With these strategic workforce planning best practices in mind, you now have a framework for success. However, each organization is different. Having a model to start with is important but you should really take elements of these best practices, find out what works for your company, and make it your own. Strategic workforce planning is an ongoing, multifaceted process that will need to be regularly tweaked as changes are made within your organization. Use these guidelines as a blueprint for your own strategic workforce plan.

About Avilar

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Avilar consultants are recognized as industry thought leaders and have decades of experience in implementation and analysis. Let Avilar help you transform your organization from ordinary to extraordinary.

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