

Succession Candidate Transition

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER GUIDE



Training your successor to step into your role can seem like a daunting task. The purpose of this guide is to provide you with a framework to systematically prepare for this transition. This guide should be used in combination with the corresponding **Knowledge Transfer Template**.

What is knowledge transfer?

An important part of the transition period is passing along the knowledge that you have accumulated throughout your tenure. This can include knowledge about the responsibilities, processes, and day-to-day operations of the position. It may also include sharing important contacts or making introductions to critical stakeholders. You will want to consider anything that can make the transition as smooth as possible for all parties involved.

Why is it important?

The process of transferring knowledge is critical to adding structure to your successor's onboarding, and to maintaining business continuity. It can help ensure that valuable information is not lost after your departure, thereby supporting the long-term stability of the organization.

types of knowledge



When preparing your successor, it's important to consider different types of knowledge. This includes both explicit and tacit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is what people typically consider when it comes time to prepare a successor. It encompasses the concrete knowledge about your position that is often formally documented and accessible to others. An example of explicit knowledge is passing down details about the status of current projects.

Tacit knowledge encompasses the intuitive knowledge or “know how” that you’ve accumulated. Often, tacit knowledge is not formally documented. However, sharing this information with your successor can be immensely helpful to the transition process. For example, knowing which clients prefer to be contacted by telephone rather than by email.

note

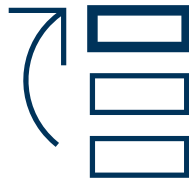
Foundational leadership skills that are central to your organization’s mission, vision, and values will also be important for your successor to develop. These skills will be the focus of SIGMA’s **Successor Coaching Program**.

transition process overview



Step 1

**Organize Your
Duties**



Step 2

**Prioritize and
Document
Specific Tasks**



Step 3

**Record Tacit
Knowledge**



Step 4

**Identify
Important
Contacts**



step 1: organize your duties

To begin the process, you will need to create a comprehensive list of your job duties and tasks. Each row in the **Knowledge Transfer Template** should correspond to a different duty.

- First, consider your **day-to-day activities**
 - What tasks do you complete each week? What accumulates while you are away?
 - When colleagues reach out for your assistance, what questions do they have?
- Next, identify activities that are **less frequent but are still important**
 - Consider activities you complete monthly, quarterly, biannually, or annually
- Last, include any activities that might **not be a formal requirement of your role**, but that you have taken on over your tenure
 - For example, organizing philanthropic initiatives

building on current documentation

If you have an up-to-date job description for your role, you can consult this document to support this step. Check with HR if you are unsure where to locate the most recent version.



step 1: organize your duties

Once you have finished identifying relevant tasks and duties, complete the remaining columns in **Step 1: Organize Your Duties** of the **Knowledge Transfer Template**.

You will need to include information such as:

- The larger **project or area** the task is associated with
 - Indicate which duties are housed within larger projects or areas
- Associated **stakeholders**
 - Who does the task serve? Who do you collaborate with? Who leads the project?
- The **resources** that are available related to the task
 - Is there a centralized location to find templates, past reports, etc.?
- Whether the task covers **explicit** or **tacit** knowledge

unsure whether the task is explicit or tacit?

To help determine the type of task, ask yourself: *If someone were to ask me what I do for work, would I talk about this task? Would the task likely be included in a formal description of my role?* If the answer to either is yes, it likely encompasses explicit knowledge.



step 2: prioritize and document explicit tasks

Once you have organized your duties, you can next prioritize which of these should be transitioned to your successor first. Beginning with your explicit duties, rate the priority of each using the following criteria. Record your ratings under **Step 2: Prioritize and Document Explicit Tasks** and note the overall priority score for each duty.

	Importance of Task	Availability of Knowledge	Frequency of Task
1 =	Not very important for maintaining operations	This task is common shared knowledge	I rarely complete this task
2 =	Somewhat important for maintaining operations	A few people know how to do this task	I sometimes complete this task
3 =	Critical for maintaining operations	No one, or one other person knows how to do this task	I frequently complete this task

Priority Score =
Importance + Availability + Frequency



step 2: prioritize and document explicit tasks

Priority scores can be used to determine which tasks to teach your successor first. Those tasks with higher scores should be considered higher priority. These are the duties for which you should prepare documentation first.

7 to 9 =

High

Before you leave, ensure these tasks have been sufficiently documented. If there will be a period of overlap between you and your successor, prioritize training/shadowing on these tasks.

4 to 6 =

Moderate

Once high priority tasks have been documented, proceed with providing this information for moderate priority tasks. These may be more amenable to written documentation and instruction.

3 =

Low

Any remaining time you have available prior to your departure can be spent adding details to these lower priority tasks.

Make note of the type of documentation that will accompany each duty and how knowledge for the task will be transferred. You will then need to prepare this documentation and ensure it is accessible to your successor. [Appendix A](#) contains information on different ways to transfer knowledge and when to use each method.



step 3: record tacit knowledge

With explicit knowledge thoroughly reviewed and documented, it is next time to transfer critical tacit knowledge to your successor.

- Add tacit knowledge details **to each task / duty**
 - Use the column **Step 3: Record Tacit Knowledge** to write any notes containing important information that will assist your successor. For example, if you order supplies from a particular vendor (explicit knowledge), you may want to note how quickly some vendors respond to requests (tacit knowledge).
- Include **generally useful tacit knowledge** to add context to your position
 - Consider any additional information that may be useful for your successor, even if it is not connected to a specific task. For instance, you might include observations about your team culture that can help acclimate your successor more quickly.
- Consider which **competencies** will be most important for your successor
 - It can be helpful to include the types of skills or qualities your successor may need to rely on to perform effectively in the role. For instance, your successor might need a strong Client/Customer Focus when working with difficult clients.



step 4: identify important contacts

The final step of the **Knowledge Transfer Template** is taking time to ensure your successor has access to each of the important contacts and relationships that you have cultivated throughout your tenure. This information can be captured on the **Step 4** tab of the template.

- Record **specific information** for important contacts
 - Be sure to include external contacts such as clients, customers, vendors, and network connections
- Include a brief description of your **history / background** with the individual
 - This can provide your successor with important details that will allow them to more easily continue the relationship with your contacts
- Identify how your successor should be **introduced to each contact**
 - Some contacts may require a face-to-face introduction, while for others a simple phone call or email may suffice. Note which introductions should happen first so you can complete these before your departure.

TIPS & STRATEGIES

supporting your successor

supporting your successor



Each succession transition process is unique. However, there are generally three conditions under which a transition occurs. The methods and techniques of knowledge transfer you choose will depend on your particular situation. Below we present some general recommendations for each.

Overlap with Successor

There is a period of time in which you and your successor will be working together in the role

- Prioritize job shadowing and short-term assignments
- Regularly debrief with your successor so they can ask questions as they learn
- Introduce successor to key stakeholders before you leave

Post-Departure Availability

Your successor will begin after your departure, but you are available to answer questions

- Prioritize documentation of critical tasks
- Schedule a meeting to answer questions after 30 and 60 days in the role
- Identify a mentor who can support your successor

No Overlap with Successor

Your successor will begin after your departure and you will not be available to answer questions.

- Clear and thorough documentation is critical
- Carefully consider which formats are most effective for different types of tasks
- Identify a mentor who can support your successor



After completing the **Knowledge Transfer Template** you will need to put this plan into action, creating relevant documentation and setting your successor up for success.

Here are some next steps to get you started:

- **Create knowledge transfer resources** for your successor
 - Ensure that if your organization does not already have instructional resources to teach your successor how to complete your tasks, that you make necessary written, audio, and video guides
- **Schedule knowledge transfer experiences** as needed
 - Depending on the amount of overlap with your successor, you can plan job shadowing events or organize short-term assignments for them. If you have less or no overlap with them, set up mentorship contacts and informational interview meetings.
- **Share the completed Knowledge Transfer Template** with your successor
 - This will allow them to keep track of their learning progress throughout the transition process



Last, the following checklist can help ensure you've taken the necessary steps to document critical knowledge that you have accumulated during your tenure in your position. This can help support a smooth transition for your successor.

- ☐ compile a list of your key responsibilities and duties
- ☐ record important details for each duty
- ☐ rate the priority of each duty
- ☐ create documentation/notes for duties, beginning with those of high priority
- ☐ record helpful tacit knowledge
- ☐ create a contact sheet for your successor
- ☐ carry out relevant knowledge transfer tasks (e.g., job shadowing)



Have questions or need help completing the succession knowledge transfer template? Contact us today.

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APPENDIX A

knowledge transfer methods



common ways to transfer knowledge

Method	What It Is	When to Use It
Job Shadowing	Your successor observes you complete your work and passively participates in meetings, calls, and tasks	When you want to transfer knowledge about multiple tasks at once, or tasks that may be linked in succession
Short-Term Assignments	These are temporary assignments you can give your successor to complete so they can practice new job skills	When you are still with the company and can monitor their progress on the assignment
Mentoring	Assigning one employee to help your successor with any general questions about their role	When you have left the company and the successor has questions about a variety of topics
Informational Interview	Your successor has a one-on-one meeting with an experienced employee about a task where they can ask questions	When you have left the company and the successor has questions about a specific task or project



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