

Strategic Succession Planning: The Business Transfiguration Driver During Crisis Management Periods

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ABSTRACT

As the modern business world is constantly evolving to exhibit changes, introducing disruptive crises and turbulences, succession planning becomes essential for creating a pool of future innovative business leaders that bolster the business's seamless transfiguration and evolution from one stage of disruptive crisis management periods to the other. Unfortunately, questions on how businesses can accomplish that are saddled by gaps in most studies that do not examine the linkage between successful implementation of succession plans and improved crisis management. It is such a question that motivates the use of an integrative review in this study to evaluate how most successful multinational business corporations handle their leadership succession planning, as well as how such succession plans have been instrumental in improving effective response to crisis situations. Findings revealed that most multinational business corporations are strategic succession planners that invest enormously in the development and nurturing of their future business leaders. In that process, carefully planned and executed succession planning is essential for influencing the evolution and transition of legendary historical businesses from one disruptive season to the other. Behind the adopted innovative strategies churning out an array of new products that bolster a firm's adaptation to the evolving new trends is the committed, internally developed and groomed business leaders. During crisis situations, it is these leaders, and not the externally recruited CEOs, who are instrumental in reading the situation and applying the accurate strategies that aid the transfiguration of the business from one century to the other. In effect, successful implementation of succession plans creates a pool of competent future business leaders who emerge as inventors of unique crisis management solutions, enhancers of seamless business transfiguration and evolution, as well as enhancers of better business understanding and crisis response. From these findings, the study enriches the existing leadership theories by highlighting succession planning as essential for preparing business leaders that bolster the effectiveness of disruptive crisis management.

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INTRODUCTION

Strategic succession planning is part of the critical proactive plan that prepares a business to deal with turbulences. As turbulences unfold, the preparedness of leadership competencies and capabilities to deal with unpredictabilities and uncertainties becomes quite essential for leveraging the accuracy of the introduced business rescue plan (Azmi, Ibrahim, Mohd Shukor, Abdul Rahim, Puteh, & Ahmad Kamal, 2025). Strategic succession planning is the process of creating a set of strategies and actions that are used for training, developing, nurturing, and grooming talented individual employees who take up leadership positions in the future. The objective of succession planning is usually to prepare leaders who understand the nature of the business, its culture, secrets,

and strategies to take up leadership positions when the existing crop of leaders retire or leave their positions for one reason or another (Okeah, 2024).

When the existing leaders leave, the existence of well-groomed future business leaders improves the capabilities of the business to easily continue thriving without experiencing interferences arising from the created leadership vacuum. This eliminates leadership crisis to bolster a business's overall sustainability, continuity, survival, and transfiguration from one leadership era to the next. Besides improving the transition from one leadership to another, successful implementation of succession planning also has the positive unintended consequences of preparing and deploying business leaders who understand the business (Magasi, 2020). Because they understand the business, they tend to be quite useful for introducing business rescue plans that accurately respond to the crisis that the business is experiencing.

During a crisis, it is only the organisational leaders who understand the business very well that are able to evaluate the nature and dynamics of the crisis to introduce more suitable business rescue plans. Bandura's (1977) "Social Learning Theory" posits that since leaders have been nurtured and groomed to understand how the existing leaders deal with the unfolding organisational dynamics, they tend to be more effective during the crisis. With little modifications of what they have learnt, they are often able to act in the way that mitigates the damage that the unfolding crisis may cause (Bano, Omar, & Ismail, 2021).

Compared to mistakes that can affect capabilities of leaders to deal with the crisis, accurate business rescue plan is essential for immediately diffusing the crisis. This reduces the costs of errors and mistakes as well as risks of undertaking crisis management strategies that fail. Failure of crisis management strategies often affects a business's seamless change and transition from the disrupted state of performance to the relatively more stable state of operation.

Succession planning is an essential pillar that creates a pool of committed leaders that view the organisation as their own that must be saved in the event of a crisis (Nave et al., 2022). Whether or not there are rewards, this creates part of the intrinsic values that motivate leaders at all levels to be committed and energized to ensure the implementation of the business rescue plan influences the business's effective recovery from the crisis. However, to prepare leaders that help a business overcome a crisis, theories imply succession planning requires the use of six main chronological steps encompassing leadership talents' identification, as well as development planning and budgeting for the required resources (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2025). These must be accompanied with candidates' placement in the strategic knowledge acquisition and transfer positions. While creating and nurturing a pool of the required leadership talents, the business must also adopt the appropriate strategies for managing leadership vacuums arising from retirement, sudden resignations, transfers, business expansion or death.

Successful implementation of succession leadership plan must be constantly monitored and evaluated to ensure it consistently responds to the needs of the organisation (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2025). When successful, it improves employee motivation, reduction of recruitment costs, business continuity, and resilience to thrive against all odds and disruptive waves. In that process, Becker's (1964) "Human Capital Theory" argues that succession planning is part of the investment in people that improves the organisation's value. Succession planning equips the organisation with all forms of competent leaders.

In the event of disruptions, these leaders tend to be instrumental for introducing more successful innovative turnaround ideas for the business. Such thinking accentuates insights in Charan, Drotter and Noel's (2001) "Leadership Pipeline Theory" that states that as organisations evolve through different successive periods, it requires new sets of skills, talents, and competencies. In that process, succession planning tends to be quite essential for exploring, developing, and nurturing such new talents.

While the organisation undergoes such evolutions, Fiedler's (1967) "Theory of Leadership Effectiveness" shares similar insights with Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) "Utilizing Human Resources Theory" that succession planning becomes part of the contingency planning that prepares the organisation's leadership capabilities to respond to all unforeseen and predicted risks of disruptions. Lewin's (1951) "Field Theory in Social Science" underscores the importance of succession planning as part of the change management process that prepares the organisational leaders to respond to future disruptions. Schein's (2010) "Organizational Development Theory" reckons that succession planning is part of the organisational development process. Wernerfelt, B. (1984) "Resource-Based View Theory" argues organisational leaders are the essential part of the organisational resources that must be nurtured and prepared through succession planning to contribute to the business's overall effective future performance.

Even if that is the case, the development and management of succession plan implementation is often a challenge. Some businesses, no matter how well-resourced they are, often do not have succession plans (Olubiya, 2023). In effect, when a crisis arises and the existing leaders are not doing well, they often look outside to CEOs who have been good in other organisations, but not the present organisation which is experiencing a crisis. Quite often, these have caused mistakes that affect a business's effective response to the unfolding crisis situations. Some businesses have succession plans, but the process of identifying and including candidates that must be groomed as future leaders is often fraught with favouritism. This affects the identification and development of more competent leaders that can deal with all the complexities of business turbulences when problems arise (Mukhama, 2024).

Other limiting factors often arise from the dual approaches used by some businesses that may have internally groomed leaders, but still leave those leaders and go for the externally sourced CEOs. This causes lack of faith and trust in the business's internal

succession plan. These affect the capabilities of organisational leaders to deal with crisis. But the question on how succession planning prepares the organisational future leaders to deal with crisis situations is an area that has not yet been widely evaluated by most of the existing studies (Leitner, 2023; Jackson & Allen, 2022; Sain & Koul, 2020; Agba, 2024; Chukwuma et al., 2022). Most of the existing studies examine the importance of succession planning, but they never explore its linkage with successful implementation of crisis management strategies during problematic situations. Combined with the organisational problems that businesses experience, it is a nexus of such deficiencies and gaps that motivate this study. Using the methodology described below, the study explores how strategic succession planning drives a business's transfiguration during crisis management to bolster the successful implementation of business rescue strategies.

METHODOLOGY

In the quest to evaluate how the implementation of strategic succession plan leads to the development of creative internal transformational leaders, the study used integrative review. Compared to systematic, meta-synthesis or meta-analysis that only rely on peer-reviewed studies, integrative review uses all plausible insights published on the subject being investigated (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008). In that context, while using the integrative review as one of the qualitative research methods for critical content analysis, it was construed that it would aid the extraction of detailed information on how succession planning creates a pool of creative leaders that influence a business's seamless transfiguration and evolution during crisis periods.

Such a reason motivated the use of integrative review. But still, use of integrative review was also influenced by the fact that integrative review, just like critical content analysis, is used in only the circumstances where a lot of studies have been conducted on the concept being investigated (de Souza, da Silva, & de Souza, 2021).

A lot of studies have so far been conducted on succession planning just as in the areas of business crisis management. Though most studies do not examine the linkage between successful implementation of succession plans and improved crisis management, it is such a question that motivates the evaluation of the existing studies to discern whether they confirm succession planning to create a pool of creative leaders that influence a business's seamless transfiguration and evolution during crisis management periods.

To accomplish that, the integrative review process focused on evaluating how most successful multinational business corporations handle their leadership succession planning as well as how such succession plans have been instrumental for improving effective response to crisis situations.

While evaluating insights from various multinational business corporations, the process of integrative review was structured according to four steps encompassing formulation of integrative review question, literature analysis, literature extraction, and analysis and interpretation (Russell, 2005; Souza, Silva, & Carvalho, 2010; Torraco, 2005). With the integrative review question formulated to entail analysis of how succession planning creates a pool of creative leaders that influence a business's seamless transfiguration and evolution during crisis periods, the literature search commenced.

Literature search was guided by the use of keywords like "Succession Planning", "Leadership Development", "Talent Search", "Crisis Management", "Impact of Succession Planning on Crisis Management", "Leadership Succession and Business Transfiguration and Evolution". In addition to these keywords, the study also used inclusion/exclusion criteria that permitted only studies conducted in English, and relevant to the subject of leadership succession planning and crisis management. The study also had to have available full contexts as studies with abstracts only were excluded. After all the required studies/articles had been extracted, the analysis of the gathered articles was accomplished using thematic and narrative analysis (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The obtained findings are presented and elucidated below.

RESULTS

From the analysis in the integrative review, it was found that most multinational business corporations are strategic succession planners that invest enormously in the development and nurturing of their future business leaders (Muhamad et al., 2025). In that process, carefully planned and executed succession planning tends to be quite essential for influencing the evolution and transition of legendary historical businesses from one disruptive season to the other. Behind the adopted innovative strategies churning out an array of new products that bolster a firm's adaptation to the evolving new trends, is the committed transformative leaders. It is the leaders who are instrumental for reading the situation and applying the appropriate strategies that aid the transfiguration of the businesses to evolve from one century to the other (Óladóttir et al., 2025; Onyango & Makhamara, 2025; Purc-Stephenson et al., 2025). As Nestlé evolved from a family-owned business into a public limited company, it is its deployed leaders who were instrumental in the quests of ensuring the change and transformation from one period of disruptions to the other. From integrative review, findings from Nestlé's analysis echoed evidence from the other multinational business corporations that indicated successful implementation of succession plans create a pool of competent future business leaders that emerge as (Hosta, 2000; Slater, 2000; Piellusch, 2009; Bersin, 2011):

- Inventors of Unique Crisis Management Solutions
- Enhancers of Seamless Business' Transfiguration and Evolution

— Enhancers of Better Business Understanding and Crisis Response

Details of these themes are evaluated as follows.

Inventors of Unique Crisis Management Solutions

During problematic situations, it is business leaders that come up with solutions for addressing such problems. This enhances the mitigation of such problems to bolster a firm's evolution and transition from one disruptive period to the next new seasons of relatively stable operations. It is the CEOs that introduce more effective business turnaround strategies to avoid risks of decline, crisis or complete business failure and collapse. When IBM was about to face business hardship and extinction in the 1990s, it was Lou Gerstner, IBM's CEO in the period between 1993 and 2002 that saved IBM from failure. Due to higher focus on hardware at the expense of developing and selling new software programmes, IBM was facing problems, declining sales, low brand recognition and risks of business failure (Yuenyong, 2025).

Coupled with its constraining bureaucratic culture affecting reforms, Lou Gerstner was introduced as the new CEO to effect the desired restructuring and reforms. Lou Gerstner, as the new IBM leader, introduced the business rescue plan requiring IBM to shift from just focusing on hardware to the creation of more appealing services and software. To achieve this, Lou Gerstner launched the "IBM Global Service" that would speed up research, innovation, development and sale of new software and IBM services. While advising IBM to adopt a customer-centric business operation, Lou Gerstner also restructured the business to streamline operations and reduce waste and costs (Leitner, 2023). IBM adopted more flatter structures that improve the interface between various players in the IBM business sphere. Through such initiatives, IBM was reoriented from just focusing on hardware to internet and enterprise computing. This demonstrates how leadership can influence the evolution and transition of legendary historical businesses from one period of disruptions to the other. IBM was created and established on 16 June 1911 in Endicott, New York. Had it not been due to Lou Gerstner's insight and transformative leadership, the 1990s' situations depict some of the turbulent periods that could have caused IBM's extinction (Williams, 2020).

Just like IBM, Apple was on the verge of bankruptcy and collapse, a decade after Steve Jobs had been ousted. In repentance, Steve Jobs was requested to return and lead Apple with new insights that would turn around Apple's impending risks of failure (Bersin, 2011). When Steve Jobs returned and took Apple's leadership mantra in the period between 1993 and 2011, he introduced a business rescue plan agitating for the elimination of the less profit-generating product lines so that Apple could just focus on a few profit-generating product lines. Steve Jobs also encouraged Apple to increase its investment in innovation. This influenced the creation of more disruptive products like iMac, iPod, iPhone and iPad. As these products emerged as the bestselling products around the world, it did not take long before Apple started rebounding back with vigour into the global consumer electronics segment's leadership (Conlon & Smith, 2011).

Steve Jobs, inter alia, encouraged the adoption of a continuous innovation culture that unfolds together with the changes in consumer tastes and preferences. These were accompanied with the improvement of consumer experience as the tool for constantly branding Apple across the global market. Reforms introduced by Steve Jobs prevented Apple from taking a downward trajectory into the path of bankruptcy and closure. It also continues to echo today as the unique innovative practices that continue to influence Apple's business sustainability and evolution from one state of disrupted operations to the relatively more stable seasons (Conlon & Smith, 2011). Yet as Apple was reeling from such awful business experience, Ford Motors, the previously vibrant business, was also experiencing declining sales due to declining product quality, rising operational costs and dwindling operating profit margin resulting from the increasingly bloated global business structure.

Upon realising risks of these challenges plunging Ford Motors into failure, Alan Mulally, Ford's CEO in the period between 2006 and 2014, introduced a business rescue plan dubbed "One Ford Plan". "One Ford Plan" sought to eliminate structures so as to improve internal alignment and standardisation of Ford Motors' operations across all its global business structure. In addition to dealing with product quality issues, Ford Motors also streamlined product lines to focus on core profit-generating brands (Jackson & Allen, 2022). Ford adopted collaborative teamwork as one big team. In effect, it quickly rebounded with rising sales and profitability. By 2008, Ford Motors was one of the American businesses that did not seek government bailout during the 2008 financial crisis, because it was not affected by the crisis. This demonstrates how effective leadership is instrumental for saving legendary historical businesses from risks of failure during one disruptive period to the other (Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2025).

Seamless Business' Transfiguration and Evolution

Effective leadership is the business brain and engine that drives the business' evolution and transformation from one disruption of the century to the other. Just like Ford Motors, General Motors would have been dumped in the dustbin of history long time ago, had it not been for Whitacre's business rescue plan. The period between 2009 and 2010 can be remembered by General Motors as the years that it nearly fell into complete bankruptcy and extinction (George, 2010). However, immediately after General Motors' placement under the US government administration, Whitacre, who was General Motors' CEO at the time, intervened with a business rescue plan. Whitacre's business rescue plan restructured General Motors to delete loss-making brands, enhance cost controls, operational efficiency, and business focus.

Whilst also flattening business structure to improve vertical and horizontal flow of information and collaboration, Whitacre also released the bailout loan repayment schedules that would see the loan paid up ahead of schedule. Using Whitacre's business

rescue plan, General Motors was able to avoid failure and emerge stronger with the effect that by 2024/25 financial year, it has still remained one of the top-performing legendary historical businesses generating \$44 billion annual revenue and a net profit of \$2.7 billion. These suggest how uniquely good leadership is part of the idiosyncratic resources that drive the evolution, change, transfiguration, and transformation of historical legendary businesses from one century to another (Sain & Koul, 2020). However, for such good outcomes to be realized, conceptualization and usage of the appropriate strategic succession plan is essential for nurturing and introducing a new set of leaders that influence the evolution of the business from one disruptive state to the other. Usage of a good strategic succession plan improves the development and future deployment of CEOs and leaders who understand the business better (Whitacre, 2013). Better understanding of the business implies if disruptions occur, the CEO will easily know where to touch for the business to avoid risks of failure. Strategic succession planning is part of the internal strategic plan of the business. It is a proactive approach that enables the business to identify and develop their probable future leaders in anticipation of taking over leadership when the existing leaders retire. It is an internal initiative, for the reason that a business cannot have a crop of new internal leaders developed during the succession plan implementation, and yet it still goes out fishing for a new CEO in case of a leadership vacuum.

From the evaluation of the behaviours of legendary historical businesses like Johnson & Johnson, Ford, Toyota, BMW, Nestlé, and Unilever, it is evident that although they are initiated to grow and become sustainable as family businesses, they have foresights that raise the “what if question”. The what if question is that, “if we are to thrive for long periods into the future, surpassing generations and generations into perpetuity, what do we need to do to achieve that as founding family business leaders?” (Goolsbee & Krueger, 2015). Such a question has prompted the initiation and evolution of most legendary family businesses from the status of being completely family businesses to businesses that evolve to be managed and run by internally groomed family CEOs (Agba, 2024).

These legendary historical businesses have often encouraged the transfer of leadership from family members to professionally trained business leaders. But as they do that, they identify and groom the potential candidates quite early. While the business thrives under a particular CEO, there are often multitudes of well-groomed CEO candidates waiting to take over. This early grooming allows the training, development, and indoctrination of the emerging CEOs with the core values and secrets of the business which are usually only availed to the family members (Goolsbee & Krueger, 2015). Early identification of potential CEO candidates that must be groomed permits review and re-review, training and re-training, and grooming and re-grooming so that when the candidate finally takes over, he or she will understand exactly what the business wants. It gives a lot of time for the weaknesses of a particular candidate to be identified and compared and contrasted with the other candidates, so as to select the best. When Johnson & Johnson (J&J) was created and established in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1886, it is likely that its founders—James Wood Johnson, Robert Wood Johnson, and Edward Mead Johnson—knew that the business would become sustainable, but not sustainable to the extent of even reaching 2025, with annual revenue of \$21.89 billion and a net profit of \$6.71 billion (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2021).

With good business leadership attributes that they had inculcated, they knew Johnson & Johnson would remain thriving, but not to the extent of remaining vibrant to even 2020 and play more instrumental roles during the Covid-19 vaccine development. During the early years of Johnson & Johnson’s evolution and development, its leadership largely remained with the family. But even as family members took leadership positions, a higher level of professionalism was introduced, inculcated, and maintained as the pillar that would influence the sustainability of the business (Ajayi, 2022). Through such thinking, Robert Wood Johnson I created the “Credo Philosophy” that guided the business on the responsibilities that they have to customers, suppliers, employees, investors/shareholders, and the surrounding communities. This Credo philosophy emphasised that business leaders need to work collaboratively and collectively to create and deliver the best for customers. This eliminated individualism that could cause conflicts and disputes to undermine Johnson & Johnson’s success (Chukwuma et al., 2022).

The Credo business philosophy emphasised the need for business leaders to recognise that since there are so many interests involved in the business, they need to act smart to avoid infringing rights that can instigate incidents undermining Johnson & Johnson’s effective market performance. To achieve that, Johnson & Johnson recognised the importance of leadership grooming using a more effective succession plan. It recognised that to deploy leaders that can sustainably run the business into the future, the company needed to do internal grooming of all its future leaders (Johnson & Smith, 2023). The effect is that Phillip Hoffmann, the non-family member CEO, who took over from Robert Wood Johnson II, was promoted, trained, and developed from within. James Burke, who took over from Phillip Hoffmann, was also internally trained for a long time before becoming Johnson & Johnson’s CEO in 1976. When J&J started its aggressive global expansion and growth in the 1990s, William Weldon, who had spent 30 years of his career at J&J, was appointed as the CEO of J&J as a global company (Davis & Harveston, 2020).

Using this approach, J&J never conducts recruitment for its CEOs. Instead, it internally grooms, develops, and appoints the best to take up the CEO position. To improve their capabilities, potential future CEO candidates are exposed to all real-world difficult business situations. They are rotated across all positions and geographical regions of the world to improve their understanding of the nature of J&J’s global business operations. This has often improved the development and utilisation of professional managers who know the business, understand the original family values, and link up well with the existing crop of underground family

leaders influencing the business (Chrisman et al., 2021). Just like J&J, Toyota also grew and became a multinational operator under the stewardship of family-groomed CEOs like Kiichiro Toyoda and Eiji Toyoda (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2020). Throughout its evolution, Toyota has embraced continuous improvement (kaizen), respect for people, “go see for yourself” principle (Genchi Genbutsu), and long-term thinking and not short-term gains as part of its business philosophy. Dubbed the Toyota Way or the Toyota Production System, these principles have influenced the embracement of continuous innovation and improvement. These became the strategies that enhance Toyota’s transitioning through one disruptive period to the other (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2021).

However, when Toyota had evolved to realise that apart from family members, other candidates could also be having unique leadership talents that the Toyoda family members may not have, it embarked on the broader internal development of potential candidates that could take over as future CEOs (Okanga, 2022). Not when Akio Toyoda came in, but from the 1990s, Toyota introduced the internal leadership grooming and development programmes. These programmes were developed for the internal personnel that have spent very long periods of their careers under the employment of Toyota. It was developed for the talented employees and leaders who have proven to be serious about upholding the core principles of Toyota’s business system. This compatibility of thinking, values, and beliefs influenced one’s seamless integration into the Toyota leadership grooming and development programmes (Tanaka & Mizuno, 2023).

Under the internal grooming programme, one would spend years or even decades being developed and exposed to the overall nature of Toyota’s operation from one division to the next, and from one region of the global market to the other. This prepares Toyota’s leaders to the extent that by the time the likes of Katsuaki Watanabe and Fujio Cho took over the CEO roles as non-family members from Eiji Toyoda, they did not disappoint (Sakurai & Jinnai, 2021). Their new insights influenced the introduction of new vehicle brands that propelled Toyota’s global competitiveness and growth to new heights.

Even as Akio Toyoda, another family member, returned to quell the effects of the 2008 financial crisis, it did not take long before Toyota returned its CEO position to Koji Sato, as yet another internally groomed non-family member (Luo & Shen, 2022). Koji Sato was groomed and positioned as the leader of the engineering and Lexus division, one of Toyota’s vibrantly performing divisions. His delightful performance in that division propelled his promotion to the overall position of Toyota CEO. The success of Toyota and its evolution from decades to decades over the past centuries indicate how internal grooming and development create leaders that accurately understand the nature of the business’ operation (Hitt et al., 2021).

When turbulences emerge, it is such accurate and detailed understanding of the business that usually becomes useful for the leader to accurately ascertain areas requiring reforms and modifications for the business to thwart the emerging crisis. Some of the businesses argue that CEOs sourced from outside tend to bring in new ideas that bolster the business’ effective performance. However, during a crisis, a lot of evidence indicates that the business responding to turbulence using its internally groomed CEOs tends to be more successful than the externally sourced CEOs that often make mistakes prior to getting it right (Hitt et al., 2021).

Better Business Understanding and Crisis Response

In the initial stages of introducing the new CEO, the new leader would actually be carefully learning the business organisation. Very lucky and talented ones may bring closer the historically resourceful employees to advise on the accuracy of the actions that must be undertaken to thwart the emerging turbulence (Gomez, 2021). However, the proud ones will try to act with minimal consultation with the motive of asserting authority. While holding the assumption that if the rescue strategy is successful, they will be praised to attain iconic status, some externally sourced CEOs have often taken actions in haste only to plunge the business into chaos causing more disruptions (Holm & Lorange, 2022). No matter how good the track record of the externally sourced CEO is, spending some time in the organisation is often essential for him or her to gain the experience that improves the accuracy of the adopted business plan. Unfortunately, that has often not been the case. Compared to CEOs with little known track records, it is the CEOs with impressive track records that are bound to make mistakes.

Under the assumption that I did well before and I have always got it right or I know it all attitude, some CEOs often act in haste only to cause mistakes that cost the business enormous damages. In 2011, JC Penney, one of the iconic American chain stores, wanted to improve its performance by introducing a more revolutionary business model. To achieve this, it hired Ron Johnson, a successful leader from Apple’s retail stores (Sen & Ganguly, 2023). Excited about his new role and confident from his track record of improving Apple retail stores’ success, Ron Johnson introduced and implemented business reforms in haste and with little consultation. Without experimenting and testing his concept, Ron also changed the store layout and branding. *Inter alia*, the reform eliminated frequent sales promotions and discounts. These were the core strategies attracting and retaining JC Penney’s core customer base (Holm & Lorange, 2022).

Hence, the elimination of promotions and discounts caused an immediate decline in sales by 25% and a \$1 billion loss. Seventeen months in the job, JC Penney had no option but to get rid of Ron Johnson. As this was a case of change and transformation undertaken without understanding the customer and business culture, in the case of Hewlett-Packard (HP), Leo Apotheker was hired, despite a controversial background from SAP, to lead HP’s transformation into an enterprise software business entity (McKnight, 2022). In addition to the attempt to spin off HP’s PC Division, the most revenue-generating division, Leo Apotheker also initiated an \$11.1 billion acquisition of Autonomy. This acquisition led to an \$8.8 billion loss attributed to accounting fraud.

Because of this, Autonomy's acquisition was a disaster that affected shareholders' and investors' confidence and trust, whilst also distorting HP's brand identity (Kim & Mauborgne, 2023).

As HP lost 40% of its market value, Leo Apotheker was fired in just less than a year into his position as HP's CEO. When the increasing advancement of digital technology and its embracement by most rivals were becoming sources of disruptions in 2017, Mattel, a thriving toy company at the time, hired Margo Georgiadis from Google to effect its digital transformation. Without understanding Mattel's core business, Margo quickly restructured the company and introduced a combination of digital strategies. These reforms caused an instant decline of product innovation and declines in toy sales that she struggled to address. This caused low morale, discomfort, conflicts and mistrust that led to the exit of several executives and subsequently Margo's firing. These imply internal grooming of future leaders can improve the successful implementation of business rescue strategies.

Facts from Xerox suggest if the grooming and selection are not well done, it can also endanger the success of business rescue. When Xerox was in decline, it internally promoted Jeff Jacobson, an internally groomed CEO, to handle the introduction and implementation of the required turnaround strategies (Miller & Zhang, 2024). Jeff effected the acquisition of Fujifilm, which was itself also being disrupted by digital changes and was therefore not doing well. As this caused a lack of strategic clarity and undervaluation, shareholders criticised the deal. This led to boardroom conflicts, mistrust and costly restructuring as Xerox struggled to disentangle itself from the deal. This was a decision of the internally groomed CEO that raises questions on the process of selecting the suitable candidates for internal grooming (Lawrence & Peters, 2022; Brown & Green, 2021; Anderson & McLean, 2023). In Procter & Gamble, Durk Jager, who was also internally groomed, emerged as a more aggressive candidate that managed to convince the board into promoting him into the CEO position (Mitchell & Boyle, 2023). Because of the confidence and trust that Procter & Gamble had in him, they did not question much his vision when he reckoned that he would transform Procter & Gamble to improve its adaptability to the unfolding changes.

Jager introduced drastic restructuring and changes dubbed "Organisation 2005" to streamline operations and reduce costs. But, with the false assumption that he knew everything about the organisation, the scale and speed of restructuring was quite overwhelming with limited consultations (Hambrick & Cannella, 2022). This instigated resistance and questions about the values of some changes being introduced. Due to poor communication, employees, shareholders and investors lost trust and confidence in Procter & Gamble. Within 18 months, Jager had to accept the failure and relinquish his position as Procter & Gamble's CEO. This implies sometimes, internal grooming can also cause the development of internal candidates who are not exposed to external competition. This can cause false trust and confidence that only become apparent when the internally groomed CEO is finally entrusted with the tasks of accomplishing the required leadership activities (Brown & Wyatt, 2020).

Despite such limiting instances, it is still confirmed that strategic succession planning improves the development of CEOs who understand the business' internal dynamics better, and are more prepared to deal with complex changes required for legendary historical businesses to transition from one turbulence to another or from one decade or century to the next.

CONCLUSION

The modern business landscape is constantly changing and evolving. This requires businesses to also adopt more flexible approaches in all aspects of their operations. Unfortunately, most businesses are often more flexible when introducing newer technologies and operational approaches, but not in change of top management leadership. Most initiatives are not undertaken to ensure the leaders are prepared enough to handle the unfolding disruptive changes. Yet, as this study revealed, successful planning improves the organisational capabilities to handle the unfolding disruptive crisis situations. From the analysis in the integrative review, it was found that most multinational business corporations are strategic succession planners that invest enormously in the development and nurturing of their future business leaders. In that process, carefully planned and executed succession planning tends to be quite essential for influencing the evolution and transition of legendary historical businesses from one disruptive season to the other. Behind the adopted innovative strategies churning out an array of new products that bolster a firm's adaptation to the evolving new trends, is the committed transformative leadership. It is the leaders who are instrumental for reading the situation and applying the appropriate strategies that aid the transfiguration of the businesses to evolve from one century to the other. As Nestlé evolved from a family-owned business into a public limited company, it is its deployed leaders who were instrumental in the quests of ensuring the change and transformation from one period of disruptions to the other. In effect, successful implementation of succession plans creates a pool of competent future business leaders that emerge as inventors of unique crisis management solutions, enhancers of seamless business' transfiguration and evolution, as well as enhancers of better business understanding and crisis response. From these findings, the study enriches the existing leadership theories by highlighting succession planning as essential for preparing business leaders that bolster effectiveness during disruptive crisis management periods. However, future studies must still continue exploring the framework for internal leadership development that does not close them from the unfolding dynamics in the external business environment.

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