

# How to Plan for Your Own Succession

*By Marshall Goldsmith*



Dr. Marshall Goldsmith's 24 books include *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, a *New York Times* best-seller, *Wall Street Journal* #1 business book and Harold Longman Award winner for Business Book of the Year. His latest book *Succession:*

*Are You Ready?* is the newest edition to the Harvard Business 'Memo to the CEO' series. His website, [www.MarshallGoldsmithLibrary.com](http://www.MarshallGoldsmithLibrary.com), contains hundreds of his articles and videos.

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## **"If I announce my successor in advance, isn't there a danger that I will just become a lame duck? I certainly wouldn't want that to happen."**

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Almost every executive goes through this dialog as part of the challenge of letting go. This fear often results in postponement of the succession announcement until the last minute -- and inhibits what could have been a much smoother transition process.

When it is approaching time to leave or move on to a new position, face reality -- you will become a lame duck. Attention will immediately shift to your successor. Her vision for the future will mean more than yours. If you disapprove of executive team members' ideas, they will just wait it out and resell the same ideas to your successor. People will start sucking up to her -- in the same way they used to suck up to you.

Make peace with being a lame duck before it actually happens and your life, your successor's life, and the lives of your colleagues will be a lot better.

## **Talk to your successor so you can leave them in a position to succeed.**

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Being a lame duck doesn't have to be all bad. Use this period to coach your successor (behind the scenes). Begin the transfer of power before you have to. Support your successor however you can. Build her confidence.

Involve your successor in all important decisions and, to the degree humanly possible, make sure that she agrees with any of your announced strategies. Remember, she is the person who is going to have to live with them for the next few years - and make them work.

If you want to be a great lame duck, make those tough, unpopular decisions that you know are good for the company. Don't worry about finishing on a great note. Be willing to make long term investments that may cost the company in the short run -- but promise to produce desired results in the long run. Be more focused on putting your successor in a position where she will succeed, than finishing in a way that will make you look good.

## **Be a happy duck.**

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Go home a little earlier. Spend some more time with the family you may have neglected in the past. Go to your grandkids baseball games once in a while. Reacquaint yourself with your spouse.

My final advice is simple but often ignored—focus less on what you're leaving and more on where you're headed next.



# Linkage

Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage's mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

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