

How do you groom your staff to one day be ready for a CEO position?



J. Clarke Price, CAE

*President and CEO
Ohio Society of Certified Public
Accountants
Dublin, Ohio
cprice@ohio-cpa.com*

Staff should be given the chance to do many different things and develop as many skills as they want to work on. By working on projects outside of their core responsibilities, they can learn new skills that are critical for career success, and they can identify areas of the operation in which they might want to spend more time to help them grow. Finding time for informal discussions about big picture issues on the horizon for our organization and associations is another way to help staff develop insights on issues that will prepare them for a career as a CEO.



Rick Cristol

*Executive Vice President
The Kellen Company
Washington, DC
rcristol@kellencompany.com*

Grooming is all about mentoring and exposing the promising candidate to the various challenges a CEO faces. This not only includes attendance at board meetings and other policy discussions, but also being party to individual discussions with association leadership (if cleared with the association leader first). Perhaps more important is sharing with the candidate the strategic development process and the rationale involved in taking and promoting various positions. Hypothetical case studies based on CEO experiences are a great tool for a candidate to engage in critical thinking on leadership.



Trudy Aron

*Executive Director
American Institute of
Architects—Kansas Chapter
Topeka, Kansas
aron@aiaks.org*

About 15 years ago I was looking for an assistant for my two-person office and had a young man apply who wanted to be an association executive. Never having encountered a person who knew so certainly that they wanted to become one, I was intrigued. We made a deal; I would teach him what I knew and expose him to all facets of association management, and he would work for the meager salary I had to offer. This turned out to be great for both of us—I got an exceptional employee, and he got a great education. In the five years he worked for me, he did bookkeeping, conference coordination, membership services, and much more. He went on to manage several associations, both at the state and national level.



G.A. Taylor Fernley

*President and CEO
Fernley & Fernley, Inc.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
tfernley@fernley.com*

Here are some tried-and-true tips to effectively ready your staff to be positioned for an upcoming CEO slot: Hire well. Have a clear understanding with your HR department that all hires (at a certain point and above) be brought on based on their attitude and interest in moving up within the organization. Assign these candidates to a mentor from within your company. Be liberal with professional development opportunities; look at the cost to educate as an investment in your future. Allow individuals to take risks without fear of reprisal. Finally, celebrate their successes publicly. Build their self-esteem and let them know that they are contributing to the overall goals of the organization. If we are successful in creating a culture of education, learning, and professional development, we will be successful in creating a world-class workforce.