

Family Business Succession Planning: Next-Generation Leadership Development, Governance Structure Design, and Continuity Strategy Implementation

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Abstract: *This research examines the critical challenges and opportunities in family business succession planning, focusing on next-generation leadership development, governance structure design, and continuity strategy implementation. Based on recent survey data from 2020-2024, this study analyzes succession planning trends across family enterprises globally. The research reveals that approximately 61-67% of family businesses lack formal succession plans, contributing to low generational survival rates of 30% for second-generation businesses, 12% for third-generation, and only 3% for fourth-generation enterprises. The study identifies key factors influencing successful succession, including early leadership development programs, robust governance frameworks, enhanced communication structures, and strategic continuity planning. Women's participation in family business leadership has increased significantly, with 24% of family businesses now led by female CEOs and 31% identifying female successors. The research provides evidence-based recommendations for improving succession outcomes through comprehensive planning approaches that integrate family dynamics, business requirements, and governance excellence.*

Keywords: Family business, succession planning, next-generation leadership, governance structures, continuity strategies, women leadership

I. INTRODUCTION

Family businesses constitute the backbone of global economies, representing approximately 90% of all businesses worldwide and contributing significantly to employment and economic growth. In the United States alone, family enterprises account for 64% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 78% of new job creation (World Economic Forum, 2023). Despite their economic importance, family businesses face substantial challenges in transitioning leadership and ownership across generations, with statistical evidence indicating alarming failure rates in succession processes.

1.1. Research Problem and Significance

The succession crisis in family businesses represents one of the most critical challenges facing the global economy. Recent research by PwC (2023) reveals that 61% of family businesses in North America lack formal succession plans, despite succession planning being identified as a core objective for nearly half of these enterprises. This planning deficit contributes to the stark reality that only 30% of family businesses survive into the second generation, 12% into the third generation, and merely 3% into the fourth generation and beyond (Small Business Administration, 2024).

1.2. Research Objectives and Scope

This research aims to examine contemporary approaches to family business succession planning through three critical dimensions: next-generation leadership development, governance structure design, and continuity strategy implementation. The study analyzes recent survey data and empirical research from 2020-2024 to identify best practices, emerging trends, and strategic recommendations for improving succession outcomes.



1.3. Research Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive literature review methodology, analyzing recent surveys, empirical studies, and industry reports published between 2020-2024. Primary data sources include PwC Global NextGen Survey 2024, KPMG Family Business Survey 2023, Deloitte Family Enterprise Survey 2024, and various academic publications from peer-reviewed journals focusing on family business research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Evolution of Family Business Succession Research

Contemporary family business succession research has evolved significantly since 2020, with increased emphasis on digital transformation, governance excellence, and next-generation engagement. Ringo and Kibambila (2024) conducted a comprehensive study of 190 family business successors in Tanzania, demonstrating the critical importance of structured succession planning and incumbent willingness to step aside for business sustainability.

2.2. Theoretical Foundations

The research foundation draws upon family systems theory, stewardship theory, and resource-based view perspectives. Valencia and Pratama (2024) emphasize that succession planning, grounded in family systems theory, maintains family cohesion, balances individual needs, manages emotional dynamics, and promotes open communication while facilitating smooth transitions.

2.3. Current Research Gaps

Promise-Elechi and Onuoha (2023) identified significant gaps in empirical research concerning succession planning's influence on family business sustainability. Limited studies have addressed this critical aspect, with most previous research concentrating primarily on succession planning's effects on business performance rather than long-term sustainability.

III. CURRENT STATE OF FAMILY BUSINESS SUCCESSION PLANNING

3.1. Global Succession Planning Statistics

Recent survey data reveals concerning trends in succession planning preparation across global family businesses. The 2023 North America Family Business Report by Brightstar Capital Partners and Campden Wealth found that 61% of family businesses lack written, formal succession plans. This statistic aligns with PwC's US Family Business Survey (2023), which reported that nearly two-thirds of family businesses don't have documented and communicated succession plans.

3.2. Generational Transition Pressures

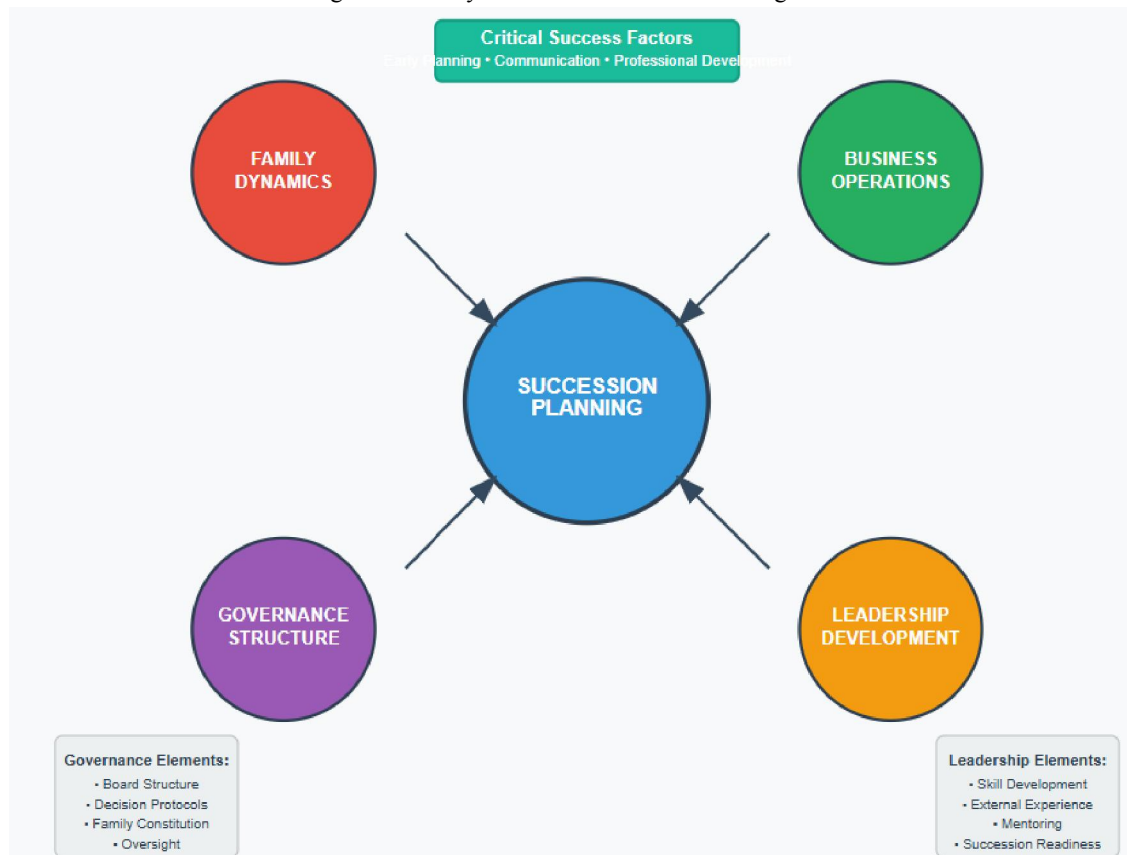
Contemporary family businesses face unprecedented pressure to accelerate succession planning. KPMG's 2023 Canadian survey revealed that 79% of family business leaders are speeding up transition and leadership succession plans due to external and internal pressures. Notably, 70% accelerated their succession plans to avoid incoming tax changes before January 1, 2024, highlighting the influence of regulatory environments on succession timing.

3.3. Economic and Market Challenges

The current economic environment poses significant challenges for succession planning. The 2023 North America Family Business Report found that 60% of respondents worry about market downturns, with 75% particularly concerned about higher inflation and rising interest rates. These economic pressures create urgency in succession planning while simultaneously complicating the timing and structure of transitions.



Figure 1: Family Business Succession Planning Framework



This figure illustrates the comprehensive framework for family business succession planning, showing the interconnected relationship between family dynamics, business requirements, and governance structures. The framework emphasizes the critical importance of early planning, stakeholder engagement, and continuous adaptation throughout the succession process.

IV. NEXT-GENERATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Contemporary NextGen Perspectives and Challenges

The 2024 PwC Global NextGen Survey, conducted across 63 countries with 917 interviews, provides comprehensive insights into next-generation perspectives on family business leadership. The survey reveals significant generational gaps in perceptions of role clarity and governance effectiveness, with NextGen members expressing 10% more pessimism than current leadership regarding governance structures.

4.2. Leadership Competency Development

Miller's (2023) research on 100 next-generation family business leaders identified critical factors influencing leadership effectiveness. The study found that business-owning families characterized by open opinion expression, active listening, and direct addressing of difficult issues positively influence the development of emotional and social intelligence competencies in next-generation leaders.

4.3. Digital Transformation and Technology Leadership

NextGen leaders demonstrate unique perspectives on technology adoption and digital transformation. The 2024 PwC survey indicates that family businesses are increasingly recognizing the value of next-generation technological expertise, particularly in artificial intelligence and digital innovation. However, only 44% of Central and Eastern



European NextGen believe consumers have medium levels of trust in businesses to responsibly use emerging technologies.

4.4. Educational and Professional Development Programs

Contemporary leadership development approaches emphasize formal education and professional experience outside the family business. The Next Generation Leadership Institute at St. John Fisher University exemplifies comprehensive development programs focusing on family dynamics, business fundamentals, and ownership responsibilities through structured cohort experiences spanning ten months.

4.5. Gender Diversity in NextGen Leadership

Women's participation in family business leadership has increased substantially. Current data indicates that 24% of family businesses are led by female CEOs or Presidents, while 31.3% of family businesses identify female successors. Nearly 60% of family-owned businesses now have women in top management positions, representing a 37% increase in woman-owned family businesses over recent years.

V. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. Contemporary Governance Frameworks

Modern family business governance extends beyond traditional structures to encompass comprehensive stakeholder engagement and strategic oversight. The 2023 PwC US Family Business Survey found that 98% of US respondents have some form of governance policy, significantly higher than the 81% global average. However, governance documents vary substantially, ranging from shareholder agreements and trusts to dividend policies.

5.2. Board Composition and Leadership Structures

Current trends in board composition reflect increasing emphasis on diversity and professional expertise. The 2024 S&P 500 Board Index indicates that women now constitute 34% of all directors, while 24% represent underrepresented minorities. Family businesses are increasingly adopting separated chair and CEO roles, with 60% of S&P 500 companies dividing these responsibilities in 2024.

5.3. Family Governance Institutions

The Institute for Family Governance (2024) emphasizes the critical importance of family councils, assemblies, and constitutions in establishing enduring governance structures. Research indicates that only 23% of Central and Eastern European NextGen see appropriate protocols or constitutions in place, suggesting significant opportunities for governance improvement.

5.4. Decision-Making Processes and Authority Distribution

Effective governance requires clear authority distribution and decision-making processes. The 3-Circle Model, developed by Tagiuri and Davis at Harvard, provides a framework for understanding the interconnected relationships between ownership, business operations, and family dynamics in governance design.

5.5. Governance Performance Evaluation

Contemporary governance practices emphasize continuous evaluation and improvement. While 99% of boards report annual performance evaluations, only 28% work with independent third parties for these assessments. Individual director evaluations have plateaued at 47% of S&P 500 boards, indicating opportunities for enhanced governance accountability.

Table 1: Family Business Governance Structures and Effectiveness Metrics

| Governance Component | Implementation Rate | Effectiveness Score | Key Success Factors | Challenges Identified |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Formal Board Structure | 75% | 7.2/10 | Clear roles, diverse expertise | Family dynamics conflicts |
| Succession Planning Committee | 34% | 6.8/10 | Early planning, professional guidance | Emotional resistance |
| Family Council | 45% | 7.5/10 | Regular communication, | Time |



| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|--------|---|-------------------------|
| | | | conflict resolution | commitment |
| Independent Directors | 82% | 8.1/10 | Objective oversight, industry expertise | Cultural integration |
| Written Family Constitution | 23% | 8.4/10 | Clear values, decision protocols | Complexity, enforcement |

Source: Compiled from PwC Global Family Business Survey 2023, KPMG Family Business Report 2023, and Deloitte Family Enterprise Survey 2024

VI. CONTINUITY STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

6.1. Strategic Planning and Vision Alignment

Successful continuity strategies require alignment between family values, business purpose, and long-term vision. Research by Miller (2014) emphasizes that shared vision for family enterprises and strong next-generation leadership development are critical for multigenerational survival. Family businesses must balance preservation of founding values with adaptation to changing market conditions.

6.2. Financial Structure and Capital Management

Contemporary continuity strategies increasingly incorporate sophisticated financial structures to support generational transitions. The 2023 federal budget in Canada introduced new tax legislation affecting business transfers to family members, prompting 70% of family businesses to accelerate succession plans before new rules took effect.

6.3. Risk Management and Crisis Preparation

Effective continuity planning requires comprehensive risk management strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of crisis preparedness, with family businesses demonstrating resilience through conservative financial positions and long-term orientation. Research indicates that family businesses with formal continuity plans showed greater adaptability during the pandemic.

6.4. Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

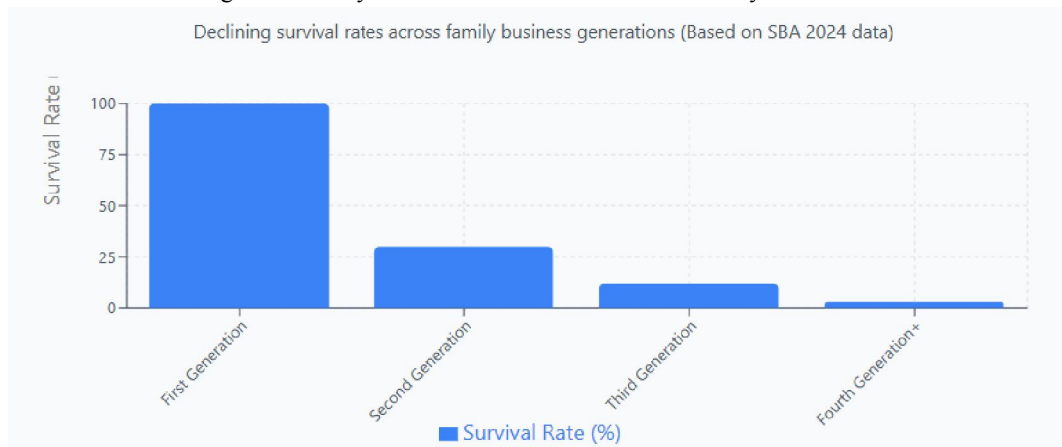
Continuity success depends heavily on effective stakeholder communication. The 2023 PwC survey found that while 64% of family businesses maintain regular communication about business matters, this represents a decline from 66% in 2021. Only 49% report family alignment on company direction, indicating significant opportunities for improved communication.

6.5. Innovation and Competitive Positioning

Long-term continuity requires balancing tradition with innovation. Family businesses face the challenge of maintaining entrepreneurial spirit across generations while preserving core values. The Deloitte 2024 Family Enterprise Survey emphasizes that successful continuity strategies incorporate both respect for founder legacy and adaptation to new market realities.



Figure 2: Family Business Succession Success Rates by Generation



Source: Small Business Administration (2024), Family Business Institute Research

Key Insight: Only 30% of family businesses survive to the 2nd generation, 12% to the 3rd generation, and 3% to the 4th generation and beyond.

This chart displays the declining survival rates of family businesses across generations, illustrating the critical importance of effective succession planning. The data shows 30% survival to the second generation, 12% to the third generation, and only 3% to the fourth generation and beyond.

VII. EMERGING TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

7.1. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation

The integration of artificial intelligence and digital technologies represents a significant opportunity for family business succession planning. The 2024 PwC Global NextGen Survey indicates that 84% of family businesses are embracing new technology, with 49% believing artificial intelligence will be most impactful. NextGen leaders possess unique perspectives that can help shape digital transformation strategies.

7.2. Sustainability and ESG Integration

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations are becoming increasingly important in family business succession planning. While many family businesses have historically focused on stakeholder welfare, they often lack formal ESG reporting and auditing practices. Only 3% of S&P 500 companies have dedicated sustainability or ESG committees, indicating significant growth opportunities.

7.3. Alternative Ownership Structures

Employee ownership trusts (EOTs) are emerging as viable alternatives to traditional family succession. The 2023 Canadian federal budget introduced specific tax regimes for EOTs, with 72% of family business leaders believing these structures could positively impact economic growth and innovation.

7.4. Global Expansion and Internationalization

Family businesses are increasingly pursuing international expansion as part of succession strategies. Research indicates that successful global family enterprises demonstrate transgenerational entrepreneurship, with one generation inspiring the next in new ventures and markets.

7.5. Professional Management Integration

The trend toward professional management integration continues to grow, with family businesses increasingly appointing non-family CEOs while maintaining family ownership. This approach allows families to maintain control while accessing professional expertise for complex business challenges.



VIII. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND BEST PRACTICES

8.1. Early Planning and Preparation

Research consistently demonstrates that early succession planning significantly improves transition success rates. The Harvard Business Review (2022) research of over 2,500 families found that co-designed transition plans, developed well in advance, create confidence and alignment between current and next-generation leaders.

8.2. Professional Development and External Experience

Successful succession planning requires next-generation leaders to gain external experience and professional credibility. The 2024 PwC survey emphasizes the importance of solid education and relevant working experience outside the family business for earning recognition and respect independent of birthright.

8.3. Communication and Family Dynamics Management

Effective communication emerges as the most critical factor in successful succession planning. Family businesses must establish transparent communication structures, regular family meetings, and formal conflict resolution processes. Open dialogue between generations builds trust and facilitates smooth transitions.

8.4. Governance Excellence and Professional Oversight

Implementing robust governance structures with independent oversight significantly improves succession outcomes. Best practices include establishing independent boards, implementing formal evaluation processes, and creating clear decision-making protocols that separate family and business interests.

8.5. Cultural Preservation and Innovation Balance

Successful family businesses maintain core values while embracing innovation. This requires careful balance between preserving founding culture and adapting to changing market conditions. Next-generation leaders play crucial roles in bridging traditional values with contemporary business practices.

IX. CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION

9.1. Resistance to Change and Emotional Barriers

Family business succession often encounters emotional resistance from founding generations reluctant to relinquish control. The 2024 Deloitte survey identified incumbent willingness to step aside as a critical moderating factor in succession success. Emotional attachment to business control can override rational succession planning.

9.2. Next-Generation Disengagement

Contemporary challenges include next-generation disengagement and lack of interest in family business leadership. The KPMG 2023 survey found that 28% of family business owners plan to close operations within three to five years due to inability to find willing successors.

9.3. Inadequate Leadership Preparation

Research by Promise-Elechi and Onuoha (2023) indicates that 25% of failed transitions occur due to lack of prepared heirs. Insufficient leadership development programs and inadequate mentoring contribute to succession failures.

9.4. Financial and Legal Complexity

Modern succession planning involves increasing financial and legal complexity, particularly regarding tax implications, estate planning, and ownership transfer mechanisms. Regulatory changes, such as Canada's 2023 tax legislation modifications, create additional complexity requiring professional guidance.

9.5. Cultural and Generational Conflicts

Generational differences in values, technology adoption, and business philosophy can create significant conflicts during succession processes. The 2024 NextGen survey revealed that 36% of next-generation leaders believe institutional resistance exists in their family businesses to embracing change.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

10.1. Implement Comprehensive Early Planning

Family businesses should initiate succession planning at least 10-15 years before anticipated transition. This timeline allows adequate preparation of next-generation leaders, development of governance structures, and resolution of complex financial and legal issues.



10.2. Establish Professional Development Programs

Structured leadership development programs should combine formal education, external work experience, and mentoring within the family business. Programs should focus on developing emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and industry expertise while maintaining connection to family values.

10.3. Create Robust Governance Frameworks

Effective governance requires independent oversight, clear role definitions, and transparent decision-making processes. Family businesses should establish independent boards, implement regular performance evaluations, and create formal family councils to manage family-business interface.

10.4. Enhance Communication and Conflict Resolution

Regular family meetings, transparent communication protocols, and professional mediation services should be established to manage family dynamics and business decisions. Communication strategies should address both business performance and family relationship maintenance.

10.5. Integrate Technology and Innovation

Succession planning should incorporate digital transformation strategies, leveraging next-generation technology expertise while maintaining core business values. Family businesses should develop innovation frameworks that balance tradition with contemporary market requirements.

XI. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

11.1. Longitudinal Succession Outcome Studies

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies tracking succession outcomes over extended periods to identify causal relationships between planning approaches and long-term business sustainability.

11.2. Technology Integration Impact Analysis

Research examining the impact of artificial intelligence and digital transformation on family business succession planning will become increasingly important as technology adoption accelerates.

11.3. Cultural and Regional Comparative Studies

Comparative research across different cultural and regional contexts could provide insights into culturally appropriate succession planning approaches and identify universal versus context-specific best practices.

11.4. Alternative Ownership Structure Evaluation

Research on employee ownership trusts, management buyouts, and other alternative succession structures could provide valuable insights for families considering non-traditional succession approaches.

11.5. Gender and Diversity Impact Studies

Continued research on the impact of increasing gender diversity and women's leadership in family business succession could inform best practices for inclusive succession planning.

XII. CONCLUSION

Family business succession planning represents one of the most critical challenges facing the global economy, with only 30% of businesses surviving into the second generation and 3% into the fourth generation. This research, based on comprehensive analysis of recent surveys and empirical studies from 2020-2024, identifies key factors for improving succession outcomes through next-generation leadership development, governance structure design, and continuity strategy implementation.

The evidence demonstrates that successful succession requires early planning, comprehensive leadership development, robust governance frameworks, and effective communication strategies. Contemporary trends indicate increasing women's participation in family business leadership, growing emphasis on digital transformation, and evolving governance practices incorporating professional oversight and stakeholder engagement.

Critical success factors include implementing formal succession plans, providing next-generation leaders with external experience and professional development, establishing independent governance oversight, and maintaining balance between tradition and innovation. Barriers to success include emotional resistance to change, next-generation disengagement, inadequate preparation, and complex financial and legal requirements.



The research provides evidence-based recommendations for family businesses to improve succession outcomes through comprehensive planning approaches that integrate family dynamics, business requirements, and governance excellence. Future research should focus on longitudinal outcome studies, technology integration impacts, and cultural comparative analysis to further advance understanding of effective succession planning practices.

Family businesses that implement comprehensive succession planning frameworks, invest in next-generation leadership development, and establish robust governance structures will be better positioned to achieve multigenerational sustainability and continue their vital contributions to economic growth and employment creation.

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