

A STEWARDSHIP APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Preserving trust, knowledge, and continuity while preparing the next generation of facilities leadership.

When an experienced facilities leader leaves, the organization is not simply replacing a position. It is replacing years of accumulated knowledge, judgment, relationships, routines, and trust.

A job description can identify responsibilities. It cannot fully describe the thousand small decisions and relationships that make a facilities operation work. A stewardship approach to transition begins by recognizing that difference.

WHAT ARE WE REALLY REPLACING?

The visible responsibilities are usually easy to list: building systems, maintenance, budgets, compliance, vendors, projects, staff, emergencies, and capital planning. The less visible responsibilities are harder to see until they disappear.

Who knows which contractor understands the building?
Who remembers why a system was modified years ago?
Who knows which recurring problem deserves attention before it becomes an emergency? Who has earned the confidence of staff and leadership when an uncomfortable decision has to be made?

Those things may never appear on an organizational chart, but they are institutional assets.

TECHNICAL SKILLS CAN BE HIRED. TRUST CANNOT.

Technical competence matters, and organizations should expect it. But facilities leadership also depends on credibility built slowly through thousands of interactions with employees, vendors, contractors, occupants, and leadership.

A new leader can inherit files, drawings, passwords, and contracts on the first day. Trust does not transfer that way. It has to be introduced, demonstrated, and earned.

That is why abrupt transitions can create more disruption than a vacancy alone would suggest. People are not only adjusting to a new name or title. They may be wondering whether the relationships, judgment, and values they learned to rely on are leaving too.

TRANSITION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD CAPACITY

A stewardship transition does not have to mean finding one person who can reproduce every strength of the person leaving. In many organizations, that person may not exist.

A better question is: What capabilities does the organization need to preserve, strengthen, or develop for its next chapter?

That may mean developing internal operational leadership, preserving strong administrative continuity, mentoring intentionally, distributing responsibilities more intelligently, and keeping access to strategic knowledge during the handoff. The objective is not to clone the outgoing leader. It is to leave the organization stronger and less dependent on any single individual.

MAKE THE HANDOFF VISIBLE BEFORE THE DEPARTURE

Whenever circumstances allow, meaningful transition should begin well before the final weeks of employment. Sixty, ninety, or even 120 days may provide valuable overlap depending on the organization and circumstances. The objective is not simply more time together, but enough time for knowledge, relationships, and responsibility to transfer through actual work.

Let the next generation participate in real decisions. Introduce them to trusted vendors and institutional partners. Explain the reasoning behind unusual building conditions and long-standing practices. Give them room to lead while an experienced resource is still available to answer the question that inevitably begins, “Why do we do it this way?”

The goal is continuity without creating dependence. Good mentoring should gradually make the mentor less necessary.



STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE

**Don’t document because you’re leaving.
Document because someday someone will follow.**

The best time to begin preparing for leadership transition is not when someone announces they are leaving.

It is the day we recognize that what we learn today may someday be useful to the person who follows us.

PUTTING STEWARDSHIP INTO PRACTICE

The following tools support transition readiness and help ensure that what matters most is preserved and easily passed forward.



TRANSITION KNOWLEDGE MAP

A living checklist of knowledge, relationships, systems, and responsibilities that should be intentionally handed forward.



VENDOR KNOWLEDGE RECORD

Who we rely on, why we rely on them, and what history should travel with the relationship.



PROJECT STEWARDSHIP RECORD

The decisions, alternatives, lessons, and unfinished business a successor should inherit.



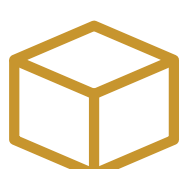
STEWARDS’ LOG

Short, recorded context about conditions, decisions, and relationships that ordinary files rarely capture.



90-DAY CONTINUITY GUIDE

A practical plan to support overlap, orientation, relationship transfer, and leadership continuity.



BUILD IT OVER TIME: THE STEWARDSHIP TRANSITION FILE

A good transition file should not begin when someone decides to leave. It should be the accumulated result of how we work while we are here.

It is the curated collection of our Stewardship System—logs, records, drawings, notes, and lessons—organized and indexed so the next steward can quickly find what matters. Add to it over time. Keep it current. Make it useful long before it is needed.

When transition comes, we do not start from scratch.

We simply hand forward what we have been faithfully tending.