

6 Challenges, Potential Solution, and Immediate Next Steps

SWP Challenge

Potential Solution

Example Immediate Next Step

1 **LACK OF SENIOR LEADER BUY-IN.** Limited support from executives, often due to competing priorities, short-term focus, or a lack of understanding of SWP's strategic value.

Present a business case that ties SWP to key organizational goals, such as financial performance, talent readiness, or market competitiveness, and highlights its role in addressing current and future challenges.

Identify one key workforce metric (e.g., turnover costs) that highlights the impact of insufficient planning. Quantify its financial cost and prepare a brief summary for executive discussion.

2 **LACK OF ALIGNMENT WITH BUSINESS PLANNING PROCESS .** SWP is treated as a standalone HR process rather than an integral part of the broader strategic business planning process.

Integrate SWP into the annual business planning cycle, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities, financial goals, and operational forecasts. Engage cross-functional leaders to create a shared understanding of workforce needs.

Schedule a meeting with finance and operational leaders to identify one or two key business priorities that SWP can directly support (e.g., cost management, talent availability for growth initiatives).

3 **RELIANCE ON MANUAL PROCESSES.** SWP relies heavily on spreadsheets and manual data entry, leading to inefficiencies, errors, and limited scalability.

Adopt SWP technology and tools that automate data integration, scenario modeling, and forecasting, enabling more accurate and efficient planning.

Identify a few SWP tasks that consume significant time due to manual effort (e.g., headcount forecasting). Research tools or platforms that automate this capability; schedule demos with vendors.

4 **DATA CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS.** Difficulty in accessing, consolidating, or analyzing data from multiple sources, such as HR systems, financial tools, and operational metrics, hinders accurate SWP.

Establish a data governance framework that ensures data consistency, accessibility, and integration across systems, enabling accurate and holistic workforce planning.

Identify the three most critical data sources for SWP (e.g., HRIS, financial planning system, operational performance data). Work with IT or analytics teams to map existing data gaps and prioritize integration efforts.

5 **SHORT TERM FOCUS.** SWP emphasizes immediate hiring needs or operational demands, neglecting long-term organizational goals and evolving skill requirements.

Gradually extend the planning horizon by adding one additional year to the current workforce planning timeframe, enabling a broader outlook while remaining actionable.

Review the organization's current workforce plan and identify one or two strategic priorities that would benefit from extending the planning horizon by a year. Adjust projections to include this extended timeframe.

6 **LIMITED SCENARIO PLANNING.** SWP focuses on a single projected future, leaving the organization vulnerable to unexpected changes or disruptions.

Collaborate with the strategic planning team to incorporate scenario planning into SWP. Build a shared understanding of potential business scenarios (e.g., rapid growth, market downturn, etc) and align workforce strategies.

Brainstorm one alternative business scenario and identify three ways it might impact your workforce needs.

For more resources and tools, check out my private community for internal HR practitioners, [Talent Edge Circle](#).