



Rising to the Challenge of Nonprofit Recruiting

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It's common knowledge that with limited resources, recruiting for nonprofit roles can be especially challenging. But it's important that nonprofit executives don't overlook best practices for effective recruiting, as it's people who are behind an organization's mission, and are critical to its success. While the challenge is great, the cultural, productivity and financial costs of recruiting missteps provide ample motivation to get the process right. Consider that the cost of turnover averages 150 percent of the departing employee's compensation. That expense can prove to be particularly troublesome for mission-based organizations like nonprofits. So, what can nonprofit leaders and managers do to prepare themselves for the task of recruiting?

Tips for Recruiting Success

Successful recruiting requires nonprofit leaders to be adept at: (a) finding qualified candidates who are committed to the mission of the organization and its work; (b) finding the right compensation mix (pay/benefits) due to tight budget constraints; (c) pushing people to do more for less or asking individual employees to work harder because they cannot always afford the staffing they might need; and (d) properly onboarding the new employees, once hired, and setting them up for success.

While bringing on the right people can be tedious and difficult, and doing it well takes time, energy and training, nonprofit leaders should adhere to these four best hiring practices to ensure they're on the right track when it comes to recruiting:

- Identify the responsibilities, performance outcomes and core competencies required in order for the individual to excel in the position, and document them in the form of a results-based job description.
- Communicate what a job well done looks like throughout the entire search process, and prepare interview questions in advance based on the desired results outlined in the job description.
- Screen resumes with a lens focused on what the candidates have done or can do vs. what credentials they have. It's the "doing," not the "having," that is important. When interviewing/evaluating candidates, ask all candidates the same interview questions and avoid common rater pitfalls; such as:

- Similar to me – they went to the same school as you, lived in the same area, etc.
- Halo Effect – One positive thing about the candidate outshines everything else and inordinately tips the scale to the positive side.
- Horn Effect – One negative thing about the candidate overshadows everything else, and inordinately tips the scale to the negative side.

Building Onboarding Skills

Once the offer is made and the candidate has accepted, nonprofit executives should consider how much time is spent ensuring that the individual is successful in the job. Is s/he being engaged to the point where s/he is as productive as possible as quickly as possible and remains so? Is there a process for making that happen easily?

Here are five onboarding best practices:

1. Be present on the employee's first day: Employees want to believe that they are an important part of an organization's mission and important to you. Showing a brand new employee how happy you are that they've joined includes actually meeting them in person when they arrive for work on their first day, or using technology to meet them if they are not within close proximity.
2. Be prepared for their arrival: Is the workspace prepared and ready for the new employee to begin



working? Is someone waiting for him/her in order to show him/her around, make introductions, provide keys, etc.?

3. Have tasks for new employees to do: Are work assignments lined up for the new employee so s/he can begin working right away? This could include training.
4. Ensure they have a lunch meet and greet: Have lunch appointments been arranged for the new employee for at least the first day?
5. Clearly communicate expectations and follow-up: This is a critical step. Provide the new employee with information regarding expectations for the first week, month, quarter and year; and make sure feedback is being provided on a regular basis. Set the pattern for honest and direct feedback early in the relationship. Do it in a helpful way, as opposed to focusing on the negative.

Over time, the process of recruiting and onboarding great candidates becomes less burdensome and more productive, but nonprofit organizations must not overlook the value of proper training to prepare their leaders for the task ahead of them – a task that can significantly alter the talent won and the future path of the organization.