

Recruiting leaders for nonprofits

A 2004 study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation showed that roughly one-quarter of executive directors anticipate leaving their nonprofit organizations within two



RESOURCES FOR GROWTH

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years. In 2006, nonprofits experienced this turnover in leadership, and it could continue for the next few years.

Nonprofits seek many of the same qualifications for their executives as for-profit businesses do. However, fundamental differences in missions, revenue generation, ownership and available resources make the process of recruiting nonprofit executives a distinct challenge.

Nonprofits need executives who possess proven fund-raising abilities and have excellent interpersonal skills to build relationships with donors and board members.

If you are a member of a nonprofit board, chances are good you will be faced with recruiting a new executive director during your tenure. Preparing your organization now for an eventual change will make the process easier for everyone.

Take a close look at your organization, and set strategic goals for the future. What talents, skills and abilities does your organization need to reach those goals?

When the time comes to begin recruiting, communicate with the staff to pave the way for changes that will occur. Most people resist change and may misinterpret the new executive's intentions if they are not prepared.

As you begin to narrow the field of potential candidates, probe the track records of each. Take a detailed look at funding, staffing, programs and services implemented as well as collaboration with other organizations and innovative solutions to challenges faced.

Get board members involved in conducting interviews. Ask thought-provoking questions that give you a sense of the person's creativity in solving problems.

Don't be afraid to talk to people who have worked closely with the potential candidate. Their responses will give you a sense of the candidate's true efficiency, tact and diplomacy.

Most nonprofits require approval from the board of directors before a formal offer is made. Communication with the board throughout the process will minimize surprises and raise the probability of a "yes."

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