

EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Replacing a Star Player

Before you automatically seek that free agent by posting a job description requiring ten years experience, consider looking for talent within your organization or your network. Just as in baseball, there is more than one way to build an effective professional advancement team.

By Steve Zastrow, Senior Consultant

The question is the same in nonprofits and professional baseball. When a ten-year veteran player leaves, does management recruit a seasoned, free agent from another team or bring a rookie up from the farm club?

Before you automatically seek that free agent by posting a job description requiring ten years experience, consider looking for talent within your organization or your network. Just as in baseball, there is more than one way to build an effective professional advancement team.

Veteran or Rookie? Often, in our search for talent, we look for long résumés with impressive titles and well-crafted bullet points promoting individual accomplishments. While demonstrated success is important, professional searches based on these criteria alone may limit an organization's ability to identify quality candidates for a successful hire.

Profile Your Desired Team: Think about your staff's professional development as you would a board of directors' development program. Create a staff experience grid to define the qualities you desire in your professional team, to assess your bench strengths, and to identify where you need to build or recruit strengths.

Build a "Farm Team": Consider ways to grow and nurture new professionals. Talent, values and creativity may not be teachable, but specific skill sets are – and why can't those skills be gained at your organization? Create career paths and educational opportunities to help these internal candidates develop their skills. These professional development opportunities will also attract new employees to your organization.

Always Be Scouting: Get involved in the not-for-profit community through professional associations and civic organizations. Even when not actively recruiting, network with professionals who demonstrate the values, qualities and character your organization needs. When the time comes to search for a new staff member, you will already know several exciting candidates well enough to discuss the subject of employment.

The next time your organization gets ready to make a new hire, pause first. Look around your organization, and search your network of colleagues. Your next development officer, marketing guru or volunteer coordinator may be closer than you think. And best of luck – if you're pursuing these strategies, your search has already begun!

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