5 Winning Ways to Wrestle Recruitment Risk

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If your nonprofit hasn't already faced the difficult challenge of attracting new staff to fill the shoes of departing rock stars, get ready! According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), an estimated 7.8 million jobs will need to be filled by 2020. This unsettling headline has led many nonprofit teams to rethink their approach to the recruitment risk/reward equation.

The cost of hiring mistakes and misfires is significant: did you know that leaders of small organizations spend as much as 40% of working hours on tasks unrelated to generating revenue? Another study indicates that it takes up to 50-60% of a departing employee's annual salary to find and onboard their replacement. Ouch! And the pain only intensifies when the new hire is a poor fit for the job or the organization.

Given that no nonprofit can afford to spend time on mis-hires, or lose ground when a campaign to replace talent drags on, we're excited to share the following winning ways to manage recruitment risk. We'll take a deeper dive into the murky waters of recruitment risk during the "Managing Staff Recruitment Risk" session that will be featured at Risk Connect on May 14th. As a reminder, Risk Connect is a free, all-day virtual conference for Affiliate Members of NRMC.

1. **Update the position description, first!** When a superstar team member announces their intention to retire in Tahiti or take a more lucrative position, many executives believe that the fastest way to move from denial to acceptance is to post the opening without delay. That's a mistake. The departure of a key team member should always be an opportunity to pause and reflect. Use the current position description as a tool to reflect on what your nonprofit needs in the years ahead. How might the role change? Do the minimum requirements listed still make sense?
2. **Use an application.** If you've been in the trenches of recruitment lately (as a hiring manager or applicant) you know how easy it is to upload or submit a resume in response to a posting on a social media platform. If you're continuing this dated and dangerous practice, don't be surprised when you receive resumes from applicants who bring few to none of the minimum requirements you listed in your posting. Keep in mind that resumes tell the story an applicant wants you to know, versus answering the questions you should be asking. Using a customized application will enable you to compare applicant apples to applicant apples. We'll show examples of custom applications during our Risk Connect session in May.
3. **Adjust your focus.** Many nonprofit leaders make the mistake of searching for the perfect circus performer candidate: the applicant who will work for peanuts, keep an absurd number of responsibilities (plates) spinning on poles, and contort into different roles on the ringleader's command or whim. Stop dreaming of your ideal candidate; instead, focus on recruiting a diverse applicant pool of talents and

skills from which to choose the candidate who will bring a new perspective to your team.

4. **Choose carrots over sticks.** Fear = failure when it comes to motivating the knowledge workers who staff today's nonprofits. And since the desire to learn is a characteristic shared across all generations of staff in a multigenerational workplace, it's vital that you consider professional development opportunities before your recruitment process is in full swing. Make sure you can confidently answer the question you'll receive from applicants across the generations: "What professional development opportunities will I have as a member of your team?" Keep in mind that you may be replacing seasoned staff with recruits who have more promise than solid experience. Candidates who are eager and enthusiastic learners should float to the top of the applicant pool.
5. **Be consistent.** Make sure that the process to fill a specific position is consistent for all who apply for that position: use the same application and the same set of criteria, interview questions and reference check questions. And when an experiment with a more inclusive process—such as involving direct reports in interviews with finalists—pays off, resolve to spread the news and replicate the innovation.

Filling vacancies and finding superb candidates for new or vacant positions in your nonprofit should be an adventure, not a drag. If you're relying on conventional techniques to build a high-performing team, plan to be disappointed. To share your thoughts on recruitment risks and winning strategies, plan to join us on May 14th for Risk Connect.

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