

A hand holding a lightbulb with gears inside, symbolizing innovation and strategy. The background is a warm, orange-toned image of a hand holding a lightbulb, with a network of glowing nodes and lines above it.

A Collective Strength: Strategies to Secure Nonprofit Endurance

5 Ways to Shape a Durable Workplace of Inclusivity, Innovation and Trust

Follow This Blueprint to Build a Home for the People Who Will
Make Your Organization the Powerhouse It Was Meant to Be

A Collective Strength: Strategies to Secure Nonprofit Endurance

5 Ways to Shape a Durable Workplace of Inclusivity, Innovation and Trust

On June 6, 1966, Senator Robert Kennedy spoke in Cape Town, South Africa — a nation still dominated by the malignant rule of Apartheid. To most people of the time, this discriminatory system seemed invincible. Senator Kennedy had only the hope that he could inspire others to work toward change. In his closing remarks, he said:

“There is a ... curse which says, ‘May he live in interesting times.’ Like it or not, we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also the most creative of any time in the history of mankind. And everyone here will ultimately be judged—will ultimately judge himself—on the effort he has contributed to building a new world society and the extent to which his ideals and goals have shaped that effort.”¹

Like the people of 1960s South Africa, we live in interesting times. The turmoil of modern life threatens our collective future. But are we doomed? History proved Kennedy’s words prophetic. The indomitable force of Apartheid eventually crumbled to dust.

So, even though we’re enduring yet another time of danger and uncertainty, the fact is, we’re also enjoying one of the most creative periods of human history. Our researchers find solutions at speeds that would astound the best thinkers of only a generation ago. Yes, our challenges are intimidating. But our resources and abilities have soared to visionary heights. Each of us has the potential to make far-reaching changes. Most valuable in our society, without doubt, are the nonprofit organizations that feed our communities, tend to our sick, protect our environment, help our poor and provide for the common good. They often accomplish so much while struggling with limited budgets and support. People like you, who staff and run nonprofits, are among the most **creative** leaders in today’s world.

Blessed with the strength of a **diverse** workforce, the agility born from **innovation**, and the stability gained by others’ **trust**, your nonprofit organization can do more than survive the competition. The practices recommended in this ebook are effective tools you can use to advance your efforts toward a brighter future for all.



WARNING: Ignoring the need for a workplace culture of inclusivity, innovation and trust can destabilize or even make your nonprofit irrelevant in an ever-changing world.



1



Evaluate Your Employer Brand Awareness and Reputation

Your employer brand is what people think of you — a blend of your outside reputation and your current employees' opinions. No matter what you do, it will always be there. However, you can influence what others think of you by proactively designing, developing and maintaining your employer brand. Ultimately, you can make it work for you.



Employer Branding vs. Corporate Branding

There are three major distinctions between the two² types of branding. First, your target audience for employer branding consists of current or potential employees, so the content of your branding is more about your culture and workplace experience than the products or services you provide. Second, your target audiences are both *internal* and *external* as opposed to corporate branding which is directed at an external audience. Third, your audience is a particular group of candidates while corporate branding reaches out to a mass audience.

So, Who Are You?

A strong brand lets others know who you are and what you stand for in a fraction of the time it would take to explain your mission, vision and values. There are several steps³ you can take to develop and maintain a brand that speaks for you in a clear and steady voice.

- **Remain consistent in your messaging.** Inconsistency can provoke fear and will weaken your employer brand.
- **Know your niche.** No matter what your organization's mission, make sure your brand clearly and powerfully shares that information to draw your best-fit candidates.
- **You're part of the community you serve.** Treating your employees like extended family makes them feel included and a part of something even bigger than the brand itself.
- **Provide the best services you can to your community.** A reputation for quality will go a long way to branding your organization as a desirable place to work.

Walk Your Talk Before They Walk and Talk

If you've earned a poor reputation, it's time to mend fences. A full 86% of job seekers will walk past a company that has a bad reputation with former employees or the general public. And the same holds true for current employees.

Any job seeker who knows a current employee will ask about life at your nonprofit. Usually, your staff member will spend less time talking about your mission and more time describing management, day-to-day operations, morale, core values and your workplace culture. You want them to say that your mission is powerful and your culture lives by it—that will draw the best possible candidates to your organization.

Remember, it's important to select, adopt and support mission-related core values within your culture. These fixed core values will help steer your people through challenges. If you're not sure which particular values will best fit your nonprofit, choose those that can be organically amplified and reinforced, with ease, each time the team works toward your nonprofit's mission. The examples, below, make effective choices for many nonprofits. They're taken from a list of values options by Caroline Forsey of Hubspot.⁴

- Integrity
- Passion
- Innovation
- Diversity
- Honesty
- Trust
- Accountability
- Teamwork

Once you have determined your current employer brand status, decide where you want your organization to go, and set actions in motion to see that you move in that direction ... you'll be on the way to great employer brand management. The benefits you'll notice begin with your organization's budget. A solid employer brand can reduce your rate of turnover by as much as 28% and reduce your costs-per-hire to half of your current rate. When job seekers are drawn to your employer brand, you'll spend less on recruitment and hiring costs. You'll also enjoy higher workforce morale and increased productivity.

People will talk about your nonprofit. And their perceptions will be shaped by seemingly small parts of your culture. It could be physical, technological or cultural.⁵ By considering each employee as a sort of *customer*, and by taking these important steps, you'll influence their words toward a positive and powerful result, leading to higher talent acquisition and retention.

A solid "Employer" brand
can lower your turnover
rate by as much as 28%



Evaluation Is Key

Zappos leader Tony Hsieh said, “Your Culture Is Your Brand.” At first glance, workforce members may lean toward for-profit enterprises with higher salaries. So, it will be important for your organization to present a brand that differentiates you as the better option for numerous reasons. Your brand must instantly show top-notch candidates the best reasons people work for you.

To determine your current status, start by surveying external audiences and existing employees. External stakeholders can give you an idea of your organization’s overall reputation. You’ll also want to gain insights into what current employees like about working for you. What is it about your mission that inspires them? How does your culture support their personal and professional wellbeing? Where are they struggling? Based on the feedback they provide, you can set a strategy to understand and improve your employer brand reputation.

Remember that people have likely, at some point in time, been frightened by employment uncertainty. While money will be important, there might be comforting benefits that your organization can offer: A sense of some control over their circumstances, safety, purpose, and above all, a sense of hope.

Your Culture

Modern organizations benefit from a deliberately assembled culture. This usually results in better overall hiring practices, retention and organizational growth. Is your culture what you need it to be?

Compare your culture to others, paying attention to your organization’s values. This is critical, because you must have a clear set of values in order to achieve your mission. Here are a dozen attributes worth evaluating⁶:

- 1. Respect and fairness.** Do managers favor some team members over others? How safe are employees with regard to their sexual identity, race, gender or age?
- 2. Trust and integrity.** How transparent is your nonprofit in living up to the values you advocate? How much do managers trust their staff to do their jobs?
- 3. Change and adaptability.** How does your organization support and communicate with employees through change? Are they appreciated as a competitive advantage?
- 4. Results orientation.** How much emphasis is placed on achieving results? Do employees enjoy incentives and feel accountability to reach goals?
- 5. Teamwork.** Do members of different departments work well across silos? Does the organization express expectations for sharing ownership of projects?
- 6. Employee engagement.** Are workers’ talents and contributions recognized and valued as key to organizational success? Is the work environment generally supportive?
- 7. Responsibility and accountability.** Are employees encouraged to think outside the box? Are they allowed to make mistakes?
- 8. Learning opportunities.** Are employees encouraged and supported in their personal and professional growth? Does leadership actively provide growth opportunities for all employees, setting clear learning objectives for every position?



A Collective Strength: Strategies to Secure Nonprofit Endurance

5 Ways to Shape a Durable Workplace of Inclusivity, Innovation and Trust

9. **Meaning and purpose.** How valuable is your mission to the staff? Do employees understand how their role contributes to the achievements of the organization?
10. **Communication.** Does your leadership put effort into clearly communicating all goals and status reports to staff regularly? Are staff members able to communicate openly?
11. **Decision making.** Who holds the keys to action in your organization? Do you trust employees to make appropriate decisions at their level?
12. **Goals and strategy.** Does your culture reflect your mission goals? Do employees believe in your strategies?

Polls and surveys that measure all of these attributes will help you determine which direction you should take to design the culture you want. Remember to survey external stakeholders who have an interest in your reputation and can share what they've heard about you. This will let you know if your employer brand is supported by a worthy culture. According to Glassdoor, an employer that actively manages its employer brand message will draw job seekers, 69% of whom are more likely to apply to a job with such an employer. You can then establish metrics, and from there as strategy, to improve your brand reputation.⁷

You should follow up within a year to discern if your plans are being enacted and employees are noticing a difference. Find your successes and failures so that you can build toward the positives.

Formally Articulate Your Employer Brand

Make sure you write up a clear direction for your brand, as it will determine your success in hiring and maintaining the staff you need. Your brand identity should clearly state your organization's strengths. Do you have strong ties to the community? Are you highly regarded among nonprofits? Organizations that effectively communicate their strengths are more able to engage talent early and instill a loyalty that is directly related to the organization's mission.⁸

Core Values, a Sense of Purpose, and Innovation

An Imperative survey of LinkedIn members done before 2020's cataclysmic coronavirus found that 73% of purpose-oriented members were satisfied in their jobs, compared to 64% who are not purpose-oriented. So, it's vital that you offer each candidate an opportunity to contribute to the common good. The same survey also found that 16% more companies with a clear set of core values and articulated purpose for employees enjoyed growth of 10% or greater.⁹ When everyone can see how they contribute to the core values of the organization, they pull together, creating a powerful force to propel your nonprofit forward.

You need to keep moving forward. Media executive Bob Iger said, "The riskiest thing we can do is just maintain the status quo." Since your values guide your mission, an innovative move would be to give ownership of your values to every member of your workforce.¹⁰ Organizations that thrive in the future will be led by those creative individuals who understand and embrace this philosophy. Give your workforce a stronger voice in the direction—the soul—of your mission.

2

Increase Operational Efficiencies to Maximize Employee Bandwidth

To improve the overall effectiveness, the performance, of your team, you'll want to improve in two areas: efficiency and productivity. Be sure to take advantage of a highly effective yet often-overlooked best-practice procedure for improvement in this area. Ask your employees to identify ways that the team can be more efficient and productive. When you involve the front-line workers who experience systemic barriers, they'll help you find better solutions in a shorter amount of time. Also, you need to know the difference between the two and which one should be tackled first.

Productivity vs. Operational Efficiency

Efficiency is about accomplishing the same goals with fewer resources, while productivity is about accomplishing more without increasing your consumption of resources. Resources could be worker hours, supplies, phone lines, funds or whatever it takes to get the job done. For example, if your organization uses 10 people to make calls and solicit restaurant donations for a community food bank, improving *efficiency* could be improving the phone system so that eight people could make the same number of calls in the same amount of time. Improving *productivity* would be training those 10



people to achieve a larger donation with each call. If you improve both, you've built a smaller team that

can achieve more. It's best to begin by improving efficiency. Always start by reducing the amount of wasted effort and resources. Once that has been set and stabilized with a clear baseline of operations, you can work to increase productivity without undermining efficiency. Why spend resources training all 10 people to improve their phone skills if you'll only need eight people after modernizing the phone system? But once you've set up the right team of callers on a modern phone system, you can then target exactly who needs training with greater results. Create a lean, mean machine and *then* make it run like a dream.

Take the time to strategize your best practices when preparing to improve your efficiency. It's not simply about cutting costs. Analytics can be a key factor in making the right choices.¹¹ Once you've fully analyzed your processes, then you can begin to pinpoint where waste occurs so that you can begin to fix it in a way that is sustainable, perhaps with incentivized buy-in from the staff.

A promising way to begin improving efficiency is to eliminate bottlenecks. These are points in your workflow where the bureaucracy overwhelms and slows the process of completing a task. Or it could simply be a matter of disorganization. Is there a file that everyone needs but is hard to locate? Do you have a disorganized email system that makes it difficult to find important correspondence? So when someone needs something from these, they have to stop the flow to go find what they need. Bottlenecks can waste time, effort and money. One strategy to eradicate such waste is the 5S method¹²: Sort, Shine, Straighten, Standardize and Sustain. When you clean up your organization and its worksite, your improved efficiency will lead to more fruitful improvements in productivity.

Remember Productivity and Employee Bandwidth

Once you've established a baseline of operations, the next step is to work on productivity. The current vernacular for this is employee bandwidth, which measures in large part team productivity.



But how did bandwidth come to relate to employees? The term started in IT, where it was used to describe the speed of internet that could flow through a particular electronic system. The metaphoric use, today, describes how much productive work a manager can expect from staff members in a particular amount of time. This really is not about making staff work harder or faster to beat the clock. It's about studying and working with the complete cultural and systemic condition. Is an employee close to burnout? Why? Too much work or too little? Are employees bored with no opportunities for growth? Are some frustrated by red tape and micromanagement? All of these must be taken as part of the bandwidth equation.

UC Berkeley professor Morten Hansen wrote about a study of more than 5,000 professionals over a period of 5 years. He looked at the way people took on workloads and delineated four common personality styles that describe how different staff members behave¹³:

- **Accept More, Then Coast.** Employees who volunteer for a lot of projects but then don't finish them all.
- **Do Less, No Stress.** Employees who do the bare minimum to keep their jobs.
- **Do More, Then Stress.** Like the first group, they say yes to every opportunity, but then they overwork in order to accomplish it all and eventually burn themselves out.
- **Do Less, Then Obsess.** This is the most realistic group. They choose a few priorities and then work hard to accomplish them with great success.

In performance reviews of the four groups, the *Do Less, Then Obsess* group scored as much as 25 percentage points higher than the other three. This style clearly works better as the workers are forced to pay attention to key factors on a regular basis.

Five Tips to Improve Bandwidth

There are five simple steps you can take to raise the level of productivity with employees and bandwidth in your team.

- 1. Provide opportunities to develop cross-discipline expertise.** Are team members stuck in one role, never learning anything new and bored? There's a simple cure for that. Provide the opportunity for members of different teams to leap into other silos and develop basic skills there. Other benefits include having people who can fill in for a few weeks if you lose a team member.
- 2. Raise the corporate culture.** No doubt you're already working to maximize the impact of your employment culture. When you emphasize innovation, team relationships, communication and trust, you build better relationships with your staff and their productivity will increase as they feel happier and more fulfilled in their careers.
- 3. Effective communication.** Avoid confusion and build a smart team filled with people who know what is expected and can express what's going on at their level.
- 4. Use technology appropriately.** The advent of inexpensive apps and software have made technological advances much more affordable in recent years. You can now improve your efficiency, increase productivity and build worker satisfaction with several available products. See what your competitors are using and find a version that's affordable and useful for your organization.
- 5. Show your appreciation.** Build rapport with the team and make sure to commemorate their achievements. The more they feel recognized for their efforts, the more eagerly they will participate in the culture and proactively fulfill their assignments.

You can also improve retention and institutional knowledge by hiring staff with full-time hours and benefits, rather than bringing them in as part-time or contract employees. Grow their roles with your organization and reap the benefits of built-in bandwidth.

Help Them Avoid Burnout

Your goal of maximizing employee bandwidth is to increase productivity without burning out your staff. Employers who push their staff to do work faster or harder, risk a high attrition rate, as employees flee for safer grounds. The first thing to understand is that employee burnout usually has more to do with an organization than any particular employee. You could be overloading your most capable employees with too much work and too many responsibilities.

It's time to begin thinking of your employees' time as a precious resource and plan accordingly. If regular overtime is celebrated in your company culture, take another look at that value and check for damage to the lives of your staff members. Too many emails flying back and forth? Too many meetings in one day? When you begin to provide some relief from these constant interruptions, and give employees control over their own calendars, you'll see your staff's energy revitalize as they gain a sense of control and autonomy.



A Collective Strength: Strategies to Secure Nonprofit Endurance

5 Ways to Shape a Durable Workplace of Inclusivity, Innovation and Trust

UST | By Nonprofits
For Nonprofits

All of this comes from the common problem of excessive collaboration.¹⁴ If your organization has grown and developed numerous layers of decision makers, this could be hampering your employee bandwidth. As each stakeholder manages multiple projects, and must sign off on each, the staff members must make themselves available for a seemingly endless round of meetings, conference calls, and emails. The exhausting schedule becomes counterproductive to the point of chasing employees out the door. Restructuring the hierarchy of command can save managers from wasting time on redundant activities and freeing them to accomplish more.

Empower Your Employees

Remember, in the end, most workers want to feel fulfilled and competent in what they do for a living. They want to contribute and make a difference. It's up to you to give them the workspace that allows them to fulfill their dreams of succeeding. Economist Theodore Levitt said, "*Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things.*" With this advice, you can allow employees to increase their efficiency, their productivity and their team bandwidth.



3



Promote a Diverse, Inclusive Workplace

Experienced HR leaders know that one of the best means of fortifying an organization is through a diverse workforce. They push for an inclusive culture that promotes strength and resilience through collaboration. Academy Award-winning director and producer Robert Alan Aurthur said, “Cultural differences should not separate us from each other, but rather cultural diversity brings a collective strength that can benefit all of humanity.” Your nonprofit can benefit from the varied contributions of experiences, perspectives, skills, talents and values of a diverse workforce. Consider the benefits to your retention goals when you strategize diversity in your workplace. As candidates see your organization’s commitment to diversity, they’ll be more likely to choose you as more than a place to work—but also as a place to continue working for years. Diversity and inclusiveness are key to employee retention.



Where to Start

First, you'll need to define for yourself what a more diverse staff would look like in your organization. Do you see older people hired into positions normally reserved for younger workers—positions such as internships and other career-launching jobs? Do you see women managing more teams? Managers in a variety of colors and ethnicities? The choices you make will help build a staff that feels engaged in your mission and ready to contribute.

Support and participation for diversity planning must include leadership, especially when implementing your strategies. Remember that nonprofit leaders tend to favor recommendations from staff and board members when it comes to hiring for key positions.¹⁵ A common bias issue is for people in these positions to recommend “look-alike” candidates. And since only 14% of nonprofit board members and only 6% of development staff are people of color, the results are usually a continuation of the situation. To deal with this, set up recruiting efforts in diverse communities. Pay attention to career fairs in such communities, reach out to potential partners who lead such communities, locate and contact multicultural associations and if necessary, hire recruiting firms dedicated and proven to bring in a diversified field of qualified candidates. Through broader community outreach efforts and partnership building, you will be able to develop a pipeline into your organization that welcomes all qualified candidates who apply.

You can speed up the process by implementing blind recruiting strategies. Done right, you can eliminate or reduce the implicit bias and focus on finding people who possess the skills, qualifications and talents for the job. You may already block photos in early recruiting, as well as names (to avoid ethnic bias), but the question arises: *How soon do you reveal the identities of the candidates?* It's been reported¹⁶ that blind interviews increase the likelihood that a woman will be hired by as much as 46%.

Do It Right!

It's possible you've been trying to diversify your staff for a while. But if the leaders you recruit and retain are part of the leading hegemony, then you can expect to continue failing in diversity. It matters where you seek candidates, what you prioritize in your ads and screening process and what happens after the interviews. To avoid the same traps, work on these five areas for improvement:

- 1. Be Open and Honest.** When candidates meet solely with white, male board members of a certain age group, they can deduce that they will find few who share their background, sexuality, gender or more in leadership roles. And they could feel discouraged. The solution is to be honest with candidates. Admit openly that you're actively working to change the deficiencies in your organization. Ask for their help in improving that situation. "If you join us, you can make a difference in our organization moving forward."
- 2. Extend Your Search.** If you've always searched for local talent, try to recruit outside of your geographic region and networks to find more pools of diverse candidates. The same holds true for generational bias. Either your current leaders are fearful of hiring younger talent to fill leadership roles or the opposite is happening in that they're not interested in selecting seasoned job seekers in favor of going with a younger vibe in the culture. Both are missing an opportunity to expand your workforce in diversity of experience.
- 3. Beware of Hidden Bias.** If you've relied on executive search firms to find your managers, watch out for the psychometric tests that purportedly remove hiring bias. The truth is, they often screen out candidates with embedded biases that miss cultural differences. Questions can be interpreted differently depending on your background, and it's a longstanding, documented problem with all kinds of standardized tests. You will find it more effective to meet with candidates more than once, starting with blind contacts, talk with them, and check their references.
- 4. Keep Your Pay Fair.** When a longtime leader departs from an organization, one old trick is to reset the pay level back to when that person first started. The hiring team could be setting it back decades. This is unfair to your new candidates, as it fails to account for inflation or an increased workload when the new person is asked to take over the larger, fully-developed role. This is a more common occurrence when a white male is replaced by a woman or a person of color. Watch the gender pay gap. According to the 2019 GuideStar Nonprofit Compensation Report, the gender pay gap for CEOs at larger nonprofit organizations (\$50 million-plus budget) is still 20%, which is less than the gap at smaller organizations.¹⁷ You can do better. Simply maintain the same salary level you've been paying as a baseline. Then, research current pay rates to determine an accurate and competitive level that is fair.
- 5. Level the Field.** To protect your culture from the abuses of power concentrated at the top, your leadership team should distribute power throughout levels of the organization. This type of decision-making model empowers more people of various perspectives and protects everyone from concentrated authority in the hands of a top executive.

Blind interviews increase the likelihood that a woman will be hired by as much as 46%

Grow Stronger

You've no doubt already discovered that being understaffed, or being staffed without diversity, can weaken your organization, as the gale force winds of change threaten to knock down everything you've built. Of course, finding qualified candidates requires building an active and

healthy pipeline of candidates. If you already consider your team diverse, and you feel safer promoting from within, that's fine for now. But consider that you'll still need to build a candidate pipeline with a regular flow of people. Diversity in your workplace is now more than a banner you wave; it is a necessity with benefits that reach beyond social approval.

Workers who have been marginalized because of disabilities, age, or some other factor are more than just the suffering few. When they can't earn a wage that recognizes their skills, education and talents, the entire community suffers. We all lose the benefits of their contributions in the workforce, and we lose the dollars they would be spending in the community.

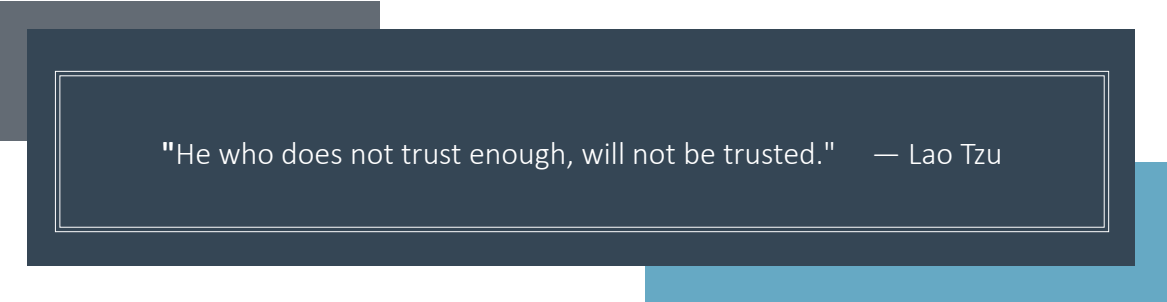
Also, when workers with varied work styles, disabilities and those who represent different cultures or generations comprise your staff, the people who work together develop more respect for each other.



4

Hire and Develop Managers People Want to Work For

As of early 2020, the nonprofit employment sector is reported to be the third largest in the nation, following manufacturing and retail.¹⁸ Job statistics will no doubt remain unsteady in the next few years, as unfolding events put these employers at risk. Beyond catastrophic demands placed on them for services, a lot of nonprofits also had to deal with financial losses caused by changing tax incentives. The result is, you are probably facing financial challenges in hiring right-fit people for your organization. One important way to attract more qualified candidates — and retain them — is to hire managers who support and sustain their teams.



"He who does not trust enough, will not be trusted." — Lao Tzu

Recognize Your Challenges

It's said that people don't quit jobs, they quit bosses. According to Gallup, up to 70% of employee engagement is affected by managers.¹⁹ Gallup also reports that one out of every two employees who have quit a job did so to leave their manager. And less than a third of employees would strongly agree that their manager involves them in goal setting.

Have you done all you can to assure that every manager in your organization has the temperament and training to effectively run a department without alienating staff? The challenges you face can be daunting. You may be forced to offer lower compensation for longer work hours. Additionally, slow progress toward your mission's goals can weaken your employees' resolve to stay. So, while burnout might be a problem, your bigger challenge might be finding enough qualified candidates who are inspired by your mission.²⁰

Specific skills can be taught in most cases, or an inventive employee might come up with smart ideas to improve your processes. Also, consider work and life experience, because in an often-gritty world, your organization could draw strength from people who have life lessons to share. Contract workers can transition into excellent full-time employees. The one common denominator they must all have is passion. Be sure to ask for their story. Find out what happened that brought them to your office. You might be impressed by what you hear.

Manage Your Talent

You want the right person for the job. You can also find the right job for the person. Either way, you should consider the following guidelines to boost your success over the long haul:

- **Think Future.** If you've thought about where you want your nonprofit to be in 5 years, you need to give equal time to what workforce you'll require. You can't grow your own expanding workforce. Eventually, there will be specific skills that require significant training, so now is the time to strategize what you will need in the future and how you will attract, hire and retain that talent. Include soft skills, such as drive, trainability and emotional intelligence to build a smart, driven, adaptable team.

- **Take a Second Look.** While building a candidate pipeline from external sources is good for your organization, you should also give current staff members a fair chance to move up in the organization. Help diverse team members rise into management roles. You'll benefit with leaders who know about the culture. And you'll also build employee engagement when others see upward mobility happening.
- **Follow the Numbers.** Always design a job with clear performance goals, so that the person in that role can be evaluated easily by others.
- **Orchestrate Your Teams.** Like a symphony conductor, you need to put together teams that work well in a collective setting with more productive results.



Your Managers

As individuals, companies, industries and nations work to rebuild after upheaval, workers need a paycheck, of course. But along with that, they need a strong sense of purpose and opportunity. When they feel that, your staff members will engage, perform, commit to staying and seeing your nonprofit through challenges that lie ahead. The only way to ensure that dedication and loyalty in workers is to provide them with leadership that supports their efforts, trusts them to perform and guides them toward future successes.

Yet, a frightening 53% of managers surveyed didn't completely understand what it meant to be a manager when they took their first management job. Additionally, a striking 66% of managers reported that they didn't receive any coaching or training for their new role.²¹ You can change that.

Make sure your managers:

- **Motivate each team member with a compelling mission and vision.** Beyond your organization's mission and vision, how about each team? If your nonprofit provides housing for homeless people, does your marketing team have a mission and vision of their own to share the message?
- **Assert themselves to overcome adversity and resistance.** How does a manager help team members with their problems? What energy does a great manager put forth to support each team member's success?
- **Create clear accountability.** Does everyone understand what's expected and what they must do to succeed? Is there honest follow-through? Or is there favoritism? Does the manager encourage a team spirit that supports everyone pulling together for the success of every project?
- **Build relationships based on trust, dialogue and transparency.** Do the managers encourage pay equity and transparency? Do they have the ability to communicate and trust their team members?
- **Make decisions based on productivity, not politics.** Do your managers choose people and projects that work or are they unable to control office politics on their team? Can they protect team members from organizational politics and lead everyone to the greater good?

Additionally, here are five core qualities that every management candidate should possess.²² Whether you're promoting from within or seeking someone new, make sure to look for someone who:

- **Listens.** You want a leader who takes the time to hear about issues and come up with solutions.
- **Mentors.** Most managers possess a veritable wealth of experience and expertise, but it's critical to find someone who is eager and capable of sharing it with staff.
- **Empowers.** Find a manager who offers workers the power to make their own decisions. This builds engagement and employee development.
- **Leads by Example.** Smart, honest, big-hearted, hardworking and open-minded leaders will inspire their team to behave the same way.
- **Has Their Back.** When workers feel respected and protected by their manager, they'll be more interested in working harder and smarter to achieve team goals.

Take the opportunity to review your leadership development options and implement what you need to develop managers who have these qualities and can prioritize this kind of conduct. Strong, appropriate leadership is an urgent need, and equipping future leaders with these critical skills will help to assure your nonprofit meets the demands of the future.



Acing the Interview

Success in an interview is often talked about from the perspective of a candidate. But the truth is, the interviewer should design a session that illuminates qualities of the candidate, teases out relevant details and helps the team make a determination.

Prepare questions that can bring out specifics. Instead of “yes/no” questions, ask about issues and strategies a candidate might devise to help her team work through them. To learn, for example, if a potential manager would have their backs, you might ask what that person would do if a team member admitted making a mistake. What would they do? Would they take away the project and finish it on time? Would they work through the mistake together with the employee to fix it? Listen for their answers to understand how they might succeed or fail with respect to the traits listed above.

Once all blind interviews have been conducted, allow yourself to cautiously acknowledge general first impressions on finally meeting a new candidate. Does that person make eye contact? Greet others with a smile?

Lose Your Implicit Bias

You want to trust your “gut feeling” about a candidate, but the truth is that you must do so with caution. *Implicit bias* happens when you allow stereotypes and preformed attitudes to affect your actions on a subconscious level. It can make you misread your emotional responses to a person you don’t know. We are all hardwired to prefer people who are similar in some ways, so it’s important to pay attention at every step in the process and take action to remove implicit bias, as much as possible.

Take steps to control it by asking yourself these questions as you work through your hiring process²³:

- **Is your job description limiting your responses?** The words you use reflect your employer brand messaging, so choose them carefully. A word like “driven” could alienate potential female candidates who might see it as too masculine.
- **Do you speak with people before you see them?** One small step toward fair initial impressions would be to conduct a phone interview first. Listen intently to the *content* of their answers; Anything else, such as tone, pitch, accents, even regional articulation, should be unimportant.
- **Have I assigned a writing task?** Prior to an in-person interview, ask a candidate to write a 500-word essay presenting ideas to respond to a strategic issue. Then, you can weigh their responses without the bias of visual or vocal stereotypes.

If, after you’ve gone through a thorough vetting and interviewing process, removing as much implicit bias as possible, you still feel some nagging doubts about a person, then try to understand why you feel that way. Ask other team members for their input and find out if they have the same reaction. And try not to rush the process. At some point, you will have to make a decision. Make it your best possible effort.

Ultimate Interview Tips

Escape the trap of the traditional interview by using a little imagination. Consider these three principles to gain a clearer picture of the person you're interviewing²⁴:

1. **Creativity Counts.** Challenge your candidates with unusual questions and allow them to show you who they really are. Ask questions like: What is your natural strength? What qualities of your parents do you like the most? The reasons they give for their answers can tell you a lot about their level of self-awareness, their ability to fit a role and their ability to evolve beyond their current skills.
2. **Up for a Challenge?** Design a situation that elicits their managerial behaviors. Have them guide a team to make a quick project and watch what happens. Can they provide steps for a committee to draw an unnamed object (such as a tree)? How's their attitude?
3. **Go Team!** Make the manager's potential team part of the hiring team. Will they trust this person, understand instructions and feel confident in their ability to make progress on projects together? Will they be able to learn from this person? Let them express concerns.

Beyond the Interview

These days, it's easy enough to check any candidate's social media profiles as well as their references. If you can arrange extra reference checks in addition to those provided by the candidate, you'll probably learn more. Be sure to ask about their behavior under stress as well as how that person worked with others. And remember, what that person has accomplished, what goals they've reached and challenges they've overcome, really do matter more.



5

Create an Exceptional Employee Experience

In recent years, the general workforce has been through a lot. They've faced discrimination, income loss, job insecurity, benefits insecurity, as well as a host of other professional, financial and personal problems. So, while it's true that they're seeking the best income they can achieve for their skills and talents, there is a lot to be said for offering an exceptional employee experience. What that means will vary by organization, of course, but there are a few basics you could offer that might make the difference in attracting best-fit staff.

Design Nonprofit Work to Enrich Their Lives in Meaningful Ways

While seeking creative ways to entice and engage talent, take some cues from the employee experiences offered by other employers (many of whom are nonprofits or social enterprises). For example, try the one-on-one manager-employee meeting. Offered on a regular basis, it's an all-enterprise opportunity. Make it employee-driven with topics including current projects all the way to achievements toward career goals. Here are some ideas to whet your appetite for potential employee experiences²⁵:

- **Workshops, seminars, in-house training.** Some organizations combine online tutorials for position-specific skill-building with in-person team-building activities.
- **Organizational goal updates.** Overall transparency and communication that keeps everyone informed of your nonprofit's achievements will keep staff engaged.
- **Real-time feedback.** If you make feedback a regular part of the program, employees will come to expect notes on performance so they can rapidly adjust to stay on-track with career goals and participation toward organizational achievements.
- **Share gratitude and appreciation.** Make note of how everyone contributes and recognize it. And then, celebrate quarterly. Present a list of awards that recognize all your staff has done for the organization and celebrate achievements such as anniversary dates.
- **Paid time off to volunteer.** You've attracted workers who want to contribute to the greater good. Let them choose a cause, and then let them contribute without losing a paycheck.
- **Cross-training programs.** Create a mentoring program and offer a broad-spectrum training program in which everyone has the opportunity to teach and learn something. It could be high-level communication skills, financial lessons or creative ad design.
- **Flexibility and innovative investment.** Work-life balance no longer means separating the two. Whether it's work-from-home or flexible scheduling, find ways to help your staff build bridges between their work and their personal lives. Work-from-home policies do more than provide a positive employee experience — it can prepare your organization for events that require sudden massive adaptation. You may need to invest in appropriate internet access, computer technology, phone systems and more to facilitate success. These will serve your needs now and could one day save your nonprofit.

"Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion. The potential for greatness lives within each of us." — Wilma Rudolph, 3X Olympic Gold Champ (runner)

Hold the Ladder

Prior to the events of 2020, Millennials were expected to make up 75% of the workforce by 2025. While they'll continue to dominate the workforce for the next few years, you should expect other generations to seek work as they attempt to recoup financial losses. Millennials, as a demographic, have generally expressed an interest in opportunities to build skills as part of an employment package. According to Gallup, more than half of this demographic rated it as "extremely important" when applying for a job. With many industries recovering — or not — from chaotic fluctuations in the business world, this expectation has only expanded in the workforce. They feel vulnerable. You can assuage their fears.

Imagine being handed a career roadmap — a clear, documented path that shows how you can advance through the company. When you create a customized plan for each employee, you show that you're willing and happy to invest in that person's future. This nurturing effort is rare and will build rapport quickly, as workers see that you're really living up to your promoted employer brand. They will share this with their friends, and word will spread that you're doing something rare and impressive for your staff members.

Welcome Them to a Spectacular Workspace²⁶

From their first day at work, employees need to feel that they've found something special. How do you welcome new staff members? Is there a company-wide announcement, even by email? Robust onboarding for new employees will go a long way to ensuring a full commitment to your organization. Sometimes, especially in smaller nonprofits, the crush of work can overwhelm attempts at welcoming and training new-hires. Don't ignore your responsibility to prepare workers adequately for their jobs. This includes temp-to-perm workers. A strong onboarding program will go a long way to ensuring retention, especially when you pair new-hires with veteran workers as personal and professional mentors.

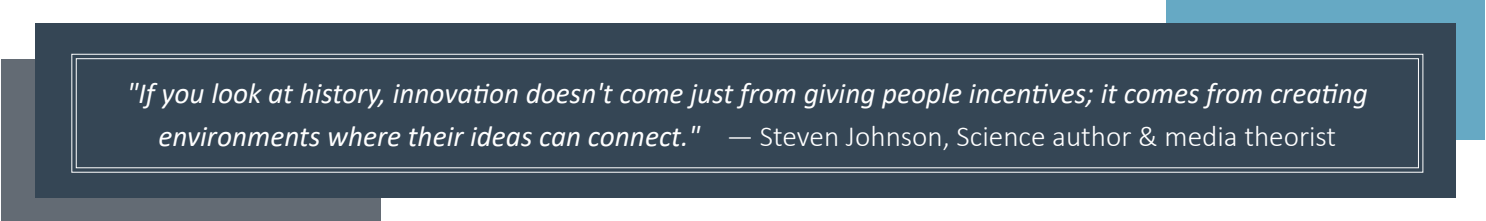
While ping pong tables have come to seem superfluous to most employees, you still need to have an enjoyable, vibrant workplace. Think of it the way a real estate agent would "stage" a home that's for sale. Is your workspace cluttered, filled with musty old boxes? Do your walls need a fresh coat of paint? How's your decor? How does the building interior smell? Are the floors in good shape? Don't dismiss esthetics. This is where people will be spending a huge portion of their lives. It doesn't have to be an amusement park, but it shouldn't be depressing, either.



Build a Strengths-Based Organizational Culture

Now that you've hired a new worker, what are you doing to keep them at your nonprofit? Studies in recent years have shown that roughly half of all employees are actively looking for a new job or tracking for openings online. If you're not actively seeking to engage with your culture, it should be a priority.

According to Gallup, when employees use their personal and professional strengths, they are nearly six times more engaged, perform better at their jobs and are less likely to leave their current job. Consider using the Online Talent Assessment²⁷ (formerly CliftonStrengths) to begin understanding your best-fit culture.²⁸ This assessment, alone, can help you identify the hidden futurist in your office, the person most able to build team harmony, or the restorative worker who's great at diagnosing and solving problems. There are 34 such strengths listed in this assessment, and every one of those skills could be useful to your nonprofit.



"If you look at history, innovation doesn't come just from giving people incentives; it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect." — Steven Johnson, Science author & media theorist

To really build a strengths-based culture, you'll need to integrate strengths development throughout your nonprofit—your mission, vision, values and processes as well as your workflow and collaboration—everything should reflect a dedicated effort. So, augment that paycheck with a sense of purpose. Offer a robust menu of staff development. Use strengths assessments and have managers coach as they learn to understand and apply their newly identified strengths. Give ongoing conversational feedback rather than an annual review. Nothing is more impactful in cultivating a sense of belonging than valuing people for their skills and talents.



Be the Talk of the Town, in a Good Way

Remember that today's workforce members are not shy about reporting publicly if they feel that a company maintains a negative or chaotic employee experience. Sites like Glassdoor provide a platform for such expression, and job seekers do review these reports when deciding on a job offer. Nearly a third of workers have declined a job offer based on negative online reviews. In a study of for-profits, those who invested in improving their employee experiences were nearly 12 times more likely to appear in Glassdoor's Best Places to Work and more than twice as likely to be listed in Forbes' World's Most Innovative Companies. The same benefits could take place in your nonprofit. A positive employee experience helps staff feel empowered to do better at their jobs, increased buy-in and more advocacy for you as an employer. When workers are satisfied with their management, their future and their impact toward the mission

of your organization, they will be more productive, consistently delivering superior performance and also recommending your organization to their acquaintances.

Encouraging Staff Innovation

Once strengths have been recognized, be sure to recognize and reward innovative thought. To improve on that, make sure your culture allows collaboration across departments for individuals who need to connect with others to draw on their expertise for the benefit of the organization, its culture, and the population it serves. Back up your support with useful technology to really make the ideas fly.

In these interesting times, today's workforce yearns for the opportunity to contribute their creativity. With the support of HR professionals like you, they will devise solutions that bring us closer to realizing our ideals. Together — drawing from our collective strength — we can achieve the dawn of a new world society that honors Senator Kennedy's noble dream.

Written by Beth Black

© All rights reserved. UST. 2020.

CITATIONS

1. John F Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Day of Affirmation Address, University of Capetown, Capetown, South Africa, June 6, 1966, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/day-of-affirmation-address-university-of-capetown-capetown-south-africa-june-6-1966>
2. Sparrow, Paul, Professor & Otaye, Lilian, PhD. Centre for Performance-led HR (CPHR), ResearchGate, Lancaster University Management School, Employer branding from attraction to a core HR strategy, p.5, June 2015.
3. Cober, Nic. American Express. "5 Qualities Commonly Seen in Strong Brands," <https://www.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/trends-and-insights/articles/5-qualities-commonly-seen-in-strong-brands/>. November 18, 2016.
4. Forsey, Caroline. Marketing/HubSpot, "18 Core Company Values That Will Shape Your Culture & Inspire Your Employees," <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/company-values>.
5. Randstad, Enriching the Employee Experience, p.7.
6. Rogel, Charles. DecisionWise. "12 Attributes to Evaluate Your Organization Culture," <https://decision-wise.com/12-attributes-to-evaluate-your-organization-culture/>.
7. Digital Marketing Institute. "How to Build an Employer Brand that Attracts & Retains Talent," <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/en-us/blog/how-to-build-an-employer-brand-that-attracts-retains-talent>.
8. Ibid.
9. Imperative, LinkedIn. 2016 Workforce Purpose Index, Purpose at Work, https://cdn.imperative.com/media/public/Global_Purpose_Index_2016.pdf
10. CPHR, p. 4-6.
11. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), UK. "Increase Operational Efficiency," <https://www.pwc.co.uk/issues/data-analytics/issues/analytics-to-run-operations-more-efficiently.html>
12. Business Development Company (BDC). "What is the 5S Method?" <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/operations/operational-efficiency/pages/lean-manufacturing-using-5s-method.aspx>
13. Metcalf, Shane. 15Five, Manage Team Bandwidth by Adopting A Growth Mindset And These Proven Techniques, <https://www.15five.com/blog/webinar-manage-team-bandwidth-techniques/>
14. Garton, Eric. Harvard Business Review. "Employee Burnout Is a Problem with the Company, Not the Person," <https://hbr.org/2017/04/employee-burnout-is-a-problem-with-the-company-not-the-person>. April 6, 2017.
15. PNP Staffing Group. Recruiting for a Diverse, Multicultural Team, pp. 3-4, September 2017
16. Ibid. p.5
17. Robinson, Vincent. Nonprofit Quarterly (NPQ), "5 Hiring Pitfalls to Avoid—if You Want Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Leadership," <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/5-hiring-pitfalls-to-avoid/>. February 26, 2020.
18. Newhouse, Chelsea. Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. Nonprofit Economic Data Project. The 2020 Nonprofit Employment Report: The 3rd Largest Employer Faces the COVID-19 Crisis, <http://ccss.jhu.edu/2020-nonprofit-employment-report/>. June 16, 2020.
19. Beck, Randall & Harter, Jim. Gallup Business Journal. Managers Account for 70% of Variance in Employee Engagement. <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/182792/managers-account-variance-employee-engagement.aspx>. April 21, 2015.
20. Anderson, Dave. RecruiterBox, Hiring Strategy. How Nonprofits Can Hire Great Employees. <https://recruiterbox.com/blog/how-nonprofits-npos-can-hire-great-employees>
21. Robins, Alison. OfficeVibe. New Manager. <https://officevibe.com/complete-guide-new-manager>
22. Meyer, Eileen Hoenigman. Glassdoor. 5 Criteria for Hiring a Great Manager, <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/40660-2/>. June 8, 2018.
23. Bryant, Adam. New York Times. How to Hire the Right Person, <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/business/how-to-hire-the-right-person>.
24. Ibid.
25. Schultz, Marc. Work for Good. How We Hire Roundup. Staff Support. <https://www.workforgood.org/article/how-we-hire-roundup-ways-we-support-staff/?TrackID=5#jobs>. February 26, 2020.
26. Roe, David. CMS Wire. What It Takes to Create Exceptional Employee Experiences, <https://www.cmswire.com/digital-experience/what-it-takes-to-create-exceptional-employee-experiences/>. May 10, 2018.
27. Gallup. Learn How the CliftonStrengths Assessment Works, <https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/253676/how-cliftonstrengths-works.aspx>
28. Gallup. Gallup's Perspective on How to Create a Strengths-Based Organizational Culture, P.3.

Connect with Us & Join Our Network of Nonprofits from Across the Country

UST provides nonprofits with workforce solutions to help better manage human resources from an employee's first day to their last. Stay up-to-date with the latest in nonprofit fundraising, national trends, legislative updates, research, webinars and more by signing up for UST's monthly eNews: www.chooseust.org/eNews.

Blog

Visit ChooseUST.org/blog for articles on nonprofit human resources, unemployment, budgets, ideas, and more.

Social

www.Twitter.com/USTTrust or @USTTrust

www.Facebook.com/ChooseUST

www.Linkedin.com/Company/ChooseUST

www.GoToStage.com/ChooseUST