

THE NONPROFIT SEARCH GROUP

Who should be interviewing your next chief development officer? (Or) Who's interviewing your candidates anyway?

As an executive search professional, I am frequently asked the question, "Who will play a part in the interviewing process?" If there is still a person in the current position, do you include them? If there are staff members who report to this position, are they included? This is often up for debate and in most instances, these inclusions are a recipe for disaster. Even if the outgoing staff member is leaving under positive circumstances (retirement, advancement within the organization or leaving for a new opportunity) there is always a sense of conflict when trying to fairly assess who is going to take their place.

For those search committees that include staff interviews as part of the process; that too can lead to many a failed search efforts. Often, a candidate will pass the gauntlet with Board members and senior staff, only to be derailed by staff members who might not be so happy with the changes or accountability that might occur with this new hire.

An executive search firm, often times will advise the leadership as to the optimum make-up of the group and more times than not, this group will not include staff.

Staff will not have the understanding to accurately assess someone's effectiveness in a leadership role. The best scenarios usually center around a meet and greet with a finalist. In those instances, the feedback is usually on a personal level and should be considered, but not given the weight of a formal interview. Some organizations don't have subordinates meet the new hire until after the offer has been made, extending this meeting as a courtesy.

Nonetheless, it is very important to be inclusive during the search process so that there is complete buy in when choosing the candidate, but it is equally important to remember that leadership should decide who would be best suited to make a necessary transformation internally and externally and who would be a good fit for the culture in the organization. To ensure a successful search, each member must have a stake in the success of the candidate. Include representatives of all relevant constituencies, those who broadly represent the diversity of the organization, but remain focused on those that can assess the qualifications for that next hire who will focus on impacting the future of the organization.