

THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

4 Ways to Reshape Nonprofit Recruitment and Hiring

By *Linda Nguyen*

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By now you've likely heard about the [Great Resignation](#) — millions of workers in America quitting their jobs upon rethinking how they want to spend their time. The pandemic has caused many to reassess how — and how much — they work.

Flexible hours and remote arrangements have largely been the focus of the Great Resignation stories we are seeing. However, social-justice organizations are also experiencing an influx of people seeking new jobs because they want more meaning and value from their work, people who want to advance the greater good.

In my work with [Movement Talent](#), I talk with dozens of job applicants each week, and over the last year, I have heard time and again some version of the following: “When I saw this position announcement, it struck a nerve. Covid-19 has everyone assessing where their true passions lie. Not to mention the activism in the streets, racial justice. I want to be a part of an organization with greater purpose.”

Nonprofits, especially those advancing social justice, should take advantage of this moment to attract diverse talent from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds. To fully capitalize on today’s intensified interest and motivation in working for social good, nonprofits also should look critically at recruitment and hiring processes.

Movement Talent, a nonprofit that is rethinking the way organizations recruit and hire people, has been operating since the start of 2020. We’ve learned a lot, including some new approaches we believe can reshape how organizations find and hire qualified applicants. We would like to see the following changes take place, and we’ve already started working to bring them about.

Share applicant pools. Among organizations seeking to fill similar roles, and with the permission of applicants and organizations involved, we are presenting candidates with a broader set of job opportunities and encouraging them to make inquiries and apply to multiple organizations simultaneously.

I urge hiring managers to stop regarding these as “competing searches” and instead focus on the expanded applicant pool.

Approaching recruiting for nonprofits as an ecosystem acknowledges that the success of one hire often depends on the success of another hire at an ally organization. Why? Because in many cases, real change requires partnerships, so the person sitting next to you at a coalition table is often just as important as the person representing your organization.

Encourage exploration. Many organizations automatically frown upon the idea of a staff member looking at job opportunities at other organizations. This habit is often exacerbated by a scarcity mindset: “We don’t have enough resources, so we can’t afford to lose or train anyone.”

But truthfully, many positions are terminal: There is no opportunity for growth or advancement within that role. We should be open about that early on and encourage people to explore opportunities at other organizations once they outgrow a job. Supporting an employee in this way often facilitates lasting relationships and connections.

Put candidates – not those doing the hiring – at the center of the process. Let’s be honest: Job candidates are sometimes treated badly by our own flawed systems, either by overwhelmed HR departments or by search firms that have not caught up with the times. Candidates frequently report applying for a job and getting no response, let alone constructive feedback. With such a low bar, any improvement in job seekers’ experience will be welcome. We advise organizations to share all steps of the selection process at the outset, including the timeframe, potential interview themes, number of candidates at each stage, and feedback on interview performance to help people improve.

Seek and share innovative hiring and talent-management practices. We talk a lot about transparency, authenticity, collaboration, and inclusion, but do we practice this when it comes to hiring?

Imagine what would happen if nonprofit HR professionals shared experiences using new recruitment software or by designing universal templates for candidate assessments – especially with ally organizations that have fewer resources. Let’s train one another on how to address bias in interviews. If you have a progressive compensation or leave policy, others would love to see them and adapt them to their own organization. There is a growing community of folks dedicated to making this sharing a reality, and Movement Talent is glad to facilitate it.

In a moment of tremendous flux in employment and careers, the social-justice sector has an opportunity and a responsibility to improve its recruitment and selection processes to attract more people to this vital work. It’s time to transform the hiring experience and make it a positive experience for employers and job seekers alike.

[Linda Nguyen](#)

Linda Nguyen is founder and principal of Movement Talent, a nonprofit that is dedicated to building better HR practices, tools, and processes to advance social, racial, gender, economic, and environmental justice.