

How to Recruit Great Candidates for Your Nonprofit

By Heather Mausz

Unlike for-profit businesses, nonprofits often hire for heart, looking beyond skill sets to the candidate's passion for the organization's mission. Many nonprofits also offer lower compensation than for-profit entities, leaving them searching for motivated, dedicated, and skilled candidates who may not mind taking a pay cut to accept the position.

Add in the fact that recruiting has to be done on top of your other responsibilities, and finding great candidates may seem like a daunting task. The key is to plan your strategy before starting. The steps below will help you create an effective recruiting process.

1. Begin early.

Clients often tell us that they can't start the hiring process because they don't have the time or resources yet. But when you know about an upcoming hiring need, it's important to start the recruiting process early.

Finding qualified candidates takes time, and operating with a personnel deficit can lead to employee burnout, decreased productivity, increased turnover, and other challenges that can [impede fulfillment of your mission](#).

Here are some tips to help you determine the right timing:

- **Start three to four months before you need to fill the position.**
- **Allow more time for higher-level positions.** In general, the higher the position, the longer the process will take. For example, it typically takes longer to hire a CFO than a bookkeeper because the pool of qualified candidates is smaller. Plan extra time for positions with unique requirements, too.
- **Understand that recruiting can be seasonal.** Fewer people look for jobs during the holidays (starting the second week of November through the end of the year) and during June and July, when many are on vacation.

- **Give yourself enough time to be patient.** This allows you to keep looking for the right candidate, rather than hiring a less-than-ideal candidate because you need someone right away.

Remember that the right time to *hire* is when you have the ability to do so — but the right time to start *recruiting* is several months in advance.

2. Evaluate your capacity.

Ask the following questions to determine the time and resources you'll need to devote to recruiting:

- **What is our budget for recruiting?** Include costs such as paid job listings and criminal and credit report checks.
- **How much time can we devote to recruiting?** The full process entails:
 - Writing job descriptions
 - Conducting salary research
 - Determining how you will source candidates
 - Posting jobs
 - Reviewing resumes
 - Prescreening applicants
 - Conducting in-person interviews
 - Checking references
 - Performing criminal and credit report checks
- **Who can help with this process?** If you have a human resources department that can help, involve them early.

Performing an accurate assessment of what recruiting will entail, and what resources it will require, will help you plan appropriately. If you don't have the capacity to handle all the recruiting tasks in-house in a timely manner, consider alternatives. (See #4 below.)

Give yourself enough time to be patient.

3. Source and Prescreen

If you decide to handle recruiting in-house, the next step is to decide where you will source candidates. Options include:

- Job boards such as indeed.com, christianjobs.com, and ministryemployment.com
- Your website
- Social networking: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Personal networks
- Alumni boards at Christian colleges and universities
- Local churches with job ministries
- Craigslist

Once you have a pool of candidates, do some basic prescreening before you spend time on face-to-face interviewing. When prescreening by phone, prepare a list of questions ahead of time to ensure you ask candidates for the same information. You can also email candidates the questions and ask for a written response.

4. Assess Additional Options

Whether or not you have the capacity to handle recruiting in-house, using a third party can often result in cost and time savings. You can turn the process over to experienced recruiters while you focus on your many other responsibilities.

There are two alternatives to handling the recruiting process in-house:

- **Traditional recruiting firms** – Also known as search agencies or headhunters, these firms typically charge 25% (or more) of a candidate's first-year salary. A good recruiting firm will have a large candidate pool it works with on a regular basis. These candidates are often actively looking for a job.

Be aware that many traditional recruiting firms operate under a business model that compensates them for filling positions quickly. You may find yourself encouraged to hire someone who is not the best fit, just to fill the position. Candidates are also often coached on resume writing and interviewing skills, making it harder for you to accurately assess their potential.

- **CapinCrouse recruiting services** – Our professional recruiting team understands the unique hiring challenges nonprofits face, and can assist you in recruiting and hiring qualified staff. We use a unique pricing model with a flat fee, and will work with you until we help you find a qualified candidate.

- Depending on your needs, we can assist you with recruiting, screening, interviewing, and hiring qualified staff for a broad range of positions. You can learn more about our services [here](#).

Recruiting for a Strong Team

Budgeting enough time and resources for recruiting will help you create a strong, motivated team that supports your organization's mission. Remember to start early, evaluate your resources, plan the process, and consider expert outside help when needed.

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Heather has over 18 years of experience in the fields of recruiting, talent development, and coaching. She joined CapinCrouse in June 2008 and provides a range of talent management consulting services, including recruiting, performance management, organizational restructuring, and training/coaching.

About CapinCrouse

As a national full-service CPA and consulting firm devoted to serving nonprofit organizations, CapinCrouse provides professional solutions to organizations whose outcomes are measured in lives changed. Since 1972, the firm has served domestic and international outreach organizations, universities and seminaries, foundations, media ministries, rescue missions, churches and denominations, and many others by providing support in the key areas of financial integrity and security. With a network of offices across the nation, CapinCrouse has the resources of a large firm and the personal touch of a local firm. Learn more at capincrouse.com.

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