

How to Hire Top Nonprofit Talent: Tips for Pre-Interview Preparation

Think back to a time in your life when you prepared for an important job interview. Maybe you did your research, thought of questions, made notes, reviewed reasons why you believed you were a great fit for the position, or even conducted a mock interview with a mentor. Maybe you did all of those things.

What you probably weren't considering while preparing for your interview was the fact that the employer also had work to do before walking into that interview with you. The pre-interview work they put in likely determined how successful you felt the interview was and your impression of your possible future with that organization. Just as your preparation could create a make-or-break situation, an employer's pre-interview preparation can be make-or-break, too.

In the nonprofit space, many employees will be drawn to your organization because of your mission, but you have to get the word out that you're searching for top talent. Your first job is to determine how to [recruit a strong pool of candidates](#). The goal during this phase is to locate potential employees who seem to be a good fit for your culture and mission and then move on to the interview phase, where you'll not only have a chance to interview them, but they'll have a chance to interview you.

Taking the time to prepare will help you interview more effectively and obtain the information you need to make an informed decision. Hiring correctly the first time is vital because the cost of employee turnover has a wider impact than you might think. Strain is put on both finances and productivity, affecting the entire team as a new hire is recruited and trained.

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Tips for Pre-Interview Preparation

- Identify any common issues you have run into with unsuccessful employees in the past and brainstorm interview questions that will help you spot them. These issues might include:
 - A lack of problem-solving or critical thinking skills
 - Work ethic or motivation issues, such as being chronically late or absent
 - Issues working as part of a team
 - Skills deficits
- Plan for each candidate to interview in person and with multiple people from your organization. Phone interviews are great for weeding out the obvious “no” candidates, but face-to-face interactions are crucial in gauging how well individuals will fit with your organization and whether they align with its mission.
- Create a template of questions to use in each interview. This will help you feel more relaxed and in control during the interview and will ensure that you ask all the important questions. Asking each candidate the same questions will also help you compare them accurately. You don't need to ask every question every time, but make sure you at least ask the majority every time.
- Include questions that will help you learn about each candidate's character, calling, competence, motivators, chemistry, and potential contribution.
- Prepare for each candidate by:
 - Reading his or her resume.
 - Reviewing your notes and notes from any previous interviewers.

- Looking at where the candidate has worked and the education or skills he or she highlighted. Research previous employers to learn what you can about the experience the candidate may have had there. Think of questions you can ask about these areas.
- Practice by conducting mock interviews with a colleague. This will help you be a more confident interviewer.
- Become a body language expert. Only 7% of how we communicate in an interview is through words. That means 93% is through body language. Learn how to tell the difference between someone who is nervous and someone who is being dishonest. There is a lot of good information available online. Just remember that candidates have access to that information, too.

Finally, as you get ready to interview, remember to have realistic expectations and to embrace variety. Different skills and personalities are good for an organization. You might like working with people who are just like you, but teams that are well-rounded and have different thinking styles are more successful.

If you need help with the hiring process, CapinCrouse offers [recruiting services](#) to assist you with recruiting, screening, interviewing, and hiring qualified staff for a range of positions. Please [contact us](#) to discuss your specific needs.

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