

The Nonprofit Sector's 2015 Talent Predictions

Lisa Brown Morton

SPHR

Nonprofit HR



The Nonprofit Sector's 2015 Talent Predictions

Lisa Brown Morton, CEO

In the nonprofit sector, 2015 is shaping up to be the year of talent. We hear it in conversations with our colleagues in the HR world and leaders in the nonprofit sector. Attraction, retention and engagement of top talent seems to be at the top of everyone's priority list. But what are nonprofit executives expecting and observing when it comes to talent? I spoke with several of them to get their predictions for 2015, and I've got a couple of my own.



2015 Talent Predictions

Michael Watson Former SVP, Human Resources, Girl Scouts

Your best employees are more likely to leave. "After years of stagnant wages and fewer promotions, a growing economy provides these employees more choices to fulfill their professional ambitions."

Hiring will become more difficult. "Nonprofit organizations, businesses and government are all competing for top talent to achieve success."

Becoming a great place to work will advance achievement of our mission. "How you are viewed as an employer will determine whether you can attract and retain the employees you need for success."

Susan T. Schmidt CNP, President, Nonprofit Leadership Alliance

Talent recruitment will take over. "Much of the funding and interest in the area of nonprofit talent has historically focused on professional development – giving current leaders the skillset they need to be successful. But as of late, the conversation is trending toward career awareness and talent recruitment."

Growth will feel endless. "The seemingly endless growth in nonprofit employment; the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation; the economic rebound, which has created more competition for top talent – these trends have collided, creating a new interest in ensuring we have a sufficient flow of best-and-brightest candidates."

Partnerships will become increasingly important. "We know we need a larger talent pipeline, but how do you attack a problem of this magnitude? The answer is quite simple: together. We at the Alliance are already forging new partnerships to recruit service-minded groups such as military personnel, service-year members, and community college and high school students. We are getting out in front of the problem – and going at it sideways. Although this challenge is not new – the creative solutions being proffered most certainly are."



HR Audit: 101

Anne Wallestad, President & CEO, BoardSource

The definition of “Professional Experience” will change. “Thanks in part to groups like LinkedIn that are helping to ‘professionalize’ the way that we think about our volunteer and service experience, candidates and hiring managers are beginning to pay attention to all of the skill- and leadership-building experience that an individual brings to the table, rather than just what has been acquired through their work history. Board service, pro-bono work, and other opportunities that build leadership skills and networks are increasingly viewed as relevant professional experience and can create entry points to new and different career pathways.”

Mission-Motivated Candidates Stand Out. “As more and more organizations are using online systems to post positions and collect applications, the volume of generic job applications – ones without a cover letter or any information about how why they would be a strong candidate and why they are passionate about the organization’s mission – has increased dramatically. While a challenge for nonprofit organizations that are hiring, this provides a significant opportunity for candidates that are willing to make the extra effort to get the edge.”

Candidates are Getting Smarter About Managing their Brand. “The era of embarrassing social media gaffes foiling a candidate’s chances for getting a position seems to be coming to a close. While the convergence of personal and professional identities seems to be a permanent one – at least for younger professionals – people have gotten smarter about managing their online reputation and brand. Curating photos and posts, using different social media platforms for different purposes, and taking advantage of more sophisticated privacy settings is helping candidates do a better job of keeping private things private, and out of the view of hiring managers and other professional contacts.”

Gayle Brandel President/CEO, Professionals for Nonprofits

The nonprofit sector will grow. “In 2015, the growth of nonprofits, noticeable in 2014, will continue, resulting in job creation. This trend will definitely heighten the challenges for human resources in finding talented staff for nonprofits.”

Demand will exceed supply. “Consequently, a major and significant trend in recruiting and retaining talented staff for nonprofit organizations in 2015 is that there will be more job openings than there are good people available. It is increasingly a candidate’s market.”



2015 Talent Predictions

New job definitions and descriptions will be prevalent. "Because of the changed marketplace for top talent, jobs, especially in middle management, will be consolidated and redefined. In addition, entirely new jobs, with a technology emphasis, will be increasingly in demand by a sector that will need to develop its tech abilities in the next few years."

Lisa Brown Morton, SPHR, President & CEO, Nonprofit HR (Me)

Culture matters. "Nonprofits that are intentional about building healthy, engaging workplace culture will win in the war on talent. Just as important as programs, fundraising and finance, positive, empowering workplace culture will mark the difference between organizations that attract great talent and those that don't."

Retention will trump turnover as a key human capital metric.

"Nonprofits that deepen their focus on retaining their top talent over accepting higher than healthy turnover will see measurable returns on their human capital dollars. By spending 80% of focus on their highest performers vs 80% of their time on the lowest performers, nonprofits will see exponential returns on their talent investments."

What are your talent predictions for 2015?

About the Author



Lisa Brown Morton is the President and CEO of Nonprofit HR, the only HR firm in the country that works exclusively with the nonprofit sector. Under her direction, Nonprofit HR has served sector leaders such as Amnesty International, Independent Sector and NeighborWorks America. With more than two decades of human resource management experience working with nonprofits and for-profit organizations, Lisa and her firm have proven that better HR can play an integral role in nonprofit success.