



10 Common Nonprofit Talent Acquisition Mistakes to Avoid

Making a mistake in the [talent acquisition](#) process can have a negative impact on your nonprofit and its mission for years to come. Here are the 10 mistakes we see most frequently, and how to avoid them.

Mistake #1: A lack of clarity on what your organization wants and needs

In order to hire the best candidate for any open position at your nonprofit, you need to be clear about your requirements. What do you need from this role? Do you need someone who can administer, manage, or strategize? Are you looking for a self-directed leader who can chart their own path or an eager learner who can fit into a team and structure you've already defined? If you fail to answer questions like these before you begin recruiting, even the most talented candidates will have trouble understanding and adjusting to their new roles.

Mistake #2: Not budgeting appropriately or at all

The average annual nonprofit recruitment budget is \$5,500, and your organization's budget may not be flexible enough to utilize the resources you need for a highly targeted hiring campaign. For example, posting a job on LinkedIn using their pay-per-view pricing model can be cost prohibitive, particularly when your organization is hiring for multiple positions. Make sure you've allocated your recruitment budget appropriately to reach a critical mass of candidates, or consider implementing a referral program to target hard-to-reach jobseekers.

Mistake #3: Too many criteria/job functions or poor position design

The average jobseeker isn't looking to be the Executive Assistant and the Executive Director at the same time. All too often, we see nonprofits try to stretch their budgets by creating "hybrid" positions that include too many criteria, lack focus, and make the recruitment process unnecessarily challenging. Keep your recruitment marketing materials straightforward, free of jargon and easy to understand. When you're writing job postings, don't go overboard. List key responsibilities and focus on promoting the most essential qualifications for the position. Also, don't forget to convey your organization's values and culture through the language that you use to describe the role.

Mistake #4: Evaluating "personality" instead of job skills

While it's important to ensure that an applicant is a cultural fit for your organization, a great personality doesn't make up for a lacking skill set. According to the [Harvard Business Review](#), the best way to predict job performance is not by looking at personality, but by evaluating applicants' experience, cognitive ability and critical thinking.

Mistake #5: Relying on "gut feel" over validated practices for effective selection

Make no mistake: it's important to listen to your gut and trust your intuition when it comes to hiring. However, it shouldn't be the top tool you use to vet candidates. Instead, leverage proven hiring processes like skills assessments, cognitive ability tests, and structured interview questions.

Mistake #6: Asking the wrong questions

In an interview, what kinds of questions are you asking applicants? Many hiring professionals fall into the trap of asking applicants to simply expand on their resume or describe certain accomplishments.

While this will help you understand where your applicant comes from, it doesn't give you insight into how they operate on a day-to-day basis or what they're like to work with. Instead, ask questions that will show an applicant's ability to think critically and operate in line with your organization's values, culture and goals.



Mistake #7: Not researching/understanding why someone has failed in a job and if their approach to failure aligns with your organization's

Applicants and hiring managers both want to focus on the candidate's past successes. However, it's much more telling to talk about your applicant's failures. Find out where their weaknesses are and how they've learned from past mistakes to get a sense of how self-aware they are and how they will leverage what they've learned from their mistakes for the benefit of your organization.

Mistake #8: Talking too much and listening too little

A good applicant will have plenty of questions about your organization in an interview, but if you find that you're talking more than they are, it's a sign that you're not effectively evaluating the applicant. Instead, ensure that you're spending the majority of the interview listening to the applicant, interjecting only to ask for clarification or to follow up with another question. Set aside time at the end of the interview for them to ask you questions and for you to provide information. The quality of their questions will give you good insight into their mindset.

Mistake #9: Failing to hire for fit and skills

A great applicant needs to show that they've not only got the skills for the job, but that they'll be a positive force in building your organization's culture and community. Hiring solely on cultural fit or solely on skills is risky—it's often difficult to assess how someone who's a great cultural fit will be able to complete necessary duties if you haven't already screened them to ensure that their skills match up with what you need.



Mistake #10: Relying too heavily on networks that don't foster diversity and inclusion

Your organization should strive to create an inclusive hiring process that fosters diversity and embraces a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds. But if you consistently use the same hiring networks and channels, you're limiting your organization's ability to attract diverse talent. Be sure that you're taking the time to scout and hire those who can bring something new to your organization, and ensure you're working to foster diversity of people and opinions at your workplace.

Hiring is at the same time one of the most important and most difficult activities a nonprofit organization can undertake. If you're struggling to overcome mistakes like these, we can help. Learn more about our Talent Acquisition services at nonprofithr.com/talent-acquisition-new.



About Nonprofit HR

Nonprofit HR is the country's leading talent management firm that works exclusively with the nonprofit sector. Since 2000, we have amplified the impact of the world's most influential nonprofit organizations, from the YMCA to NeighborWorks America and ASAE.



We understand the unique needs of mission-driven organization like no one else, and as such, know that your organization is only as effective as your people. We partner with nonprofits and associations in talent acquisition, executive search, human resources consulting and education & training, all with the objective of making the nonprofit workforce the best it can be.

Nonprofit HR is also widely recognized for nonprofit sector research and thought leadership. We publish the leading [annual study](#) on nonprofit employment practices, and host a variety of [educational events](#) for nonprofit professionals.

About Yvonne Rivera, CSP

Yvonne is a bilingual professional who brings more than 20 years of staffing and recruitment experience to the firm. She is a proven staffing strategist who is effective at recruiting at all career levels and who has superior ability to bring together talented teams. Prior to joining Nonprofit HR, Yvonne held leadership roles at Spherion and Career Blazers (acquired by Global Employment Solutions). She brings deep experience supporting the staffing needs of the nonprofit sector.

As Director of Talent Acquisition at Nonprofit HR, Yvonne leads our day-to-day temporary staffing and direct hire activities, including building and cultivating client and candidate relationships and enhancing the firm's opportunities to continue to serve as a valued business partner with our clients. She has an undergraduate degree in Business Administration. She has also earned the Certified Staffing Professional designation from the American Staffing Association.

