Nonprofit HR

WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

Streamlining & Strengthening Your Organization’s Interviewing and Hiring Practices

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Streamlining & Strengthening Your Organization's Interviewing and Hiring Practices

How does your organization maintain a high quality candidate experience throughout interviewing and hiring? These two crucial aspects of the recruitment full-cycle process are key, especially in today's hybrid and virtualized environments. In this conversation, you will hear how reviewing and modifying your hiring process where needed can make the difference in maximizing your mission's impact. By knowing where and how to successfully integrate the sought-after candidates attracted to your culture and values, you will ensure their early and ongoing success.

You'll walk away from this conversation prepared to maximize:

- Essential steps to be completed for candidates to be presented for consideration by the hiring manager or committee.
- Implementing an effective communication process that includes status updates and target timelines related to the hiring steps.
- Vetting, background check and pre-offer/rejection process to complete within the interview timeframe.
- Negotiation of best practices, maintaining engagement and finalizing hire consistency of candidate experience from hiring to orientation and onboarding.

NonprofitHR

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Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Hello and welcome everyone. Thank you for joining us this afternoon for a Nonprofit HR's Virtual Learning Education Event. Today's session is entitled Streamlining and Strengthening Your Organization's Interviewing and Hiring Practices. My name is Atokatha Ashmond Brew and I am Managing Director of Marketing & Strategic Communication for Nonprofit HR. I will be your conversation moderator for today. We have a lot of great content to cover, so let's jump right in.

Before we get started, though, I would like to go over a few items so you know how to participate in today's event. You have joined the presentation listening using your computer's speaker system by default. If you would prefer to join over the telephone, just select telephone in the audio pane and the dial-in information will be displayed.

You will have the opportunity to submit text questions to today's presenters by typing your questions into the questions pane on the control panel. You may send your questions in at any time during the presentation. We will collect these and address them during the Q&A and throughout today's session. Today's event is being recorded, and you will receive a follow-up email within a few days with a link to the recording and also the presentation slides.

Just a brief note about Nonprofit HR:

Since 2000 Nonprofit HR, remains the country's leading and oldest firm focused exclusively on the talent management needs of the social sector, including nonprofits, associations, social enterprises and other mission-driven organizations. We focus our consulting efforts on the following practice areas: Strategy & Advisory, HR Outsourcing, Total Rewards, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Search. We were founded with one goal in mind: to strengthen the social impact sector's talent management capacity by strengthening its people.

Today's conversation will be led by our Managing Partner & Vice President for Nonprofit HR, Patty Hampton. Patty Hampton will be joined by a panel of experts from Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR, including Bert Ruiz, Team Leader and Senior Consultant for Search; Noelle Cherubim, Recruitment Outsourcing Team Leader and Senior Consultant; Sophia LaFontant, Consultant for Search; and Recruitment Outsourcing Associate Consultant, Stephanie Zavislan.

You will soon hear from each of these search consultants and how they concentrate their time for our many search clients, which straddle all types of missions and organization sizes. You will again have an opportunity to ask questions throughout the webinar and during a formal Q&A session at the end of the webinar.

And now, a little about Patty Hampton.

Patty [has been] nationally recognized as a beacon of light for social sector people management since 2001. She has served in a dual leadership capacity as Managing Partner and Vice President for Nonprofit HR. Among her many accomplishments with the firm, Patty has helped build its infrastructure, culture and workforce. Patty currently serves as Interim Managing Director for Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR. She is also creator of the firm's social enterprise collaborative, SITA, and spearheads multiple strategies and business initiatives.

In her role as Managing Partner, she co-leads the firm's business and financial strategies and is a member of the senior management team. Innovation is a personal core value of Patty's, which has helped her shape the firm's executive recruitment and consultation services. Her expertise includes developing and delivering trainings and facilitating focus groups that result in an enriched employee-supervisor relationship and engaged workforce culture. I am excited to — introduce to some and reacquaint with others — none other than Patty Hampton. I now turn the program over to you Patty, take it away.

Patty Hampton: Hi, thanks so much Atokatha, and welcome everyone. Good afternoon and good morning to those [who] are joining us in a different time zone like me. So, thank you so much for joining us. We're going to unpack and dive into some great information this afternoon, this morning. While we will do our best to stay on our key takeaways, I have a very brilliant group of colleagues with me [who] will join in the conversation. But I believe some of the best conversations and learning experiences are certainly revealed when we just keep it real. With that in mind, let's take a step back for a second.

We all have experienced the Great Resignation — the great attrition — to hiring diverse candidates, your culture, the candidate experience and managing expectations of hiring managers, team members [and] board members, to a very real and challenging market that is mixed with a war for talent. But also, wait — the pandemic. We can't forget what's happening across the world that's still going on with respect to the pandemic. Now we're into and have now experienced a hybrid and remote workforce ...

Yeah, it's all about how we are navigating some of the most interesting times and challenging times — to say the least. As my young one would say, "Mom, please say less."

Anyway, I wanted to certainly talk to you more from my consultant, search consultant, side of the brain, and that is always on, and also, how we support the sector ... in a way that you benefit from our collective brilliance.

Can we go to the next slide, please? Thank you.

So with this in mind, there was a quote that really resonated with me as we were preparing for our webinar today. And it really just reads, "We can never fall short when it comes to recruiting, hiring, maintaining and growing our workforce. It is the employees who make our organization's success a reality."

Let that resonate just for a second.

This is the core of who we are and who we are being given the timeframe that we are in across the country. Here's what we're going to unpack today. Next slide.

This is our agenda. While I'm not going to read all of the bullets before you, I ... want to make sure that you keep them in mind. So, we're going to walk through and maximize the conversation. We will skip over ... these bullets. We are a very agile group. We know how to have a conversation ... so you will hear and be prepared to understand steps to completing the candidate experience and what that looks like with respect to hiring managers and a committee: Being able to effectively process information that includes status updates, timeline — and these are all related to your own organization. So we'll speak from working with clients, but also from our own experiences as well.

Next slide.

And here are my colleagues joining us today. I'm going to pass it over to Bert and then if you could pass it along to each of your own colleagues, I'd appreciate that as we progress. Thank you, Bert.

Bert Ruiz: Great, thank you, Patty. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this panel session and engage with our audience. My name is Bert Ruiz. I'm Team Leader and Senior Consultant on the Retained Search team side, so a lot of my focus is [on] supporting organizations with executive searches [and] professional services. So ... again, I just want to thank you for participating. I'll pass it on to my colleague, Sophia.

Sophia LaFontant: I am Sophia LaFontant, Search Consultant with Impact Search Advisors, and I have [been] with Nonprofit HR for three years. My personal passion is working in recruitment to develop a diverse talent pool and really build a strong relationship with candidates.

I'm going to send it over to Noelle now.

Noelle Cherubim: Thank you very much, Sophia, and good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Noelle Cherubim. I have been with Nonprofit HR since May of last year. I am the Team Leader and Senior Consultant for Recruitment Outsourcing. I have a background in HR, recruitment, talent acquisition. I've been fortunate enough to work numerous fields, including nonprofit, for-profit, a little bit of finance and research. It's a pleasure, everyone. I will pass it over to Stephanie.

Stephanie Zavislan: Hi, everyone. I hope you can hear me. I'm sorry, I'm not on camera today. My name is Stephanie Zavislan, and I work with Noelle in Recruitment Outsourcing and I joined Nonprofit HR last summer. And before that, I was in the nonprofit sector as an employee for 10 years. And I will pass it back to Patty.

Patty Hampton: Thank you, Stephanie, for being agile and joining us via audio. We can hear you just fine. We're going to move on with our program and lean into the conversations, and get ready for a wonderful ride.

Next slide.

This should look familiar to everyone on this call, including my colleagues, who — we live this on a regular basis through our own organization — but also in how we support our clients as well. So [there are] questions around attracting and growing, and also, the value that each of us bring to our organizations. In the center, we focus on culture, engagement, values and now, of course, even before this lifecycle became finalized, it really is DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion). And [now] we look at everything through ... that DEI lens. And so, what I like to focus on, more so than anything else, is all of the talent management lifecycle. But more important, it's more around workforce planning.

So, I wanted to start with Stephanie. And Stephanie, can you give us a sense of how we can improve our attracting and onboarding, recruiting, employer branding and workforce planning as we're attracting candidates to our organizations? I know you have some strong thoughts about that, so let's dig into that a little bit.

Stephanie Zavislan: Great. Yes, I do have some strong thoughts about this. Thanks for asking.

So, the first thing, having worked in a nonprofit for 10 years and seeing a lot of what was happening in the talent management cycle, I would, first and foremost, encourage anyone on this call, anyone in the nonprofit sector, to be intentional. Don't rush to fill a seat just because you're short staffed. All of you know that recruitment takes time. It takes energy, it takes thoughtfulness. And if we rush through it, we're not doing [ourselves] any favors because if that person — for whatever reason — doesn't work out then we have to start back at square one. We've lost time, we've lost money and we've even lost credibility.

So, stop and be intentional.

Get away from this idea that you are working in transaction. I have seen this greatly in the past year. The pandemic has changed so much of what we're going through ... and as I recruit, I hear over and over people ... no longer [want] just a job in exchange for a paycheck. They want to make a difference. They want to learn and grow with the company. They want a sense of belonging. They want something that is more significant than that old transaction. So, begin to move away from that transactional mindset, and look around and really dig in and know — first and foremost — who is going to be a good fit for your company and who is going to help take you to [a] new level.

Second, piggybacking on that transactional idea, as you recruit, you are entering into a ... two-way street. It's a relationship that you're building. So as you're looking for someone to fill your recruitment needs, you're also going to be looking at what they are hoping to do. So, don't be shy about asking, “How does this position align with your short- and long-term career goals? What are some non-professional skills that you would like to learn?” ... Bring them into your culture, and be prepared to meet them where they are, and grow them in their career, rather than just fill a seat.

And I urge you to move quickly. I urge you to develop a timeline, especially for those organizations listening in, if you don't have a dedicated HR department. And this is something that is additionally taxing on you as hiring managers, get holds on your calendar before you even start. Know when you're going to review the resumes, and when you're going to reach out to candidates. And then, be very mindful about scheduling those first and second interviews, and have your calendars ready ahead of time, so that not only are you not fumbling through the process, but you are able to tell your candidates what they can expect out of the timeline, and they will have a better candidate experience.

And finally, I urge you to expect competition. As you prepare to extend an offer or find out more about if this candidate can join your workforce, know that you are likely not the only people pursuing this person. It's a very aggressive talent market right now, and people are highly sought after, and they know that. So, be prepared for competition and know how you're going to set yourself apart.

Patty Hampton: Thank you, Stephanie. Very well said. And folks, part of what Stephanie is also talking about is ... where I lean on Sophia because I consider her our expert around building a body or a pipeline of candidates for hiring managers and talking more about this ... Sophia, based on everything that Stephanie has shared, can you speak to the group a little bit more about: How do you build a body of candidates or a pipeline for hiring managers? And, talk us through that just a little bit.

Sophia LaFontant: Absolutely. Thank you for that question, too.

One of the things that is important to me for building that body of candidates is making sure that there are various professional strengths that you can lean on. As a recruiter, you want to lead the search. You really want the hiring managers to feel confident in the decisions that you made, with the candidates that you brought to them. So, an example that I like to use is if you're hiring a Communications Manager ... [A] person who has experience to be a communications manager has been in that career for 10-plus years. They could have an emphasis in their background in either journalism, writing, design, storyboards, website building, public relations. Communications is something that is changing on a continual basis as we move into a place where even your most conservative organizations have to pick up social media.

So, when you're thinking about that, think about looking for candidates that are diverse also in their experience. Have someone who is really, really great at telling a story. Have someone who has previously done some form of journalism and is really good at getting the facts, getting that research and presenting it.

You want to, of course, check this against what the needs are for your team. Where does your team want to grow? [Do] they [need]to grow their social media? [Do] they [need] to grow their branding and audience? And then also think about the generation that [you want] to bring into the organization. So if it’s an association where you're trying to build your membership to talk to a younger audience, make sure you're bringing someone who can give examples of growing a younger audience.

Also, understand that if you're working with [a] communications person who needs to talk to people in a tech industry, or medical industry, make sure that they know white papers are very important to those individuals, and being able to present facts is important. So, always look at [this scenario]: Maybe I want to bring people to the table. All five of those different people have ... very strong professional [strengths] in their work history that would set them apart from each other and give your hiring managers options.

Another thing for building a very strong workforce or candidate pool is making sure that there is diversity in their culture. Diversity, not just from appearance, but also ... their personal background of how they've gotten to where they are in their career. And there's many job boards that are specific to certain cultures or industries that will really allow you to dig into the specific niche that you want.

So, for example, we are on their job boards, a job board called Green Latinos, which is specifically for those individuals who are the Latin American descent, who really, really love environmental work. So, you want to start there if you know, "Hey, we have an environmental role or environmental-led organization."

There are also ones that are just based on demographics ... here in D.C., we're a very politically driven place, a great place to find people who can do business development and certain things. So, there is a job board specifically called Black Beltway that is reaching for professionals that are in the Bay Area. So, also, understand that in certain states, in certain regions of areas, are going to lead to bringing you certain candidates. So, if you are open to hiring someone right now, in this remote world, from different places, consider stepping outside of just the immediate 20-mile radius where you are, and opening up the pool to [bring] in individuals who have a specialty. And if you have the budget for relocation, consider that as well.

Patty Hampton: Thank you so much, Sophia.

I just want to pause for a second and see if Noelle has anything to add to what Sophia has mentioned. I know, for Noelle, she is what I like to call the data metrics person on our team, and I love leaning into her conversations around the tools that we've used to deploy and also have a more diverse candidate pool for our clients that we're servicing as well. So, Noelle, lean in a little bit to some of what Sophia has shared, and talk to us about sourcing for diverse candidates ... What sort of tools have you seen that are useful? And what sort of metrics ... [have] you've seen, that are certainly helpful as we're supporting our clients?

Noelle Cherubim: Thank you very much, Patty. Where do I begin? I will start by saying [that] in terms of metrics and sourcing — and they actually go hand-in-hand — I would say from my perspective, sourcing is like matchmaking ... right? Truly, there's an art to it, as you can tell, based on what Sophia just shared with us. It certainly requires a lot of patience, it requires research. It requires — I like to say — a keen eye, which means that one of the things that we do when it comes to sourcing and using metrics is ... identifying: Where do we need to post? How long do we need to post? What is the time to fill? What is the time to hire? Are we going to conduct passive sourcing [or] active sourcing? And how exactly do we put the plan together?

And, frankly, [it's about] monitoring time to fill where we're posting the industry type [based on] market research. I do quite a bit of market research using a BLS (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) — and several others ... but that's one of my go-to's — to make sure that ... the information that I am using and sharing [with] my team [and] our clients, is accurate, up to date and up to par.

What I have found, and what I have noticed in terms of relevancy is, one, identifying the time to fill, which is critical ... We get ranges from 42 days up to six months, depending on the seniority level. It is critical for a team to understand the demographics, the diversity piece, I think anything that we talk about today, we're always going to — at least from my perspective — ... incorporate a bit of diversity into the process, because metrics is critical ... A diverse pool equates to diversity of thought and expansion in an organization, et cetera.

But just to close, I will say, in terms of metrics, number one: [When identifying] what to pose, [ensure] that we understand exactly what it means, the position that we're going to pose. And actually, going back to what Stephanie said earlier, [it’s about] really being patient, understanding that if ... the data says, it's supposed to take 30-42 days and we’re at three months, it might be OK if it means that we're going to hire a good [candidate]. It’s going to be [a] great hire or a bad hire ... A bad hire can cost an organization $50,000 higher ... It can cost an organization about 100k+ when you calculate everything into it. So, it is worth ... spending the time to find that ideal candidate, and we ... have to incorporate metrics, [the] timeline, the diversity pool, and a lot of patience and research.

Thank you.

Patty Hampton: Thank you so much, Noelle, and I know most of you are probably wondering, do you need to track the data? Absolutely you do. If you're like us, we've all been in and worked in the nonprofit sector, and who's the one person in the organization that is asking for data around information and metrics, around talent acquisition and talent management? And it's two people that ... come to mind [—] the CFO and the CHRO. They are both data-driven individuals. And if you have the data to back up what's happening in your organization, all the better for a really successful candidate experience and making sure that you're hiring teams [who] also understand what those metrics look like.

You don't have to communicate [the data for their understanding]. But certainly, you should have them as a driving force with ... how you're moving candidates through the talent management lifecycle. Data is important in every one of the boxes that you see in the circle in front of you.

Bert, I didn’t leave you out. I certainly want to pull you in now. And, given your experience with board members and recruiting for ... C-suite level candidates, let's not forget the internal candidates when you have to diversify your candidate slates — some of you know I don't like that word, but we continue to use it. So, Bert, [we're talking more right now about the external candidate search, but] talk to us ... about when there is an internal candidate ... Talk to us a little bit about how we are focusing on the internal candidate when more senior-level opportunities are open within an organization.

Bert Ruiz: Thank you, Patty.

One of the things that we advise our search committees is that you want the experience to be consistent and you want to be able to deliver an equitable process to all. So, the internal candidate scenario is a unique one.

Typically, some would feel that an internal candidate [may have] an advantage over others, because they obviously work at the organization, they have insight [into] information. And what maybe some forget is [that] sometimes for an internal candidate, [it may be] a little bit tougher than an external candidate because they have to present themselves to a search committee or board in a different light. That board has seen them traditionally in the role of a VP or COO, and the individual is seeking a CEO position, so they have to take that extra step to ensure that when they're presenting themselves and seeking the opportunity the board sees them that way.

In regard to how the board manages that process when you have two internal candidates, again, we just want to treat them the same as the external candidates with how we communicate. One of the things that, obviously ... we can provide as consultants from our firm is [that] we ... manage that communication for you. We communicate with applicants [and] candidates on your behalf, so we're able to provide that support.

There are some cases where you may have an internal candidate that [is] serving as an interim ... I think what's important for boards to remember is that you clearly communicate the expectations when you're in a scenario like that. We certainly don't want to mislead internal candidates that are looking at the opportunity. We want to clearly communicate ... “Should you be interested in the position, we definitely encourage you to apply. And if you have any questions, reach out to the consultant.”

Those are just some steps that I think the boards can take to ensure that the quality for that [internal] candidate ... remains high and consistent with the other candidates that are going through that process. So it's unique. It ... [adds] an element of ... challenge, sometimes, for [the] search committee, because they have an established relationship with those internal candidates. But following consistent steps and some of the recommendations that we provide will result in having a positive experience for both parties.

Patty Hampton: Thank you so much, Bert. As we move on to the next slide, I ... want to be sensitive to our audience, and perhaps there might be some burning questions right now. So, I want to take a break for a second and just lean into any questions that might be in the chat.

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Hi, Patty. Yes, here's one question.

A lot of nonprofits are hiring younger staff out of necessity. What can they do to onboard on both job responsibilities and soft skills?

Patty Hampton: Hmm. Who wants to take that question?

Stephanie Zavislan: I want to encourage companies to invest in training. I know that many organizations are reticent to do it because you don't feel like you have time and you don't feel like you have energy, but it's worth it.

Don't bring someone fairly green in and then be disappointed in them that they're not acting the way you want them to act. Invest in them, spend some time with them. Another great thing that you can implement is ... a buddy system where a new person coming in can be mentored or at least have ... support ... with someone who's been in the organization longer and can be a resource when they have questions.

So invest in the training. Take time to build this person up. A lot of people who are coming in who are green, they're pliable. They're not set in their ways. This is a great trait to embrace, but use that to your advantage. Mold them into the worker that you would love to see them be, and partner them with someone more senior in the organization, so they can learn and develop some of those soft skills.

Patty Hampton: Yeah. Thanks for that, Stephanie. I think it is really important. Sophia?

Sophia LaFontant: The first thing that jumped out to me is technology, and I know [for] some organizations — again, it's an investment, the cost — but, it's really important for you to remember that the younger generation is analyzing you from literally the time that they open up the application link and job description to going through the process.

Gone should be the days [when] you upload your resume [and] then type in all of your work history as though it is not in your resume. So, make it [that] your application can be ... completed in ... 10-to-15 minutes, because you're really going to learn more from the person when you're able to bring them in and talk to them.

The other thing that immediately jumps out to me is recognizing that they're not just looking at the inner process, but they're looking at you, the organization. Socially, as we are sitting here — where we are with everything that has gone on with the pandemic and prior to — there is a great awareness of whether or not a person is boasting their diversity and equity and inclusion initiatives or actually acting upon them. They need to be able to see through your hiring process that you're actually doing it and ... not just preaching it. And it also needs to be in the forefront and understood that they are going to be looking for balance.

If you look at our economy right now, the cost of owning a home — which is still the goal of someone who was between the age of 25 to 35 — it is not feasible on a single paycheck ... So these individuals may have part-time jobs, second jobs or at least starting some type of new, innovative thing that's going to bring them some form of income. Work-life balance is very important to that, not because they don't care [about] your organization, but because they care about maintaining a roof over their heads. And I think that we have to recognize that right now, with where the economy is going, there are certain things that you have to just be cognizant of and be open to.

I've seen a couple of hiring managers be very concerned about hiring someone who has their own business or has previously been a consultant. And I really think that we should open up ourselves to understand that people are doing exactly what they need to do to be able to survive. And it would be nice if we could get to a level where everyone is not just surviving but thriving.

Patty Hampton: Wow, I love what you just mentioned there, Sophia. You're a lot younger than I am, and yes. I completely agree with what you and Stephanie ... both said. And I ... think it's important as we're attracting people to our culture, and what does it look like to talk about talent and culture integration and priorities for organizations? Hence, the reason why Nonprofit HR conducts a talent management priorities survey every year. And I love the fact that it focuses on the heart of our organizations, and that is talent and culture.

If nothing else resonates with you all today, it is truly about [attracting and growing] talent and culture. And remember, in the center, [it is] ... all about culture, engagement. And so how do you continue to engage candidates ... [as] you’re attracting them to your organization? Because it is critical as you continue to move, and that's all the way from administrative through the C-suite. Every position in your organization is critical.

So, I want to just look really quickly at the slide that's before you, and really talk through culture and how it continues ... Next slide.

And there, as you can see, the data hasn't really shifted. If you understand and [have] been a part of our data — as we've been managing these every year and putting out this data and sharing it with the sector — there is still a continuing lack of management strategy. It’s still very high ... So that second box, you can see it says 68% [of] people just don't have a management strategy ... I find [this] just amazing that in this day and age, given the war for talent and our strategies around culture ... CEOs are making that a priority.

I know in our organization, Lisa Brown Alexander ... takes it very seriously that she is the Chief People Officer. And I think that's a critical role for many leaders, as Bert will contest to. It's an important role for many organizations. And so, we've been doing this for years and given the organizations that don't have the HR that we mentioned earlier ... they don't have enough resources ... the same [goes] when it comes to financial resources — we get it. I used to work for a nonprofit, two nonprofits at that.

And so, I really want to ... [hone] in on the fact that all the programs and all the services that we offer, that you offer to your stakeholders, your community, you cannot get it done without the right talent in your organization. And attracting them, growing them and nowadays, it's about retaining them, right? So we said that at the top of the call ... it's about the great attrition. You want to retain the people [who] are looking to leave the organization, given everything that has gone on.

So, Bert, I want to lean in just a little bit more on the data that's before us. Given what we know ... help us ... frame, if you will, the conversation more around: How do we help organizations and leaders streamline and strengthen their interview and hiring practices? I know you spoke to [it] earlier ... a little bit. So talk to the folks a little bit more [about] how [they are] streamlining ... some of the information that is being shared with respect to our talent management priorities and what we've seen?

From your perspective, what have you been seeing in supporting our clients around what matters at that C-suite level when they're looking to onboard a new executive in their organization?

Bert Ruiz: Yeah, thank you, Patty.

So one of the things to think about at that level is when we say onboarding: What type of onboarding are we referring to? Because [there are] a couple of different options. There’s this onboarding where you're showing folks, here's the restroom in the office, here's where you can find this.

And there's something that some folks will call strategic onboarding, which includes being engaged in conversations with staff that you'll be supervising or the larger staff team — spending some time with the board in the first 30 days or 90 days to really get embedded into that process. As we think about [onboarding] candidates, we go back a little, maybe one step, on what [the] candidates [are] asking about the organization. So, the example I'm going to use is diversity, equity and inclusion.

We all know that Impact Search Advisors [by] Nonprofit HR has been focused on diversity before. As we would say, it became popular here in the last few years to focus on that. So, when organizations come to us and ask us: "We're really looking for diverse candidates, we want you to help us with that," I share ... that one of the things that we will get from the applicants or candidates regarding the organization's commitment to diversity comes in the form of a few questions from candidates.

It's not just a matter of, "We're just going to hire diverse staff, and then we're done. We've achieved our diversity, equity and inclusion goals." Some of the questions that you'll get from candidates is [when they want to see] examples of how you've demonstrated that you've embedded diversity, equity and inclusion in the DNA of the organization.

For example, what does that look like at the leadership level? Is diversity, equity and inclusion embedded in the strategic plan of the organization? What type of financial resources have we committed to this work? Is the staff that's maybe responsible for diversity, equity and inclusion ... leading a team? What type of resources does that individual have?

These are the types of questions that we're getting [concerning] ... committees and boards [that] really need to be able to respond to and communicate. Just be honest and transparent. A board, an organization, may say, "You know, we're not there yet. That's to where we want to [go]. We need some help with that. We're committed to doing that, but we don't have examples to demonstrate ... because we haven't been successful in that yet." Others may say, "Yeah, these are the steps that we've taken the last few years. We've gotten to this point, but we really need some help in these areas."

... We just have to keep that in mind. And then, once you've got your candidate selected, embed them in those opportunities to learn more about that, so they have a clear understanding of what their role will be ... moving ... forward. As we know, if we're thinking about the CEO position, that individual ... drives the organization. So if that individual is supportive [of] a particular initiative around diversity, then the organization will follow.

So, it's important that ... what you're seeking [as a] leader, that you as a board are able to provide the support needed for that leader to be successful ...

Patty Hampton: Thank you very much, Bert. And I completely agree. You need to be transparent, especially when you are hiring at all levels. But more importantly, you certainly wouldn't want to bring someone at the C-suite level into an organization expecting transformation, and then you haven't been fully transparent with them from the beginning. I think that's critically important as you build a culture. They're going to be responsible for helping to build that culture. And Bert, I can agree with everything that you've said there. And Noelle, I haven't been giving you any love, have I? I can do that right now.

So, let's go to the next slide.

I really wanted to ... focus in on where I know Noelle has her strengths as well, if you can go back just one slide just for a second.

There are some glimmers of hope, right? We all want to know that there's hope on the other side of this pandemic, and folks are feeling really confident. So, I really want to bring Noelle in here, and really talk more about how we're still managing hiring teams ... [how] hiring managers are interviewing people, and how they are leveraging the hybrid workforce and what that looks like. We dig into that, right? When we talk with clients. And, we also get the same questions about how the organization is now onboarding or attracting candidates to their organization. What does orientation look like?

Hey, Noelle, is this position going to be fully remote now, or is it a hybrid role? So, talk to us from that perspective, Noelle. And what are candidates saying right now that we can share with our audience that's listening in? They're making changes themselves with respect to their workforce and how they're going to return on the other side of this pandemic. Some of them have gone back already, if you will, to the workplace, and hybrid or remote or both, right?

And so, talk to us about what you're hearing from candidates and from their perspective on their expectations, because if it's a war for talent, guess what? The talent is going to win.

Noelle Cherubim: Always. Well, thank you. Before I jump right in, I'll actually start with onboarding. I just wanted to add a couple of critical points.

Patty Hampton: Absolutely.

Noelle Cherubim: I should note that we should now be aware that ... nearly, one quarter of new employees leave the job within the first 45 days.

You know I like metrics, OK? Sixty-five percent ...

Patty Hampton: Say that one more time, Noelle, I love that.

Noelle Cherubim: One-quarter of new employees leave the job within the first 45 days, sixty-five percent do not show up on the first day and 80% of workers struggle with anxiety while waiting to start a new job.

And so, when we hire someone, it's imperative to understand that it's not just they're hired then they have a start date. One of the things that my team and I ... spend a lot of time on is to ensure that there's a bit of hand-holding. I'm very hands-on, to ensure the candidate is prepared for the transition ... for counteroffers, but then, more importantly, to ensure that they're already building a relationship with their new team, which means the hiring manager should be a little bit more an email as a reminder: "We're excited for you to join the team on such and such date, and to go out and have virtual coffee." It makes a big difference.

So ... the point of this [is] when you hire someone, it's not just on the first day, it's the day you extend the offer. We ensure that the individual is able to not only have a great transition. Personally, my team and I ... engage for at least three months and so on, as long as the hiring manager is comfortable. I highly recommend ... for everyone on this call: [consider] who are hiring, because it is critical.

And when it happens, it's shocking. But the numbers are astronomical, as you've heard ... which ... leads me into what candidates are looking for ... transparency. They are looking for clarity about your value proposition. That it is clear and specific, there's a connection to your mission. Individuals are not taking positions right now because of finances. They are looking for work-life balance. They're looking for a mission, particularly in ... the nonprofit sector. They are looking to identify with their team ... I will mention it later, it goes into ... vetting the individual to make sure that it is [the] right candidate.

They're looking for explanations about your benefits package. What does it mean to them? How is it beneficial to them? [The] majority of the time ... candidates will tell you, a lot of it is jargon unless it is explained clearly — particularly the healthcare portion ... so that they understand what they are getting out of it as well, right? The idea is, for lack of a better terminology here ... a bit of a quid pro quo.

We have someone who's really excited about joining your team and you are excited as well. ... how do we marry the two? We do so like any other relationship, right? We start with building a partnership, ensuring that there are regular touchpoints throughout the onboarding and, frankly, throughout their time within the organization.

That is what candidates are looking for: transparency and a partnership.

Patty Hampton: Great. Thank you so much, Noelle. Really appreciate those nuggets that you've dropped right there. Let's go to the next slide. I really want to just stay on the next slide for just a little bit and probably as we get closer, each of my colleagues will certainly chime in. Processes look the same, they're somewhat vanilla, right? I bet your processes ... communication and timelines look relatively the same if you start to put some steps around it. And what does that look like?

So this should look familiar to all of you on our call today. But I really want to turn it back to Bert: ... I think the stakeholder meetings and outlining a communication plan [look] slightly different at the C-suite level. Bert ... chime in there.

And then I'll go back to — Bert, if you could turn it back to Stephanie, I want to make sure that she gives it from her perspective: What those stakeholder meetings look like ...

Bert Ruiz: Thank you, Patty. Yeah, And I'll use the example of maybe a search for a CEO position where my partner in those types of searches is the search committee made up of board members ... One of the things, as I mentioned earlier, is [that] we will communicate on behalf of the search committee ... So one of the things that we do at the very beginning that we offer — included in our process and service — is ... conduct stakeholder meetings. So, what does that look like?

... At the CEO level, it's very critical that you think about the audience and the groups that need to be involved in the communication. It's even more intense, because [some of the funding that you receive] may come from foundations ... In some cases whoever the foundation is that you're working with, there may be a requirement related to the funding that you are supposed to communicate, like leadership transition. If a CEO [is] transitioning out, they may need to be one of the first individuals or groups that you have to reach out to communicate that this is happening.

So, one of the things we recommend you do is ... outline a communication plan. What does that look like? So, obviously, when a transition is going to take place, the board is typically the first ... to know. Then, as we shared, we ... think about the other groups, externally, that are connected to the organization, that maybe you're supporting financially and let those individuals [know] ... Communicate to staff that this is occurring.

And so, in the stakeholder sessions, what we offer is, we ask our committee and our board to identify those key stakeholders that, as a consultant, we should have a conversation with. And typically, there's two or three groups. It's the leadership staff team that maybe you have a conversation with, its board members that maybe you're not serving on the search committee and its community partners. And the purpose of those stakeholder sessions .. [that] take place early in the process ... [is to discuss] ... some things. Information that we pull from those discussions ... will be beneficial [not only] to our search committee, but also in attracting candidates.

And what I mean by that is, there's [a] certain amount of content that you can include in a position profile or job announcement, but sometimes you can't really speak to the culture of the organization, the culture of the staff, the culture of the board. So, when we move into our recruiting mode, these are the types of questions that we're going to get from candidates: Tell me a little bit about the board. What kind of board is [it]? Is it an operations board? Or is it a strategic board? Because that may impact for me, as a candidate: What type of organization I want to move into ... as it relates to where they are on that spectrum? Tell me a little bit about the staff. Is this the staff that needs a lot of development or support, or is this a staff team that's seasoned, and they've been excelling?

And so, those discussions that I have with stakeholders allow me to articulate to candidates that I'm recruiting information that you can't just glean from the job announcement or the position profile. So, that's where these sessions are really impactful.

There's also opportunities ... to take that data back to the search committee, because your board members, if they're strategic board members, they're not supposed to be ... involved in your day-to-day operations, that's the job of the CEO. So, they may not be as connected to some of the things related to the staff culture, because they're working and communicating directly with one individual. They're directly reporting to the CEO. So, some of the information that's pulled from the stakeholder sessions is also very beneficial to the board that you're working with.

So, these stakeholder sessions have been effective. The partner clients that we work with find them extremely beneficial, and it helps us articulate the culture to the candidates. So that's just something to think about when you think about who you're engaging early in the process and thinking about your stakeholders.

Let me turn it over to Stephanie so she can provide her perspective on this.

Stephanie Zavislan: Great, thanks Bert.

So in terms of how we engage teams before we [even] start recruiting, the people who I like to speak with [is] obviously, the hiring manager. We ask, what are your pain points? What are you looking for this person to come in and do? How can we help? What are the must-haves for the position? Low-level basic, what do you need this person to be able to do on their first day or within the first 90 days?

We ask those questions. What does success look like in the first week, in the first 90 days, in the first six months and in the first year? What are some key performance indicators that would signal to you that this person would be a good hire? Because, honestly, these are questions that we're getting from candidates when we're screening them or in interviews. They want to know, what does success look like in this job? We make sure to get that information from stakeholders before the recruitment begins, and I also like to bring in colleagues ... subordinates and managers [of this person]. So, anyone that this ... this candidate is going to be working with on a regular basis.

It's great to have the buy-in to know who's going to work well [and] who isn't going to work well. Is there someone on staff this person should be ... or not [be] like? What are some soft skills that are important to you? What are some things that you're willing to train [on]?

And in terms of communicating culture throughout the interview process, I've seen some creative ways that people are going about it. So, we've talked about people wanting transparency in this process, and that partnership that Noelle spoke of.

Here are a couple of questions that you can infuse in your interview process to start to get a good feel for not only what you can offer, but [also] what this person is looking for. You can ask, what are some characteristics of a work environment that lead to your maximum job satisfaction and motivate you to stay? And as you get this response, you can listen to if they say, “I want this to be a really fun environment,” “I want a way to be able to connect to my team on Zoom,” “I want a lot of work-life balance.” And as you're getting these responses, you can start to gauge if that is a good fit for what your organization can [offer or isn’t offering] ...

I've seen candidates say, I really want a lot of consistency in my work, and it was an event planning role. And they couldn't promise a lot of consistency. Event planning is very different from day to day, and so we knew this candidate isn't going to be a good match for this role.

So, in addition to asking about elements of a work environment that lead to job satisfaction and longevity, you can ask: How do you like to connect with your co-workers? Are you all business or do you like to socialize? And start to get a feel for what someone is expecting when they walk in the door. If you're an all-remote workforce, what kind of social activities have you planned? Is that a hole that you need to fill? Questions like that.

And as you wrap up the interview process, I encourage all of you to ask your candidates, what questions do you have, not only about the job, but [also] about our company ... culture and ... values? And be ready to answer them.

So, start weaving in that culture piece into the interview process and encourage the transparency on your end, and also for people to be very clear about what they need, as well.

Patty Hampton: Thank you, Stephanie. Appreciate that. And so, let's move on to some of the other steps. We’ve already talked about identifying a pool of candidates and what that looks like. We certainly hope that no one is continuing to post and pray, that means you go to a specific job board or several job boards, and you post, and then you wait. That is not how it should be done, folks. So I want to make sure that that's not continuing to happen. And we get it. Some people still focus on that, but that should not be your number one priority when you're identifying a pool of candidates.

You should be tapping people on the shoulder and what I mean by that is, are you leveraging social media platforms to sort of what I like to call, “being a sleuth"? And that means setting your LinkedIn settings, giving ... [some] secrets away here folks, and setting your LinkedIn settings so that you're completely anonymous. Because you're now identifying a pool of candidates from a variety of sources and, if you can, fly underneath the radar and reach out to them. They may be totally happy in their [current] role, but ... based on their profile, [they] might be totally into what you're offering by way of your culture [or] by way of the industry [in which] you're working ... So, we certainly hope folks are not ... still moving in that [other] direction ... It's about a network. It's about a pipeline of passive candidates as well.

Let's go into steps three, four and five. They kind of all go hand-in-hand.

As I said before ... the word “slate,” I put it in quotes because it might not be a slate of candidates that you're looking after. You may have gone through 50 resumes on your own, and [looked] through your ATS (Applicant Tracking System), and [identified] your top two, believe it or not, or your top three candidates. Different when you're working with a board, right Bert? And they're looking for a slate of candidates. We get it.

But really streamline your processes as best as you can around that slate of candidates. [Control] the messaging and the expectations of your hiring team, your hiring managers. I think that's really important. And you started to take care of a lot of that in ... step three ... But let's move on to steps four and five.

Like I said, they too go hand-in-hand, so let's talk about keeping folks engaged. What does that look like?

We have some interesting examples of how to keep your candidates engaged once you start approaching step four and, in particular, step five. There's a little surprise there, that we ... let the cat out of the bag when Noelle was talking, so I'll certainly address that later on unless you want to do that, Noelle.

But, as we talk through these last two steps, I want to give each of the panelists an opportunity to chime in, briefly, because I know we're approaching time. And we also want to give our audience an opportunity to ask a multitude of questions as well. So, with that said, let's focus ... and share ... some information ... that you love to share ... in how they can streamline the process as they approach steps four and five.

Who wants to start?

Bert Ruiz: I’ll go first, Patty. [During] one of the recent conversations with [a member] on the Retained Search team, we [discussed] assessing and presenting these candidates ... that we're recommending ... Something to consider is: Typically when we launch a search, we hold a kickoff meeting [with the partner] ... At that meeting ... we're identifying, what ... the key ... priority areas [are] that you want us to focus on as we're recruiting candidates.

And there's a little bit of a time ... between that event and when we get to step four, where you've identified top candidates. So it's important to go back and revisit those priority areas that we discussed at the beginning to ensure that your organization is still focused on that. Has anything significant changed since the first time you identified these areas? So you want to have that conversation and ensure those areas are still consistent — this is what we're still looking for. And as a consultant, then, what we'll do is ensure that the candidates that [we’re presenting] are aligned with those priority areas.

And one of the ways to do that is to reach back out to the candidates and go a little bit deeper in those areas ... This is part of our vetting session that we will conduct on behalf of our client partners, we’ll have those discussions with the candidates [to] re-iterate, “These are the priority areas, please share with me ... examples of your success in these areas.” That way, you're ensuring that you're aligning what your organization is looking for with the candidates that you want to consider to interview. So that's something to just think about, you identify priority areas at the beginning.

And then when you get to step four, revisit that and ensure [it] still remains the same, so you can continue to move forward in the process.

Patty Hampton: Very good. Sophia, Noelle, Stephanie, who'd like to chime in on that?

Sophia LaFontant: I'll chime in ... I'll say two things.

Thinking about what everyone said prior, too, as we're coming up to steps four and five is those touch points. I understand that everyone's calendars can get very, very, very busy and hectic when it comes to needing to hire. Specifically, if you don't have a recruiter who is designated for that.

But, as ... said earlier, set aside certain days — maybe an hour, or two hours — in your calendar to allow for some active sourcing ... [and] ... [block your] calendar for the interviews. One thing that I find very handy for the streamlining aspect of it is if you are using your applicant tracking system full out, and I know someone shared — Noelle probably has — the percentages on how many people are actually using their ATS system and everything that it offers.

If you ... tap into your ATS system, you can have automated templates that go out to candidates by ... changing the status. And it's an email that is personally typed by you. I definitely am one of the people on our team who [has] the most personal type of emails because I don't talk in a very professional way. I always talk in this very like warm, yogi, how's your vibration and energy kind of thing, and it's a template. So [many] people are very responsive to my emails and messages, even though it's two or three sentences, simply because they're hearing something different ... or it's tapping into how they're feeling ... That's the feedback that I get from candidates.

I also have in my Calendly [I have] a 10-minute option [for] when I reach out to people on LinkedIn, or Monster and Indeed, where they can ... set up a 10-minute meeting ... to ask questions about the job application I've shared with them. Just in case they are apprehensive about applying. Or they want to know: "Well, what is the salary before I even do this?" Or: ... "Is it ... hybrid? Is it remote?" ... Those are really major questions that people want to know before they even apply to a job ... If you're not including that in your job description, or you're undecided and ... open, depending on what the candidate is, leave 10-minute spots [just to] have quick conversations.

Also, be very conscious [of] being consistent with your candidates. If you start a candidate into the interview process, you need to [check] in with them no more than two weeks out since the last time you spoke to them. Even if you don't have a specific update to give them, you need to email them [and] say something along the lines of "We're currently waiting. Thank you so much for your patience. Very excited to move you to the next steps once I've talked with the hiring managers."

And for any person who does two interviews, this is my own personal thing. If you go through two interview rounds with [the] organization, you get a phone call if you're not getting the job, you do not just get an email that says, "You were not selected." It is not a long phone call, it can be 5-10 minutes, even less sometimes to just let someone know that.

But what I find with my candidates — because I work really, really hard to build a great relationship with them — is that even if they are not selected for the role, [which] happens for me 80% of the time, if not more, if they are not selected for the role, they are so excited about the relationship that we built before they even got to the hiring manager that they will send me additional candidates, friends [and] colleagues of theirs. So, they're like, "Look, it's five of us who are unhappy here, we're having a mass exodus. There are some additional individuals who also have the same skillset that I have, if not more, who would love to talk to you and talk about this position and other positions that you might have open."

And so, I will have another five-minute conversation with a referral for a potential next step, or ... job, that I know that I'm working for within the organization. So ... it's very important for us to remember that being personable, asking those questions about passion and culture, being consistent in contacting the candidates — [all are] really what will help you get to that last step, which is, having the person still be excited, interested. And when we get to the competition because we are competing with other organizations who are sending out offer letters, [have] someone say: "I enjoyed this process so much ... meeting these hiring managers ... that even though this other job might be offering, $15,000 ... $20,000 more, I feel like I will be happier here." And that is something that you just have to think about and hope ... that [the] relationship that you've built with them will lean to your side once you're dealing with that competition towards the end.

Patty Hampton: Yeah, thanks for that, Sophia.

Noelle, I know we're close to time, but I want to give you and Stephanie a chance [just to] chime in here. And [there are] some lessons [that we can all] learn from around leaning in and listening to your candidate. What are they saying, and what are they not saying?

Let's lean in a little bit and give the folks maybe one or two recommendations on how to streamline the process because once you get to step five, there's no way you want to lose candidates, especially your top three candidates, at that point. What sort of nuggets do you have to share and leave our folks with there?

Noelle Cherubim: Sure. Thank you. I will say that I'm sure everyone can tell [that we have discussed] creating a great candidate experience ... For us, it's not ... nice-to-have. It's a necessity. And as it should be for all hiring managers.

And so, the nugget that I will leave is ... [that] 62% of interviewed candidates agree that they will recommend an organization if they had a positive experience ... It's imperative that we actually spend some time doing that.

Streamlining [the] recruitment process basically means making sure that we tighten the onboarding process for ... new hires, or [inform] unsuccessful candidates and [check] in after their start date. Not providing the red-carpet treatment or the white-glove treatment just to those who are selected, but also to the candidates who are not selected, to make sure that they have a positive experience. In such instances, I believe 38% of candidates are more likely to accept a job if they've had a positive experience.

Stephanie Zavislan: Remember what it was like to [want] the job that you have, and go at it with that lens.

What's it going to take to bring ... the right people into your organization and connect with them as people first and candidates second?

Patty Hampton: Thank you very much. I love that. We were all on this call once [as] a candidate, what was your experience like?

And so, I just want to leave you all with this, as we go into the next slide, lean into every candidate that you are speaking to during the interview process — [build] that relationship. How are you leaning into what they're saying? And what are they not saying?

And I say that because you become the one person [who] can impact someone's organization when they're onboarding with you as a new hire. They trust you, so build that trusting relationship. You can stay professional. You can certainly build a professional relationship. I know some of us like to keep a short little distance there, if you will, but who else in their family is making a decision?

That's not how you're supposed to ask the question. It's more around: Who else is helping you to get to a yes? If we were to extend this offer to you, be more consultative in your approach, as you get to [the] last [fourth] and [fifth] step ...

You know them so well that they disclose some information to you, [giving you a small] window into who they are as an individual. And some of them disclose information to the recruiter that they probably wouldn't tell anyone else. If it's personal, skip over it ... because once you go down that path, there's no getting out sometimes.

But I really want to be transparent around the candidate experience in ... trusting their recruiter. We're all recruiters at heart, no matter what your title is. If you're recruiting for your organization, I think it's important. So, who else is helping them to get to yes? Many of us have been burned by that question ... so I have been asking it for [over] 20 years.

Believe it or not, I learned early on in my career — as a recruiter and as an HR practitioner — how important that question is. Because at step five, when they say, “I'm sorry, this is not for me.” You should've known that way before step five, so [there are] ways to get to that.

This last slide [details] what we're talking about now: ... Negotiating best practices and engagement of the candidate all the way through [to] the [hiring] stage, right? And sometimes, even before.

But the statistics [on] this and the metrics around how our folks have reported about their talent management priorities [are] still high in a lot of the areas, with respect to this slide. So, with that said, I ... want to open it up for questions right now.

Atokatha, I think we're close to time ...

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Yes, Patty, we are, and what a wonderful conversation. Thank you so much to the panel for all the information that you shared. We ... have about 15 minutes or so to get through a few questions. So, we'll ... jump right in.

Here’s a follow-up question to one of Bert's comments earlier about the challenges that internal candidates face. If an internal candidate applies for a position and meets the required qualifications but doesn’t appear as strong on paper as external candidates, would you still recommend that the hiring committee interview that internal candidate?

Bert Ruiz: Thank you for that question.

Yes, as I may have shared earlier, as a consultant, a couple of steps ... in identifying candidates are vetting sessions, right? So, as we look at numerous resumes, they're going to [stand out in] some areas ... But I may have questions on those. I may want ... specific examples ... This is where we set up our screening [or vetting] sessions ... with that candidate, and my job is to explore those areas where there may be some gaps.

They may have touched on something, but [there are no] specific details around a particular area. So ... in that vetting discussion, I [may] feel pretty good about what the candidate has shared ... Certainly they can be recommended ... In my recommendation to our partner, [I will] communicate ... the reasons why I'm recommending.

So, it does happen. We certainly encourage candidates to seek support in strengthening their resumes, their [profiles], to really focus on including accomplishments — not just listing your day-to-day responsibilities, but [also] some of the things that you've achieved because that's what organizations are looking for.

So, that's just something to consider ... If [as consultants we are feeling good about the candidate] results ... in our vetting discussions ... then you certainly can be recommended.

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Great. Thank you so much for that, Bert. This question is for everyone.

Our organization doesn't have an HR department, so the hiring manager also screens candidates and communicates with them about the process. We've had discussions about whether the hiring manager should have conversations with potential candidates or whether that introduces potential bias into the recruitment process.

Any thoughts?

Patty Hampton: Sophia, I see you [want] to answer that so bad.

Sophia LaFontant: I want to. Can you say it again for me? Because the thing is ... it hit me, but I was like, "Hold on, let me do it again." Can you say it for me again, Atokatha?

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Absolutely.

It's like our organization doesn't have an HR department so the hiring manager also screens candidates and communicates with them about the process. We've had discussions about whether the hiring manager should have conversations with potential candidates or whether that introduces potential bias into the recruitment process. Any thoughts?

Sophia LaFontant: ... I do not think that's a bad idea. If your hiring manager is the person who is responsible for reaching out to the candidates, then that's perfectly fine.

What I would do, in that case — for that specific nuance of a hiring manager [as] the person that's talking to everyone and then the hiring manager [who] is doing the interviews — is not let the hiring manager be the only person [doing] interviews. See if your organization is open to having a full interview panel. [Similar] to how we have this diverse skill set on our panel ... [and] different [career and job] levels, make sure that you have an interview [reflective of] this process.

And then the second thing that I always ask, and try to ... encourage, [is to] an interview rubric [with] a checklist. These are the things that you want to see in the interview. You're rating the person. Did they exceed it, match it, [or] did they not show this in the interview? Have each person fill that out. [Don't] ... [share] amongst the ... interview panel ... [Rather], find one person who can ... review those notes separately, come back to the individuals who [are] the interview panel and say, "Based on what you guys said, this person ranked number one. This person ranked number two. This person ranked number three."

That way there isn't that space that we all ... have at work, where there might be one person who is a little bit more boisterous. One person who takes up more space in the room who literally says, "No, this is the person. We have to choose Noelle right now, because this, that and the other." Because we know that in the culture of our organization, there's always going to be one employee who we ... listen to more, who we treat more ... like our mentor ... You want to make sure that the biases are removed, because each ... person's perspective, thoughts and rating on that person who was interviewed is separately given in an objective way.

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: All right, thank you so much, Sophia. Here's another question.

Is the use of the cover letter as part of the application process still important? Or is there something else we can be asking candidates for?

Sophia LaFontant: I can answer this one, it's up to you guys.

Patty Hampton: So, let me ... start and then I'll pass it back to you all.

I will speak from ... experience, right? And so, one is when a profile for an opportunity is posted. You want to make sure that if you need a cover letter, [there's a] "why" behind the cover letter. It's not just a nice to have.

[If you are asking that as a requirement] ... the reason for the cover letter ... is ... [to serve as] another touch point where you can evaluate the candidate's writing competencies.

I literally look for typos. I can be that anal recruiter, as I've always been. I look for typos, I [ask]: Are they able to convey their interests in the role? And I've seen all the above. I think it's important that if someone took the time to write a cover letter, you have a responsibility as a hiring manager to review it, especially ... if you did not request that hiring letter, cover letter, in your posting. I think it's critical. I think it gives you insight.

I have actually called C-suite ... level candidates ... saying, "You are perfect for the opportunity that I'm looking at. When was the last time you read your cover letter?"

I'm not just going to discard them because there was a typo, or they generally haven't really spoken to the position itself, but their resume tells me a different story. Gone are the days given how we are operating after the pandemic.

It's about the engagement of that candidate, making an impact in the positions that are open in our organizations. It's critical that you not just spend [less than five minutes on a person's application [as I've heard] throughout ... our recruiting industry and through some of our organizations that we know of ... and I'm not kidding.

You have no idea who you're missing ... a conversation with, and why they're applying for that opportunity ... Yes, [the] short answer is yes, it's still important. So, I'll pass it off to my colleagues to add to that.

Noelle Cherubim: I think you've covered everything, frankly. I don't, I personally don't have anything else to add. It is imperative. In the cover letter, we're certainly looking for a writing style, we're looking for the candidate's understanding of the role. Is that conveyed accurately in the cover letter, or is it irrelevant, frankly, [to] the position?

So, it really depends on, as Patty mentioned earlier, the purpose of the cover letter and exactly what your team is using it for.

Bert Ruiz: Yeah, I would just add that for the cover letter ... sometimes you get a little bit of a peek of the candidate's personal desire or passion about the position.

In some higher-level positions, where maybe the candidate might have to relocate, it's an opportunity for the candidate to share why they want to relocate, or do they have some connection to the region? Because that is something that hiring managers or committees will look at, is, "OK, someone's coming in from outside our region. I want to know why." And sometimes, that appears in the cover letter. "I grew up in this town, and this is an opportunity for me to come back through this position," so it is helpful.

You get a little bit of a personal perspective from the candidate on their interests and their passion through that cover letter.

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Thank you so much, everyone. Here's what I believe may be the final question, just so we have time for you all to leave any final remarks.

This question is, in this sense of making all candidates feel engaged, if there was one thing you can recommend that we do in recruitment, what would it be being that there are so many candidates that can be in the system at once?

Sophia LaFontant: I would say respond to everyone. If I apply, have some type of template that says, "Thank you for responding. We will get [back to] you [in] XYZ time." Or, "We're currently reviewing resumes." If the person is brought in for an interview screening, have a response that says, "We want to bring you in for this."

But I would say touch points. I also have one setting in my specific template [for] ... when I have people who are secondary, because it's important to me to always get the best, right? We have 50 ... or 100 applications, and you want the top 10 individuals. I have some individuals, I'm first going through, that I'm like, "Oh, it seems like it could be 100%, 90% match, but I'm also not sure." I have a template that goes out to that individual that says, "Thank you so much for applying. I want you know that you are still a candidate of interest. And at this time, we're still reviewing resumes."

So ... even that person who may not get looked at, technically, by me, [who was] screened with the hiring manager for potentially three to four weeks, which is a little bit longer ... Again, we try to keep everything under two weeks. They had a touch point that was within two weeks and then two weeks later, after I looked at everyone, I was like, "Oh, yeah. This person is good for me to bring in." I'm touching [base] with them again in two weeks, so I think the touch points are really important.

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Thank you.

Noelle Cherubim: Oh, I'm sorry.

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Oh, no, go ahead, Noelle.

Noelle Cherubim: The thing I would add to that is, remember, an ATS platform?

It is branding, right? It is always an opportunity for us to brand our organization or company. So, those X number, let's say 200-plus candidates. They are technically 200 individuals where you actually have the platform to share your value proposition [and] mission statement, to truly make them brand ambassadors — knowingly or unknowingly — because they will have learned quite a bit and may actually start following your organization and ... make referrals. So definitely, it's an opportunity. And to Sophia's point, always touch base when you can use that opportunity to continue to share your branding information.

Sophia LaFontant: Oh, and also ... if a person isn't qualified, let the message say, "Hey, please connect with us on Facebook or LinkedIn or wherever your social media channels are."

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Thank you so much, everyone. Again, for such a lively discussion, that is all the time we have for today's questions and answers. We know that there are so many more questions that we were not able to get to. And we will converse internally to see how we can provide answers to some of the questions that we did not have the time to respond to today. Thank you so much for all the questions that you asked to make this a very lively discussion.

Patty, I would love to know if you have any closing remarks that you'd like to share with our audience within one minute so that we may close out.

Patty Hampton: You gave me a time limit, I love it. Well, my closing remark is really on the final slide, if I'm not mistaken, Atokatha, and I really just want people to lean in and understand the fact that you're not just recruiting ... As we look at candidates, and them joining our organization, you are sowing seeds about your organization's reputation. I cannot stress it enough how important it is for you not to allow candidates to go down a black hole, because you're sowing a seed of a black hole.

And so, I want to be sure that you are intentional about your recruiting efforts. You are intentional about the culture that you are building. And you are intentional about identifying the talent and the people that help to move your mission forward.

Atokatha Ashmond Brew: Thank you so much, Patty. Thanks again to our entire panel, for being here and for sharing all of your knowledge and expertise. I know our attendees really appreciate it. There are many more webinars coming your way in 2022. Be sure to check out our events calendar at nonprofithr.com/events. Also, be sure to complete the feedback survey that will pop up once this webcast has ended. Again, thank you to our panel. Thank you to all of our attendees. We appreciate your time today, and we'll see you on the next webinar.