

Put Top Talent to Use in Your Organization

The secret is to understand what drives each person.

By David Nour

What motivates people not just to meet but *exceed* expectations? For some, it's the promise of financial rewards, while others want recognition or political clout.

For many nonprofits, it can feel as if they're in a race without the proper equipment. Unlike their corporate cousins, who can use financial rewards and perks to a much greater extent (as well as titles and promotions as wild cards), nonprofits must find creative ways to drive people to push beyond their perceived limits.

Pinpoint People's Motivators

Many nonprofit employees are impelled by a passion for the cause. As a nonprofit leader, the key to motivating your employees is to help them use this passion in a way that's basic to their individual DNA—to who they really are and what they value most. Then, identify critical roles in your organization and make sure those roles are occupied by self-motivating, self-correcting, passionate people who are both willing and able to effect change.

Once the right people are in the key roles, profile them so that you better understand what their fundamental motivators are. What do we mean by fundamental motivators? Here are some examples:

Interest in Others: Some people are driven by a genuine interest in others. Some call this "chemistry" or a feeling of "they get me" when talking with these types of people. They have an innate ability to in-

teract with others and bestow joy on those whose lives they touch. These people, projecting the right level of professionalism as an extension of your organization, should be charged with engaging as many different types of stakeholders as possible. Leverage their smiles to connect with current and possible donors at open-house events. Encourage them to interview incoming candidates. Make them ambassadors of the fundraising event, advocates of a new initiative, and tour guides of the new building. In short, embrace and encourage their desire to involve others.

Profile employees so that you understand what their fundamental motivators are.

Purpose: People propelled by purpose need to understand the organization's vision, mission, and strategy; to have input into the process; and to have their ideas heard and implemented. Once they understand their purpose, they'll skip the snooze button, get up at 5:00 a.m. to head to the office, and stay late on Friday afternoon to make one more phone call. Use focus groups, surveys, and other avenues to help these purpose-driven employees keep their fingers on the pulse of various stakeholder communities.

Change: Some people are motivated by a zeal for change and a desire to fix things. Put these change agents in charge of identifying what's broken—people, processes, or tools within the organi-

zation. They're passionate about an evolution—if not a revolution—in thought processes, as well as the way projects are developed. Give them the power to question the status quo and to explore best practices in other nonprofit organizations, as well as across other industries, for the infusion of not just incrementalism—doing things better—but true innovation—doing things differently.

Learning: Less than 5% of Americans read more than one business book a year. Less than 10% of Amazon.com's clients have bought more than four business books in the past year. The few people who fit into these small percentages are innate learners. They believe that education is a life-long process. If you're lucky enough to have such employees, encourage their personal and professional development. Nurture their love of learning by helping them subscribe to newsletters, attend guest lectures, and interact with experts on matters that interest them. Thought leadership, along with practical, hands-on experience, will allow these individuals to blossom. When you help them raise their personal bar, the rising tide will bring success to the entire organization.

Put change agents in charge of identifying what's broken.

Self-esteem: Sometimes self-esteem is a person's prime driver. Such a person makes an ideal nonprofit employee, since representing a nonprofit's goals starts with a

Celebrate what you want to see more of.

—Tom Peters

healthy self. A high level of self-esteem builds relationships, which forge the foundation for successful fundraising. Empower these people to lead key initiatives. And when they fail, encourage them to fail fast and fail forward, learning from each experience to produce greater results the next time.

Mission: Mission-driven enthusiasts are in the organization because they followed their hearts there. The challenge is to balance the acumen it takes to succeed as a nonprofit with the employee's passion for the mission. Again, your task is to identify chief motivators.

Use the Power of Relationships

To make the best use of talent in your organization, you need to invest in your employees. Make them feel that their role is vital to the organization's mission and that their input is heard. Over time, you'll build what is called Relationship Currency®. In its most simple definition, Relationship Currency is a gift of time, talent, knowledge, or an influential relationship that is exchanged between individuals with the intent of adding quantifiable value in the process.

The secret is to uncover what is important to each individual on the team and make the appropriate "deposit" of Relationship Currency. The power of Relationship Currency comes from its ability to *enable*—to use the lubricant of social capital to get things done. Social capital is made up of tangible things in daily life such as good will, fellowship, and social interaction. By improving the lives of your employees, not only will your organization benefit, but its leaders will accumulate influence, earn trust, and create a more highly motivated team. ■

David Nour (www.relationshipeconomics.net, 888-339-1333) is one of the foremost thought leaders on the quantifiable value of business relationships. A native of Iran, David came to the U.S. with a suitcase, \$100, limited family ties, and no fluency in English. Fast forward 25 years and he has built an impressive career of entrepreneurial success. David is an author, senior management advisor, and featured speaker.

How to Light their Fire

For more on motivating volunteer as well as paid staff, take a look at these *Nonprofit World* articles (available at www.snpo.org/members):

- **How to Ignite Entrepreneurial Spirit in Your Organization** (Vol. 20, No. 5)
- **Overcome Organizational Indifference** (Vol. 24, No. 2)
- **Training Programs Need More than Good Information** (Vol. 21, No. 2)
- **Building Morale: The Key to Successful Change** (Vol. 13, No. 3)
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If you have any questions, contact Jason Chmura at jchmura@snpo.org.