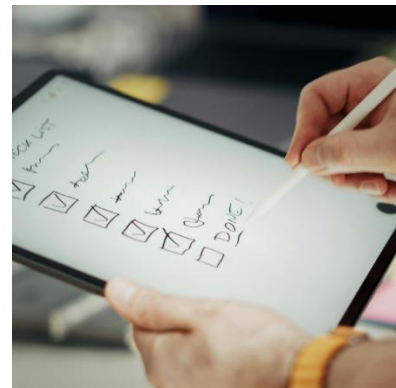


How Board Members Can Help Attract and Retain Top Nonprofit Talent

Attracting and retaining mission-driven talent is a critical challenge for nonprofits, and while staff management is typically led by executive leadership, board members play a key role in shaping the overall employment experience. Boards that actively support talent strategy (from recruitment to culture) help build long-term organizational strength and stability.

Here are ten practical ways board members can contribute:

1. **Champion Employer Branding:** A compelling employer brand helps attract value-aligned candidates. Board members should ensure the organization's mission, values, and impact are clearly communicated on the website, job postings, and social media channels. Organizations that fail to highlight employee stories or workplace culture may limit their talent pool.



Question for the board: Does our public presence (including our website and social media) reflect what it is truly like to work at our organization?

2. **Support Competitive Compensation:** Be willing to have candid conversations about pay. Benchmark salaries at least every two years – [KEES can help](#) – and benefits to ensure the organization is not unintentionally pricing itself out of the talent market.

Question for the board: When was the last time we reviewed compensation and benefits against similar organizations, and what did we learn?

3. **Leverage Your Networks:** Board members can help fill positions by sharing job openings with their personal and professional contacts. Many top candidates come through referrals, and board members often have access to networks that staff may not reach.

Question for the board: Are we actively using our networks to support recruitment efforts, and how can we be more intentional about it?

4. **Invest in Leadership Development:** Encouraging professional development, mentoring, and succession planning helps grow internal talent. When organizations build strong leadership pipelines, they reduce their reliance on external recruitment and demonstrate commitment to staff growth.

Question for the board: What opportunities do we provide for staff to grow into leadership roles within the organization?

5. **Model Commitment to Culture:** Board members should reflect on the kind of culture the organization wants to promote. Candidates often observe how the board operates and collaborates with leadership when evaluating whether an organization is a good fit. A healthy, inclusive board [culture](#) can reinforce positive workplace dynamics.

Question for the board: Are we modeling the values and culture we expect throughout the organization?

6. **Plan for Transitions Early:** If an executive transition is expected within the next few years, planning should begin as soon as possible. The board can help create a [succession](#) or transition plan and clearly define its role in the search and onboarding processes.

Question for the board: Do we have a clear and up-to-date succession plan in place for key leadership positions?



7. **Recognize and Appreciate Staff:** Supporting both formal and informal staff recognition efforts reinforces a culture of [appreciation](#). Board members can contribute by acknowledging staff contributions and celebrating achievements, helping staff feel valued and respected.

Question for the board: In what ways do we recognize and show appreciation for staff contributions?

8. **Conduct Stay Interviews:** “Stay interviews” offer valuable insights into why employees remain at the organization and what could cause them to leave. Board members can encourage leadership to conduct these interviews regularly and review high-level themes to support retention efforts.

Question for the board: Are we regularly learning from staff about what keeps them engaged, and how are we using that information?

9. **Track and Inquire About Talent Health:** Talent and workforce-related topics should be part of the board’s regular oversight. This includes reviewing data such as turnover rates, staff satisfaction, hiring pipeline status, and exit interview summaries to understand how the organization is managing its people.



Question for the board: What workforce data are we regularly reviewing, and what does it tell us about staff well-being and retention?

10. **Support the Full Employment Experience:** Board members should advocate for a holistic employment experience that includes not just pay but also benefits, flexibility, professional development, and a commitment to equity and inclusion. All these factors influence whether talented individuals stay or leave.

Question for the board: Are we doing enough to support the full employee experience, beyond just salary and job duties?

An engaged board strengthens the entire organization. When board members actively support recruitment, retention, and culture, they help create a workplace where talented individuals want to build their careers. These ten steps offer a starting point for deeper board involvement in shaping a healthy and sustainable staff experience.