Summary of Insights
New York Seminar
Talent Management and Development

July 11, 2018

ROCKEFELLER
Philanthropy
Advisors

Seminar Overview

In July 2018, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors had the honor of hosting the first seminar of the Theory of the Foundation Learning Collaborative on the topic of Talent Management and Development. The half-day gathering took place at our offices in New York City and brought together more than 20 key HR staff, program heads and operations team leaders.

In the course of a lively discussion, the seminar participants shared best practices and challenges in identifying, recruiting and retaining top talent and embedding diversity, equity and inclusion. We are grateful for their insights, diversity of views and experiences, and pleased to share key takeaways from the discussion. We look forward to continuing our thought partnership in further exploring the topic of talent management, development and alignment.

Recruiting: Best Practices

- Recruit based on character traits that best align with the mission statement, strategic plan, or founders' outlook and values

- Incorporate values and culture into the recruitment strategy

- When checking references, gauge the candidate's past behavior and how they contributed to their previous positions

- Utilize different techniques to hire for different roles, based on the position's responsibilities and the team culture

- Remain patient in the hiring process. Don't hire based solely on the need to fill the role quickly, as this can be more expensive and affect the bottom line more so than a vacancy

Identifying Top Talent and Determining Cultural Fit

- Consider performance factors (i.e. initiative, willingness to collaborate, problem-solving abilities, communications skills), rather than skills and experience alone

- Testing simulations and short term contracts can help determine whether a candidate is a good fit for a permanent role

- Conduct personality/psychological tests. While there is some skepticism about this approach, some organizations find it to be an effective method to assess competencies, especially for senior level hires

- Involve colleagues at all levels of the organization in the hiring process to assess cultural fit

- Hire for adaptability to ensure that the successful candidate can evolve with the shifting strategies and needs of the organization

Building Diversity

- Avoid relying too heavily on networks for recruitment, as it only exacerbates limited diversity within the sector

- Educate senior leadership and board members on issues related to diversity and inclusion. This can help encourage greater prioritization of DEI

- Hold yourself accountable to uphold standards of diversity and inclusion in daily interactions (i.e. recording meetings to ensure equal opportunities to speak)

- Include DEI training in onboarding for all employees

- Make small changes to day-to-day processes to encourage a more common ground and less hierarchy (i.e. move to an open office floor plan, alternate ownership of meetings so the most senior person isn't always facilitating)

- Don't rely solely on volunteer basis for participation or development opportunities as marginalized people are less likely to volunteer without encouragement

- Engage headhunters to help seek out diverse candidate pools

Attracting Untraditional Philanthropy Talent

- Shifting priorities within the sector has led to less emphasis on traditional grantmaking roles and increased need for capabilities in data and tech fields

- Corporate candidates may hold reservations based on misconceptions that philanthropy holds a lower pay scale or is less professional than corporate environments, or may be confused about the distinction between an endowed foundation and a nonprofit

- Big name philanthropies may have "instant credibility" and help generate interest but candidates may be confused about the actual job requirements

- Establishing partnerships with corporate entities and universities can diversify candidate pool

- Integrating new hires from different backgrounds with current employees can be a challenge

- Hiring for trends (AI, big data, robotics) is attractive across sector but the significant demand for these skills may make it difficult to recruit specialists

Retention

- Professional development is key to attracting and retaining employees; allow employees the opportunity to expand beyond the confines of the job description

- Promoting a feeling of not only job satisfaction but also passion about the subject matter

- Creating a family atmosphere through social events and meaningful get-togethers will make people feel good about their work and the organization

- Develop strategy interdepartmentally and incorporate input at all levels of the organization so every employee has a stake and a voice

- Downside to good retention is a lack of development opportunities for lower level staff; without opportunities to grow into, employees are often left with no other option but to leave

- Stress that learning new skills qualifies as development; promotions aren't the only form of development

- Create internal measurement systems to establish baseline for internal development and how many new strategies have successfully created engagement (i.e. equity score card)

Equity of Pay and Power

- Complete compensation studies every set amount of years
- Make an effort to keep all employees within a certain compensation range
- Encourage conversations about pay transparency
- Consider diversity demographics on a regular basis and incorporate findings into internal measurement systems and strategy development