

# CONNECTIONS

~ a quarterly newsletter from Careers In Nonprofits ~

## 3 Easy Steps To Strengthen Your Staff And Your Career

Every hiring manager we know wants to strengthen his or her staff, and every nonprofit professional wants to strengthen his or her career. The good news: our simple formula for achieving job satisfaction can help you to do both!

Whether we're talking about your staff or your career, long-term satisfaction is key. Professionals who are satisfied at work will perform better and stay longer. Managers with a satisfied staff will enjoy higher morale, efficiency, and retention rates. And achieving long-term satisfaction in your own career--more important than titles or salary--is the ultimate mark of success.

If you are hiring new staff or considering a professional move, now is the perfect time to employ this simple formula:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Careful Planning} \\ + \text{Proactive Relationships} \\ = \text{Long-Term Satisfaction} \end{array}$$

### Step one: Careful Planning

Whichever end of the search you are on, careful planning should be your first priority. When you set out to hire a new staff member or to become one, always plan with the future in mind. Short-sighted decisions lead to short-sighted partnerships, which can be costly to your budget and your career.

Identify your long-term goal and plan back from it. For staff planning, write a detailed job description, including skill-set and characteristics of the person who would best fulfill your vision for the position and inspire new energy in your department or organization. For career planning, write a detailed description of a

position or organization that would best match your skill-set and character and inspire your professional growth.

At every point in the interview process, ask yourself whether the person or post you are courting matches your description and contributes to your long-term goal. And here's the hard part: continue only if the answer is a clear, "Yes." Do not let expedience cloud your vision for the future of your staff or your career. Let your plan guide you to the right decision.

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## New Year's Resolutions

10 New Year's Resolutions from Careers In Nonprofits staff:

1. Write five things I'm thankful for every night, big or small.
2. Give more.
3. Put America to work, one person at a time.
4. Engage and serve on two new boards of directors.
5. Have some dedicated time to myself at least once a week.
6. Make more time for family and friends.
7. Smile often.
8. Grow my LinkedIn network.
9. Be aware of my body-mind connection.
10. Spend more time outside.



## IN THIS ISSUE

### 3 EASY STEPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR STAFF AND YOUR CAREER

Learn our sure-fire formula to achieving real job satisfaction for yourself and your staff.

### NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Read a list of 10 actual New Year's Resolutions from Careers In Nonprofits staff.

## CONTACT US

Chicago, IL: 312-523-2044  
 Washington, DC: 202-349-3829  
[www.CareersInNonprofits.com](http://www.CareersInNonprofits.com)  
[CNP@careersinnonprofits.com](mailto:CNP@careersinnonprofits.com)

Careers In Nonprofits is a full-service staffing firm serving associations and nonprofit organizations in Chicago, IL, and Washington, DC. We are the nonprofit staffing experts, providing a winning process for temporary, temp-to-perm, and permanent searches, from entry to executive level.

### 3 Easy Steps, *continued*

With careful planning, you can build a foundation for long-term success. New hires who are a true fit to the position and organization become your most valued staff members. And a job that is in line with your career vision helps you to appreciate your professional value and future potential. The job satisfaction that follows a carefully planned hire or professional move paves the way for a long-term, mutually beneficial, and strong partnership.



#### Step two: Proactive Relationships

So you've done your planning and hired the ideal candidate, or secured the ideal job. Now what?

The next step is all about relationships: relationship building, relationship management, and what we like to call relationship expansion. Fundraisers are keenly aware of the importance of relationships because of their unique role working with donors. In fact, many development officers include "relationship building" as a skill on their resumes. Fantastic! The truth is, a relationship-centered approach to staff and career is essential to *all* nonprofit professionals.

*Relationship building* is important when recruiting or training new staff and when seeking or starting a new post.

*Relationship management* is important when resolving conflicts among your staff and when handling difficult personalities in management or on your board.

*Relationship expansion* is important when interacting with staff, supervisors, and colleagues *on a regular basis*. It is the *every day* relationship skill.

If we focus on relationship building at the beginning of a business partnership and relationship management in times of conflict or stress, then relationship expansion is what we do, or *neglect* to do, the rest of the time (which, of course, is *most* of the time). It is about fostering *ongoing* communication, encouragement and trust with and among your staff, supervisors or board. Though often lost in the busy-ness of business, it is, perhaps, the most essential relationship skill.

Business relationships, like dating and marriage relationships, are not static; without active and purposeful engagement, they tend to disintegrate and eventually dissolve. If the interactions between partners stop after the wedding and resurface only in conflicts, the marriage is not likely to thrive. If, however, there is regular communication, encouragement, and trust, the marriage is far more likely to succeed and to bring lasting satisfaction to both partners.

We tend to slide into relationship building and management modes fairly naturally, when circumstances require it. Relationship expansion, on the other hand, is rarely *required* by outside circumstances, so we have to require it of ourselves. We have to be truly *proactive*.

Being proactive in work relationships means creating an environment of open communication with your staff, supervisor or board. It means discussing goals, job descriptions, successes and concerns routinely--as a matter of practice--and making appropriate adjustments along the way. It is an ongoing commitment that pays huge professional dividends.

#### Step three: Long-Term Satisfaction

Congratulations! You've planned carefully and made a practice of proactive relationships. The next step? Enjoy the fruits of your labor!

When each person is properly suited to his or her position, shares the values and vision of the organization, and has

an open invitation to grow and evolve professionally, you are bound to achieve a high rate of job satisfaction among your staff. Retention--one of the most common *and most expensive* staffing issues among nonprofits--will be a non-issue in your department. The strength of your staff will show in its loyalty, continuity, and productivity. And you will enjoy a less stressful, more energetic work life--and the admiration of your staff.

Of course, the ultimate mark of success is long-term job satisfaction of your own. The formula to achieve it is the same, but the benefits to you personally are even more rewarding. When your talents, interests, and goals are aligned with your position--and you foster solid, purposeful relationships with your supervisors or board--you are bound to achieve satisfaction over the course of a rich professional life. The strength of your career will be evident in your remarkable staying-power and confidence. And you will enjoy a sense of pride and fulfillment, along with the admiration of your colleagues.



**Connections is a quarterly newsletter from Careers In Nonprofits designed for nonprofit professionals and executive staff. We would love to hear from you regarding ideas, topics of interest, and general feedback. Also, let us know if you would like to be interviewed in a future newsletter. We value your input and look forward to continued successes in our work together!**