

Are you Called To Work in a Non-Profit Organization?



Do you feel called to engage in non-profit work, the service to the community, or the giving of yourself to aid others? Career success in the non-profit realm can be measured by the difference we make in others' lives; the changes we see come about in our community, or in improvements we bring to the organizations we serve. Yes future employers want to hear how much you have raised, how many staff you have managed, and what experience you have working within a development committee, but

for you personally, looking back on your work history, you need to be able to identify the changes you have brought about, where you added significance. Those who are engaged in nonprofit careers, volunteer on committees, and serve on board are sustained by the feeling that their lives make a difference.

Many times individuals are called to the work. At other times they simply stumbled into the opportunity and the passion grows over time. Certainly if you are the founding CEO or ED of a nonprofit organization and launched it from the dining room table you might feel that the work you are engaged in is a "calling". Possibly you grew up with music as part of your everyday life, something that gave you joy, allowed you to experience commitment, and provided a clear example of the results that come from dedication. The idea that our young school children would not be exposed to musical instruments due to budget cuts and the lack of support causes your blood to boil, and drives you to establish an afterschool music program. The passion that fuels your drive to insure that every child has the opportunity to try their hand at a musical instrument drives you to overcome any fear you might have to ask family, friends, colleagues, businesses, and others in the community for support and the finances needed for the program.

Maybe you were on a family trip and spent time in Africa and experienced the lack of basic elements such as water and electricity. The difficulty of access to daily water, the poverty, the lack of infrastructure all compel you to reach out to a non-profit to assist them in supplying these basic human needs. Initially you become a donor or a volunteer, then as you see lives changed and saved, your passion for the work grows and more and more time and resources are dedicated to assist those in need. The drive, the passion, the commitment needed for you to be successful in helping others becomes a part of the fabric of who you are. The work becomes a calling and in many ways defines you as an individual.

It is therefore no surprise that in recruiting for positions in the nonprofit sector one of the most important factors is to identify the passion for and identification with the mission of the organization. While skill sets and experience are important to hiring managers, more important for you is to search for mission-related connections. Certainly previous work history will tell you a lot but so also will your hobbies, language skills, and references.

When interviewing for a nonprofit job, recognize that hiring managers will be reviewing your LinkedIn profile to learn “who is this candidate?” and “who are they following, or who are their business affiliates. In a phone screening interview one of the first questions asked will be, “How are you connected to our mission and our organization?” Those individuals who demonstrate a knowledge of the organization’s mission, a personal connection to your area of service, and passion for the work being done, are the ones to move on to the next level in an interview process. While there are personality traits to consider, management style, work ethic, and much more, insuring that there is a match with your mission early on will save everyone time in the search process. The love and passion one has for the mission of the organization will carry them through when tough times come up in the work and service you are providing, or bring out the best in you.

David Snyder

Principal

Stanton Chase San Francisco

d.snyder@stantonchase.com

Many individuals really are called to work in the nonprofit community. It is one of the joys of serving as an executive recruiter here at Stanton Chase. We help identify those who will best meet your senior executive needs through their passion for your organizations’ mission. Mr. Snyder has invested a lifetime of giving and executive service in the nonprofit and foundations industry, and now is helping other nonprofit organizations through his executive search career.