

Dear Colleagues,

The war for talent is on.

For much of the past decade, top candidates for leadership positions in the association and nonprofit communities have faced a very tough market. But from our perspective, things are changing. Demand for talented leaders is picking up once again, and with it, the competition among associations for the best of the best. So what can associations do to win the war for talent?

Employer Brand

A starting point is a candid assessment of one of your most valuable tools of battle — your employer brand. Strong employer brands help cut through the competitive clutter, providing candidates with a clear, strong picture of some of their most critical considerations. Strong brands do more than simply establish a name. They also communicate the values and principles behind the name, helping speed candidates to an understanding of what makes the opportunity relevant, special and compelling. Strong employer brands attract strong candidates, with less need for education, selling and persuasion.

The war for talent is on.

How ready are you to win the battle?

Culture

Strong employer brands go hand in hand with an established organizational culture. Top candidates have a choice in where they work. They look for more than mechanical position requirements and cold experience. The best candidates look beyond the purely practical aspects of a position to the larger work environment. A well-defined culture — based on commitments to such things as excellence, teamwork, open communication, continuous growth and all the other elements of a happy, healthy work environment — can be a key to standing apart and above other competing organizations. To help ensure a cultural fit, 70% of the organizations surveyed recently by the McQuaig Institute indicated they are using behavioral or personality assessments as part of the recruiting process.

Strategy

To make the most of a strong employer brand and an established culture, leading associations also make sure their recruitment and retention strategy addresses the need for continuity in the caliber and capabilities of individuals at all levels of the organization. It starts with succession planning, not just for the CEO but all other key leadership posts as well. (*Be sure to see the special resource on succession planning on our web site.*) It extends to a focus on diversity — a recognition of the importance of finding people with a full range of experience, background, perspective and other considerations important to dealing effectively with our interconnected world. And it certainly includes technology. Consider this... according to a William Blair Report on LinkedIn Use, 48% of executive candidates are originally identified via LinkedIn. Additionally, seven out of 10 candidates in the United States use their cellular phones to search for a job according to a SimplyHired survey.

Onboarding

Bringing the candidate into the organization in the right way is critically important. Organizations must develop a comprehensive plan to transition a new hire successfully and this is especially important when the candidate is replacing a long serving highly successful executive. Even the best candidates need guidance and help in the transition to a new position. This 'on-boarding' process can be critical to the success of a new hire — and speeding his or her ability to contribute to strong organizational performance.

Today's Market

So what do we see in the association marketplace? More COO hiring, to allow CEOs to focus more externally. More senior-level market intelligence talent, either from within the sector in which they operate or from top research firms. More marketing executives, especially among associations with highly diverse program, product or service offerings, to lead creation of new offerings and to enhance revenue generation. The most successful associations also seem more prepared to look for talent outside the association community — or at least a mix of corporate and association experience.




Employer brand... well-defined culture... a thorough recruitment and retention strategy... and a solid onboarding process.

As it relates to CEO recruitment, we continue to see a number of vacancies due to retirement, as well as movement to other CEO posts. In replacing talent, Boards want a CEO who can function as a partner — someone capable of working in sync with them both to develop strategic goals and objectives not just for the association but for the industry or profession they serve. Boards are focused on executives who can raise the visibility of the association and the sector it represents, in addition to driving revenue and success in the policy arena. More advanced associations are looking to the association CEO to help ensure a continued talent pool for the industry/profession and to advance any global expansion.

Employer brand... well-defined culture... a thorough recruitment and retention strategy... and a solid onboarding process. All are important in today's marketplace, perhaps never more so than now. Keep them in mind as you enjoy the remainder of the summer and recharge your batteries for the continuing competition for top leadership talent.

All the best from all of us at Vetted Solutions!

James Zaniello, President, Vetted Solutions
+1 (202) 544-4749
jim.zaniello@vettedsolutions.com

 vettedsolutions.com
 [/vetted-solutions-llc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vetted-solutions-llc)
 [@vettedsolutions](https://twitter.com/vettedsolutions)