



Paula Manley
Consulting

Tips for Boards of Directors in Managing Successful Executive Leadership Transitions

Be sure to...

- Know the story of your organization—it's mission, history, and accomplishments. With the departure of the executive director, you hold the context.
- Publicly recognize the contributions of your departing executive and find a meaningful way to say thank you.
- Use the executive director transition as an opportunity to take stock, including assessing challenges and opportunities, and developing a future-focused leadership profile.
- Recognize the importance of hiring the organization's next executive director, take your time, and get the support you need (resources, expertise, etc.).
- Communicate with internal and external stakeholders. Staff members will need to know there is a plan for the transition and what their parts are. Funders and community members will need assurances that programs and services will continue.
- Recognize and provide support to staff members and board members who assume extra duties during the transition.
- Consider talent within the organization. In the search for your next executive director, the best candidate may turn out to be homegrown.

Avoid these pitfalls...

- Approaching the executive director search as a problem that needs to be fixed.
- Undertaking the executive search process without assessing and articulating the organization's current issues and leadership needs.
- Hurrying to fill the position without taking time to involve important stakeholders in the process (especially board and staff members).
- In the hiring process, trying to find some one "just like" the departing executive.
- Overcompensating in the hiring process by placing too much emphasis on _____.
(Fill in the blank with the main weakness of the departing executive).
- Underestimating the need to actively recruit candidates and promote the organization to candidates as part of the search process.
- Failing to present a realistic picture of the organization to prospective candidates.
- Having unrealistic expectations of the incoming executive director—expecting a "savior" or a "hero."