

Looking for New Staff

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As I coach pastors to lead their churches toward health and effectiveness, one issue we tackle is the need to fill staff positions. I encourage pastors to identify specifically what the position will require, how much time it will take, and what gifts are needed. Many times the pastor will then talk about a person from another organization or church who is “just like” the person they want to hire. The pastor begins to dream about how their own ministry could really take off if they could hire this ‘star’ to be on their staff.

In the short run, this seems like the perfect solution. We see someone who is a star performer in another ministry and our assumption is that if we can only hire a star performer, we don’t need to train the person (easier for us) and they can do for our church, what the ‘star’ as done for another church.

I just attended the Willow Creek Leadership Summit where I had the privilege to hear Ashish Nanda, an associate professor of Business at Harvard Business School. What he had to say was very enlightening. He did an extensive study to find out what happened to ‘stars’ and to the organizations who hired them. While there certainly were success stories in the mix, the majority of the time the result was:

- 1) The star did not perform as well in the new setting as he did in the previous setting.
- 2) The team the star joined decreased in productivity.
- 3) Stars tend to be more mobile and move more often.

Professor Nanda likened the hiring of an outside ‘star’ to an organ transplant. The organ may be assimilated or it may be rejected by the new host.

His conclusion was that a star becomes a star for reasons that are often unique to that particular organization (ie. organizational culture, leadership above them, the team they work with etc.) and that if you want to hire a star and expect the same results, you probably need to hire his or her entire team. Further he saw that teams the star joined either felt intimidated by the star or relaxed their own efforts resulting in less productivity.

In those instances where the star and organization did continue to do well, the leadership went to great lengths to help the new star understand and fit into the social and organizational culture.

Another aspect to consider is whether you’re hiring someone to strengthen an existing ministry, replace a ministry, or start a new ministry. Professor Nanda said another instance where stars had a better shot at succeeding was when they were hired to start a brand new ministry.

So if hiring a star is not necessarily the best path to take, what might be a better route? The recommendation was to *grow your own star*. Find the people in your church who have the potential to be a star and create an environment that allows them to flourish and grow. Coach them to effectiveness and surround them with people who can work together with them to see that ministry thrive.

New Staff Assessment Tool

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Before you hire take some time to evaluate your hiring situation with this tool. It's not always easy to find the 'diamonds in the rough'. A coach can help you assess your hiring situation, identify those emerging leaders in your ministry and help you chart a course for raising up a constellation of stars for the Kingdom of God.

Purpose	Improving a Ministry	Replacing a Ministry	Creating a Ministry
Reason for Vacancy	Which aspects of the existing ministry are beyond the abilities/man hours of the existing paid or unpaid staff?	Why did the previous staff leave? Was the ministry developing, successful, or crumbling when the previous staff left?	Which aspects of the new ministry are beyond the abilities/man hours of the existing paid or unpaid staff?
Team	In place, developing, disbanding, or non-existent?	In place, developing, disbanding, or non-existent?	In place, developing, disbanding, or non-existent?
Candidates	Developing, peaking, experienced?	Developing, peaking, experienced?	Developing, peaking, experienced?
Assimilation	Developing insider, connected insider, connected outsider, outsider	Developing insider, connected insider, connected outsider, outsider	Developing insider, connected insider, connected outsider, outsider
Politics	Support/Opposition of other staff, team, church leadership, congregation, conference.	Support/Opposition of other staff, team, church leadership, congregation, conference.	Support/Opposition of other staff, team, church leadership, congregation, conference.

Additional Questions to Consider

1. Is this staff position focused on improving an existing ministry, replacing a ministry or creating a new ministry?

2. What will be the primary role/responsibility of the position?
3. What other responsibilities will this person be expected to cover and how much time will each take?
4. What Gifts, passions, talents and experience will be required?
5. Who will this person be accountable to? Who will coach the person? (these may be different people)
6. Who will this person work with? Who will be on their team?
7. What are your measurable goals for this position?
8. What kind of time commitment will be you asking for?
9. Who in your church/ministry/organization has a passion for this ministry position but you don't feel has the capacity to do so at this time?
10. Who in your church/ministry/organization that has the capacity to step into this role:
A year from now, if properly coached
In the next 6 months
Now
11. What will be the advantages and disadvantages of hiring from outside?