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-- By Nicole Wallace, “Tackling Diversity in a New Way,” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, vol. 29, issue 5, March 07, 2017.

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“Rather, the sector suffers from ‘a deficit in investing in our leaders and our people,’ he says. ‘It’s incumbent on everyone in every role to begin maximizing investment rather than wringing our hands about a supposed lack of people. Let’s invest in the people we’ve got and help them do their best rather than continuing this deficit mentality.’

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“It’s got to come from their leadership — they can’t wait around for some funder to tell them what to do,’ he says. ‘It’s great to establish this as a priority and base their fundraising around that. Many funders are not going to invest unless they hear their grantees coming to them.’”

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Complete articles provided on following pages...

THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

Tackling Diversity in a New Way

<https://www.philanthropy.com/article/7-Ways-Nonprofits-Are-Building/239389> (premium)

Chronicle of Philanthropy

By Nicole Wallace

NEWS AND ANALYSIS

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Give Voice to Employees

Teach for America offers an array of voluntary, employee-run groups for staff to meet and learn from colleagues who share a common background. There are groups for parents, African-American managers, Latinos, and more.

One group is for employees who come from a low-income background, however each person defines that. Members meet online every other month. They have discussed class and family issues that come up at the holidays and talked with an investment adviser about 403(b) retirement plans.

The education nonprofit tells employees that their life experiences are a valuable asset for the charity. It follows through by asking the groups for input on proposed new policies. For example, the management team asked the low-income group for perspective on potential changes to the pay schedule and on how big a burden it was for employees to cover up-front costs, like travel, that are later reimbursed. Teach for America incorporated some of the group's suggestions, such as giving employees plenty of lead time to adjust personal budgets before changing the pay periods.

Natalie Basham, a senior managing director at the charity and co-leader of the low-income group, says knowing that some colleagues share her experience of growing up poor has changed the way she thinks about her background.

"What it did for me is unleash some of the shame that can come if you're not from a high-income background or you're a first-generation college graduate and reframed it as a leadership opportunity," she says.

Structure Hiring to Limit Bias

A few years ago, the Massachusetts branch of Bottom Line realized that for a charity that helps low-income, first-generation students get into and graduate from college, it had an awful lot of white staff members educated at elite private institutions.

The homogeneity was unintentional, says Justin Strasburger, the group's executive director. With support from their families, people from wealthy backgrounds could afford to take low-paying, entry-level jobs at a nonprofit. At Bottom Line, they worked their way up into the positions that were doing most of the hiring.

When those employees interviewed candidates with similar backgrounds, they felt an unconscious connection, says Mr. Strasburger: "They're like, 'This person reminds me of me. Let's get them on board.' "

To counter this, the group introduced formal hiring practices. One of the biggest changes: Many more people from different levels of the organization are now involved in interviews.

"Our goal is to help our students go far in life," Mr. Strasburger says. "If we're not able to hire our alumni students or those who look like them, we're either failing at our job or being inauthentic to our mission."

Pay a Living Wage

DoSomething.org, a youth volunteerism charity headquartered in New York, has an unusually high starting salary: \$43,000 a year. It hopes that such pay will open its entry-level jobs to individuals from all walks of life. "A person can live on that in New York City without help from parents," says Aria Finger, the group's chief executive.

Because 20 to 25 percent of DoSomething's employees start as interns, the organization also has looked at how to diversify that pipeline. While the group has always paid interns, it now aims for a pool of candidates mixed by race, class, and parents' level of education. It also offers a housing stipend based on need.

DoSomething employees' health-insurance premiums are fully covered, and the nonprofit offers to pay up to \$20,000 in undergraduate debt for employees after five years at the organization.

"We want low-income folks to know that it's economically possible to stay at DoSomething for the long-term," says Ms. Finger.

Hire for Life Experiences...

The California Community Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of people who are struggling in Los Angeles. When CEO Antonia Hernández is hiring, she wants to know whether candidates have lived or worked in the neighborhoods where the foundation supports programs. Do they speak the language residents speak? Are they comfortable engaging in the community?

Ms. Hernández generally doesn't hire people who have worked at foundations. Instead, she recruits community organizers or veterans of government or local nonprofits.

"It's easier to teach philanthropy than it is to teach someone about community organizing, and all that goes into the life experience," she says.

The foundation has become a training ground for larger philanthropies. In recent years, employees went to the James Irvine Foundation, the California Endowment, and other large foundations.

Ms. Hernández used to be frustrated that staff would leave after her organization invested so much time in their training. Now she sees it as an important role for the fund.

"Community foundations can be the door into philanthropy for people to get the training, get the experience, get the connections," she says.

...Not Credentials

Public Allies works to develop community leaders nationwide, in part by placing young people from low-income neighborhoods in yearlong fellowships at local charities. Some have college degrees; some don't. It's not unusual for an organization to request a college graduate.

When that happens, Public Allies talks with the nonprofit about the skills and experiences it needs. Often, the organization discovers qualified candidates without a degree.

With the exception of groups that run college-readiness programs, "I can't think of when it's been make or break to have a degree," says Ava Hernández, executive director of Public Allies Milwaukee.

She argues that the success of young people in their Public Allies assignments has very little to do with their academic training. Sometimes, she says, those without credentials fare better: "Allies who don't have degrees are more open to learning and connect with their community members in a deeper way because they don't have to unlearn things that they might have learned in a classroom about a community."

Make Good Training Affordable

The Institute for Nonprofit Practice in Needham, Mass., runs a low-cost, yearlong certificate program to train people already working at nonprofits who could help diversify the management ranks. It's designed to maximize the number of people in the field with whom students can make

connections. Instructors are nonprofit veterans, and the institute offers lots of guest speakers, networking events, and a mentor program.

Once a year, more than two dozen grant makers gather to hear pitches from program participants about their organizations. There's no money on the line, but the students meet funders who might otherwise be out of reach.

It's all about building confidence, says Yolanda Coentro, the institute's chief executive. "You deserve to be in that room, too," she says. "Just because you didn't come from money doesn't mean it's not the place for you. You need those resources to change the world."

Ms. Coentro learned the hard way that people from modest economic backgrounds are at a disadvantage when it comes to fundraising. She started her nonprofit career as a social worker and slowly moved into leadership roles. She says she didn't have the ready-made networks that allowed more prosperous peers to win access to big donors or make connections to program officers.

"My parents didn't have wealthy people sitting at the dinner table," she says, with a wry chuckle.

To compensate, she spent a lot of time building her network of relationships and getting comfortable asking those contacts for help. Her efforts led to greater success raising money and career advancement. But early in her career, Ms. Coentro says, "I was taking the stairs and other people were on the elevator."

Invest in Your Low-Wage Staff

Many nonprofits can boost the number of people from modest economic backgrounds on their program and leadership staffs by developing the skills of the front-line and administrative workers they already employ, Ms. Coentro says.

"We have folks living in poverty working in the nonprofit sector," she says. "We owe it to ourselves to really invest in folks."

When nonprofit compensation makes the news, it's almost always the high CEO salary at a large charity that causes the stir. Far more scandalous are the low wages paid to support staff and front-line workers, says Rusty Stahl, founder of Fund the People, which seeks to increase foundations' financial support for developing the skills of nonprofit workers.

Nonprofits and foundations, Mr. Stahl says, should be thinking about the people who are paid the least and whether their organizations' business models are built on exploiting their lowest-paid employees.

"That's the real problem," he says. "It's not that a few people are too well paid. It's that too many people are too poorly paid."

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Chronicle of Philanthropy

NEWS AND ANALYSIS

FEBRUARY 15, 2017

By Rebecca Koenig

Mimi Kravetz had her dream career. The Harvard MBA oversaw employee recruitment marketing at Google, hunting for the best and brightest in one of the most competitive skilled-labor markets in the world.

Then, in 2015, Hillel International called. The nonprofit, which serves Jewish college students at chapters around the world — and for which Ms. Kravetz worked for three years after earning her bachelor's — had a new vision for attracting and retaining high-performing employees. Its leadership needed someone to implement it.

Today, Ms. Kravetz is chief talent officer at Hillel, her hiring one piece of a major recruitment and professional-development effort the likes of which is little seen at nonprofits.

Among other incentives, Hillel is boosting pay and offering employees online courses to sharpen their skills. And it's raised \$50 million in private donations — including one of the largest grants in its history — to pay for it.

The nonprofit pulled off the fundraising feat by convincing donors of Ms. Kravetz's philosophy: "Putting people first allows the best outcomes."

"To me it is so simple and straightforward to recognize that the most important asset you have isn't a particular program that you're running or a particular curriculum you're teaching," she says.

"Certainly you need a good product, but it matters so much, the people who are delivering that product and the way that they deliver it."

A year and a half after Ms. Kravetz's arrival, donors are preaching her doctrine.

"The quality of every Hillel is only as good as the quality of its professionals," says Randall Kaplan, former chair of the nonprofit's board of directors, whose family gave \$2 million to the effort through the Leonard J. Kaplan Fund of the Jewish Foundation of Greensboro. "Investing in the skills and knowledge of the professionals is fundamental and key."

The organization will gauge its success by measuring employee retention and promotion rates and staff members' engagement with the students they serve — for example, tracking how many students take part in Hillel activities, and how often.

Down to Business

Hillel International, which reported annual revenue of more than \$126 million last year, oversees a network of campus organizations that provide programs to Jewish students, such as hosting weekly Shabbat celebrations and coordinating trips to Israel.

Hillel's nearly 850 campus staff members manage operations and facilities, raise money, and interact with students. Along with organizational duties, they must be knowledgeable about Judaism and Jewish culture.

"It's got so many facets to it," Mr. Kaplan says of what the nonprofits needs in its employees. "No one can ever walk into the job knowing all those skills."

Recognizing this, Eric Fingerhut made professional development a priority at Hillel soon after becoming chief executive in 2013. The nonprofit started raising money to support staff training and searching for a chief talent officer.

Donors were responsive. Mr. Fingerhut credits their interest to three factors.

First, many have a background in the business world, where they "earned their livings and built their foundations and resources on people," he says.

Among them is Bernie Marcus, co-founder of Home Depot, whose foundation committed \$38 million to Hillel's professional-development work.

"Bernie told us early on that his success was always determined by his ability to hire great people," Ms. Kravetz says. "Most of the savvy business people I have had a chance to meet immediately get it when I start pitching this case."

Second, donors recognize Hillel's role as a gateway employer in the Jewish professional sphere. In addition to supporting people who work with college students, contributors "know that the professionals they're investing in are likely to continue giving back to the Jewish world, whether they stay at Hillel or go in a different direction," Mr. Fingerhut says.

Hillel has made that connection explicit through its participation in the [Talent Alliance](#), a partnership with Moishe House and BBYO — nonprofits that respectively serve Jewish young adults and teens — that helps employees pursue career opportunities at all three organizations.

Although Hillel's role as an employee incubator for the Jewish nonprofit world makes it unique, the idea of investing in nonprofit employees should resonate with all donors and grant makers, Mr. Fingerhut believes.

"We do need to work more collaboratively in the talent space," he says. "We should recognize as a sector that people are going to move."

Made for the Job

The third factor is Ms. Kravetz herself. Her boss credits her drive, leadership skills, and engaging personality for much of the progress Hillel has made carrying out its plans.

Plus, Mr. Fingerhut adds, "You could not have found a better background for this job."

Having participated in Hillel while an undergraduate at Tufts University, Ms. Kravetz went on to work three years for the branch serving Stanford University. She left the nonprofit world to earn an MBA at Harvard University, then worked at American Express before joining Google.

At the tech giant, she helped lead re:Work, a project that disseminates information to other companies and the public about best workplace practices. It was during that period that Ms. Kravetz got a call from a recruiter asking if she knew anyone who might be interested in leading Hillel's new talent-development work.

She did: herself. In 2015, Ms. Kravetz joined Hillel in a position made possible by a \$16 million grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation that was partly earmarked for employee professional development.

"It was really exciting to me to have the opportunity to come back to this organization I had loved," she says.

'A Whole World of Talent'

One of Ms. Kravetz's first big leadership decisions was a personal one: She opted to remain on the West Coast rather than relocate to work at Hillel's Washington headquarters. It set a precedent for subsequent hires.

There was concern among the staff that this would hinder workflow. But as Mr. Fingerhut's own busy schedule — full of travel and Skype calls with people across the country — made evident, "the world has changed," he says.

"If you say, 'We want to hire the best people and we want it to be someone who will move self and family to D.C.,' you're actually limiting yourself significantly," Mr. Fingerhut says. He believes Ms. Kravetz is more productive living the way she prefers "than she would be if we were telling her how to organize her life."

After all, Hillel is a distributed organization, with operations on hundreds of campuses in 17 countries. "The idea that the people running that distributed organization need to be in the same place doesn't make sense anymore," Mr. Fingerhut says.

Allowing Ms. Kravetz to open a Hillel office in the Bay Area created "a mind-set about putting people first," she says. That's helped Hillel "find the best talent wherever that talent is."

"As soon as we came to grips with it, it was one of those 'aha!' moments," Mr. Fingerhut says. "It opened up a whole world of talent we never could have had otherwise."

Recruiting Help

Hillel has made use of its millions of dollars in donations by creating multiple professional-development programs. One involves what the nonprofit terms "talent grants," to be awarded to its campus branches to help with recruiting, retention, professional development, and technology support. Most of the grant money will be spent on staff compensation, Ms. Kravetz says.

Another major new effort is Hillel U, an education series that will offer in-person and online courses to the nonprofit's campus employees. The curricula will cover Jewish life and Israel, student engagement and wellness, and management and leadership.

"One of the insights I bring from Google is that management is important," Ms. Kravetz says. "One of the most critical elements of whether you're happy and sustained in the job has to do with your direct supervisor."

Eventually, Hillel employees will be able participate in two courses a year, lasting six to eight weeks, plus a professional-development experience over the summer. Although Hillel leaders helped develop the courses, the nonprofit will pay external educators to teach them.

Ms. Kravetz is also working to improve the organization's core human-resources practices regarding recruiting, setting goals, and evaluating performance. For example, Hillel recently ran its first employee-engagement survey, a common practice at many companies.

"I think these combined set of activities will hopefully really change the experience of our professionals in the field and really impact the experience of students on campus," she says.

'Employer of First Choice'

Efforts like Hillel's will help bust the prevailing myth that nonprofits have a [leadership deficit](#), says Rusty Stahl, chief executive of Fund the People, a nonprofit that advocates for increased investment in the nonprofit work force.

Rather, the sector suffers from "a deficit in investing in our leaders and our people," he says. "It's incumbent on everyone in every role to begin maximizing investment rather than wringing our hands about a supposed lack of people. Let's invest in the people we've got and help them do their best rather than continuing this deficit mentality."

Indeed, there's a growing consensus among experts that the nonprofit world is blessed with an abundance of young, ambitious employees but cursed with a [dearth of opportunities to train them](#) for satisfying careers. Building an internal leadership pipeline is common at corporations but less so at nonprofits, Ms. Kravetz says.

"The talent that will be most successful is the talent that grows internally," she says.

Hillel leaders hope that new investments in professional development will entice talented people to both join the nonprofit's team and commit many years as loyal workers.

"We want to be an employer of first choice," says Mr. Kaplan, the former board chair.

Although employees at Hillel will likely never earn the same salaries as their peers at tech companies, Ms. Kravetz says she's optimistic that these new resources will help talented young people "justify the decision" to work for a nonprofit without requiring them "to make major sacrifices" financially.

"I think that we will get people who already have a heart for this work and a deep desire to do it to seriously consider it in a way they haven't before," she says. (Some of her business-school peers, she adds, are jealous about her move to the nonprofit.) "I think by paying more competitively within our context we can do that, we can get some of those great people."

If more nonprofits make professional development a priority, foundations will follow their lead, Mr. Stahl says.

"It's got to come from their leadership — they can't wait around for some funder to tell them what to do," he says. "It's great to establish this as a priority and base their fundraising around that. Many funders are not going to invest unless they hear their grantees coming to them."