

# Is there another transition in your nonprofit's future?

CURRENT YEAR

By Sharon Danosky

In the wake of COVID-19, many nonprofits are experiencing a transition of leadership. Some executive directors are retiring; others are pursuing different interests. Whatever the reason a leader is leaving, these transitions can be tricky, especially at a time when there is so much uncertainty.

They can also offer unique opportunities. It is so critical to plan for this transition carefully.



***What not to do is panic and immediately list the position.***

The right way to approach a transition is to take a deep breath and decide what is required to lead the organization through this tumultuous time and emerge with a stronger organization, well prepared to deliver your mission.

With all the changes that have transpired – in the world and in your organization - your organization may have evolved into something different than it was pre COVID-19. That's why a leadership transition is the perfect time to take stock.

The first thing a Board should do when the leader is exiting an organization is to fully understand where the organization is. That usually entails some kind of organization assessment where you consider:

- 1) Who have you been serving? How is this aligned with your mission? Has it changed, if so, how so? Should this change be a priority for the future? Should other factors be considered?
- 2) What is your revenue model? Has that changed? What has happened with both revenues and expenses? Is this a short-term change or will there potentially be lasting ramifications?

- 3) What has happened to staffing? Again, is this a temporary or permanent change? Are there new ways of operating successfully?
- 4) Where do you want your organization to go in the future? What are the leadership skills that will take you there?

Doing this exercise does two things: it gives you a better understanding of the where the organization is today and helps you reflect on the leadership you want for tomorrow. Don't rush into preparing a job description or placing the ad. There are options for managing the day-to-day operations of the organization in the short-term. Take the time to understand where your organization is headed and the leader you need to go there.

In the words of Wayne Gretzky, "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been."

*Danosky & Associates is available for a complementary consultation should your organization be going through a leadership transition.*

As Boards seek for leadership talent, there is also a need to expand the search to include candidates who are People of Color. In the 2017 Report **Leading with Intent** (<https://leadingwithintent.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/LWI-2017.pdf?hsCtaTracking=8736f801-1e14-427b-adf0-38485b149ac0%7>), BoardSource reported that 90% of all



nonprofit chief executives were Caucasian. The following article is a good discussion of how to facilitate a smooth transition, particularly if your hire is PoC. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/failure-is-not-an-option-how-nonprofit-boards-can-support-leaders-of-color>