

Seize opportunity when board asks you to interview with senior staff!

If you are interviewing for a new job, be aware that some boards use a novel screening tactic: an interview with the organization's senior staff.

Consultant Terrie Temkin (CoreStrategies4Nonprofits Inc.) said the practice is becoming more common, particularly for higher-level positions in an organization. "People want to know they are getting someone who has the ability to interact with all stakeholders," she said.

If this happens to you, understand the interview is not a one-way street, Temkin said, and use this to your advantage. Consider the interview as an opportunity for you to assess the organization. Temkin offers these suggestions for carefully screening your screeners:

- **Consider the interview a sneak preview.** Are these people competent? Pay attention to the questions the interview team asks, Temkin said. What sense do you get from the senior management team? Is it cohesive? Do they know the organization's direction? Are the senior staff aware of what is happening in the community?

"These people are going to be reporting to you — and you don't want to go from the frying pan into the fire," Temkin said. "You want to be sure you will want to go to work with them every day."

- **Question your questioners.**

Temkin suggests you ask questions like:

1. "What is the organization's most critical issue right now?" Compare the answer with whatever you were told by the person who contacted you about the job first, Temkin said. "Everyone has their own perspective," she said. "You want to know senior staff's perspective on where they see the need for change."

2. "What are the most important characteristics in a CEO for this time and place?"

3. "What is the CEO's role at this organization?" Temkin said. "You don't ask this to fit your response to them, but to assess if this job is for you."

- **Assess senior staff interactions.** It's important that they respect and like each other, Temkin said, because a hiring decision is a two-way street. "Run away if you get the sense you don't want to work there," Temkin said.

- **Learn who the players are — and determine if you can work with them.** You'll be the one supervising these people, Temkin said.

For more information, visit www.CoreStrategies4Nonprofits.com. ■

Understand key benefit of interviewing with staff

When you interview with staff members as part of an organization's screening process for the executive director's position, you have the opportunity to put cognitive dissonance to work to your advantage.

If you take the job and staff had no say in the hiring decision, employees may be suspicious of you or may not be sold on the hire. "If they've been involved in the process and said 'Yes, we want her,' that makes the transition so much easier," consultant Terrie Temkin (Miami) said.

"Staff must like you — they approved you," Temkin said.

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