

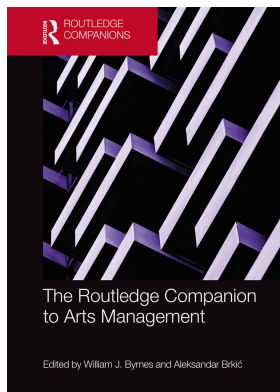
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 26 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Arts Management

William J. Byrnes, Aleksandar Brki

Strategic staffing in the arts

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351030861-24>

Brea M. Heidelberg

Published online on: 26 Sep 2019

How to cite :- Brea M. Heidelberg. 26 Sep 2019, *Strategic staffing in the arts from: The Routledge Companion to Arts Management* Routledge

Accessed on: 26 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781351030861-24>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

24

STRATEGIC STAFFING IN THE ARTS

Brea M. Heidelberg

Introduction

The best time to read and reflect on a chapter about hiring is before the information is needed. Organizations that routinely engage in critical self-reflection of the methods used to gather data about the work being done, recruitment and selection processes, and the ways in which new hires are welcomed into the organization always have access to important staffing information. These organizations are not caught off guard when there is a sudden departure or if there is an unexpected opportunity to grow. This chapter provides some considerations for how organizations can engage in the staffing process strategically and equitably.

There are many reasons why organizations bring on new staff members. Whether it is because the organization has recently let someone go, someone deciding to pursue employment with another organization, retirement, or organizational expansion the need to hire someone is an exciting and challenging opportunity. The ideal situation is to have the right person doing the right work.

This chapter begins with information about rightsizing or determining the correct number of people needed for the organization to achieve its strategic goals. Next, this chapter provides a blueprint for identifying the amount and type of work each position requires – a process known as job analysis – as well as how to assess the current organizational culture through exit interviews. Together, job analyses and exit interviews provide the background information needed to successfully navigate the more commonly known aspects of the hiring process: writing a position description, position advertisement, applicant assessment, interviews, and presenting the employment offer.

The importance of effective hiring practices

Hiring is often looked at as a daunting task that is largely dependent upon luck. Many people working in arts organizations are surprised when they find themselves responsible for hiring someone to work within their organization. There are countless resources available that discuss hiring in general (Pynes, 2009; Word and Sowa, 2017), but what about hiring specifically for arts organizations? Is it different? While there are many universal elements in the hiring process, hiring in arts and cultural organizations can require additional considerations. These considerations

include a desire for three distinct types of knowledge: knowledge of a subject matter area (e.g. finance, marketing, or development), knowledge of a particular art form (e.g. dance, theater, or visual art), and knowledge of the operational context of the hiring organization (e.g. non-profit, funding institution, or for profit). The need to account for these additional considerations, coupled with the fact that there is often not much training in human resources in general (Varela, 2013), let alone hiring as a specific subset of human resources, means that many arts and cultural managers are left without the resources they need to ensure that they are doing what is best for their organization.

Hiring the wrong person can negatively impact an organization in a number of ways. First, the process can be a drain on current employees. The process of recruiting, selecting, and onboarding a new employee takes current employees from their primary tasks. While this is a necessary part of hiring someone new, getting it right the first time minimizes the impact on current employees. If the initial attempt is unsuccessful, current workers are taken away from their work to engage in the hiring and onboarding process repeatedly. Furthermore, continuously having to let the wrong person go and re-engaging in the hiring process will negatively impact the organization's reputation with potential workers, funders, and the general public. In addition to wasting employee's time and damaging the organization's reputation, ineffective hiring practices, especially practices that are unethical and discriminatory, can result in costly lawsuits. Finally, the continued presence of ineffective workers could undermine an organization's effectiveness, preventing the achievement of strategic goals for an indeterminate amount of time, draining resources like money and time while also negatively impacting less-tangible resources, like its reputation. Organizations that choose to employ strategic hiring practices can save valuable resources and avoid all of the aforementioned calamities that may befall an organization that does not hire wisely.

Chapter overview

Hiring is a strategic function that can help organizations achieve their mission. This chapter focuses on the earlier phases of the hiring process, beginning with figuring out exactly how many people are needed to reach organizational goals, also known as rightsizing. The next step is figuring out what each person should be doing. This process, known as job analysis, provides the specific information required to craft a position description – one of the initial steps in the recruitment process. Recent investigations into the arts and entertainment industry workforce have noted the lack of diversity present at all organizational levels (Cuyler, 2015; DeVos, 2015; Schonfeld, Westermann, and Sweeney, 2015). This research indicates a need for not only an informed hiring process that will result in the right hire but also an equitable hiring process that encourages a diverse applicant pool and removes barriers that have created systemic inequities within the field.

Beginning the strategic staffing process

Strategic staffing is a process Bechet (2008) framed to help organizations create both short- and long-term staffing strategies that can be implemented even without a completed or up-to-date strategic plan. This approach accounts for changes to the overall workforce and can be adapted to address the needs of small, mid-sized, and large for- and nonprofit organizations. This approach is particularly useful because it champions making data-informed decisions. To that end, the process starts by identifying staffing needs.

Identifying staffing needs

How many people are needed for an organization to operate effectively? Simply sticking with the number of employees currently on staff, or – if the staff is majority part-time workers – the current number of working hours, without taking a critical and strategic look at whether or not the current way of working is best for the organization both now and in the near future may prevent an organization from ever working at full capacity.

Strategic staffing includes the process of identifying the number of workers or the number of hours current employees work and comparing it with the workforce that will allow the organization to reach strategic objectives. This process is common in other industries. Accounting firms tend to hire more workers and authorize more working hours from current employees during tax season. Restaurants that expect an increase in the number of customers during a holiday will shift schedules around to account for the increased need for servers. Almost all retail companies hire additional help and stay open additional hours in the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas in order to reap the financial benefits of holiday shopping. Each of these industries engages in gathering information about what their organizations need to accomplish and how many people it needs to achieve those goals in order to determine the number of people that need to be hired and how many hours each employee needs to work.

Working in an organization that does not have the optimal number of people working, or that does not account for the number of hours needed from each employee to accomplish strategic organizational tasks can have negative results:

- Burnout – when employees are overworked and end up less productive as a result. Employee burnout is often directly related to turnover.
- Absenteeism – when employees regularly call out of work, despite not having a medical or personal need for doing so. Absenteeism results in decreased productivity.
- Excessive turnover – when employees consistently leave the organization, often after only a short period of working, requiring the organization to be engaged in the hiring process continuously.

Proactively aligning an organization's human resources and its talent management strategies with the organization's strategic plans is particularly important if there are issues with productivity, morale, or a need to account for an increase in responsibility due to a new grant or initiative. This process may require shifts in departmental structures, reorganization of employee responsibilities, identification of new roles that need to be filled, and changes in who reports to whom.

Subtract the optimal number of employees or working hours from the current number of employees or working from the hours to identify an organization's staffing gap or surplus. An organization that currently employs five people but has identified the need for ten total employees has an obvious staffing gap. A staffing gap may be addressed by shifting positions from part-time to full-time or increasing the number of hours a part-time individual works each week. From a hiring perspective, if there is a gap in the number of employees needed, then this is the number of individuals you should look to hire in the near future. Conversely, an organization with ten employees, but with an identified need for only five total has a staffing surplus and should consider rightsizing in order to avoid wasting resources. A staffing surplus may be addressed by shifting some full-time employees to part-time, reducing the number of hours part-time employees work, or by eliminating positions that do not serve the organization's strategic goals.

In many cases, financial constraints can prevent arts and cultural organizations from being able to fully right size. However, gathering rightsizing data can help leaders make strategic staffing decisions, equipping them with a list of workforce priorities to guide hiring as resources become available.

After determining the workforce needed to operate at full capacity, the next step is gathering information about an organization's culture and working environments. One of the most efficient ways of doing this is conducting exit interviews and staff surveys.

Exit interviews

It may seem odd to begin the recruitment and selection process with exit interviews. However, starting at the end is a great way to identify any barriers to effective hiring and retention before they arise in the hiring process, a time where there is an audience, and it is more difficult to make changes. Exit interviews are conversations designed to provide the organization with information about what it is doing well and areas for improvement from a departing employee's perspective.

There are many different ways of conducting an exit interview. While it may be done via a survey – either online or on paper – it is best if the exit interview is conducted in person during the last few days of the employees' tenure with the company. Face-to-face exit interviews are much more likely to yield candid information, which is the most important outcome. Ideally, someone that can be as neutral as possible conducts exit interviews. Often, this results in the HR department conducting the exit interview. Unfortunately, many small and mid-sized arts organizations do not have dedicated HR departments. In organizations without a HR department, some companies have a departing employee's direct supervisor conduct the exit interview. While this is an understandable impulse, it is not the best option. The direct supervisor may be one of the reasons, and potentially the main reason that the employee is leaving. If this is the case, then the exit interview is unlikely to yield any useful information, as many employees would not feel comfortable being completely honest in that situation. If there is no HR department, a supervisor that is one level removed from the employee should conduct the exit interview. For example, if the departing employee is a marketing assistant, then the Executive Director should conduct the exit interview – rather than the Marketing Manager (the Marketing Assistant's direct supervisor). Likewise, if the Marketing Manager were the departing employee, then the Board Chair (a representative of the Board of Directors – the equivalent of the Executive Director's direct supervisors) should conduct the exit interview. This allows some space for the departing employee to identify any significant issues with their direct supervisor and the working environment they created for junior staff. If it is not possible to have an objective individual conduct the exit interview, another option is a post-turnover survey. This method presents a former employee with a questionnaire one to six months after their departure. This separation of time allows the former employee to reflect on their time with the organization. It also allows current employees to process the feedback more objectively and productively. This option also alleviates the anxiety that may accompany the prospect of a face-to-face exit interview.

There is some concern that employees interested in having a good reference may not provide the type of information needed in order to initiate organizational change – especially in arts and cultural ecosystems that are small and interconnected, where one's reputation is arguably almost as important as their tangible skills. In some cases, what is left unsaid in exit interviews coupled with other contextual information provides the most insight. If the Development Assistant position is experiencing consistent turnover but exit interview responses about the

Development Manager or Director are vague, this may indicate a supervisory-level issue that should be investigated.

The information gathered during an exit interview or post-turnover survey can be important on many levels. Therefore, it is best when there are multiple people involved in developing the exit interview questions. The data needs of direct supervisors may differ from the data needs of the HR department, executive-level staff, and the board of directors, especially if they are a working board. Each of the levels above should be given the opportunity to weigh in on exit interview policy and questions. While the particular data needs of the organization and the individuals involved will alter the number and type of exit interview questions asked, questions typically fall into one of five categories: (1) reasons for departure, (2) satisfaction with the working environment and position tasks, (3) compensation satisfaction (i.e., salary/pay, benefits, and work/life balance), (4) interpersonal aspects of the job (i.e., relationships with supervisors and coworkers), or (5) any general feedback about the organization and the working environment and culture.

A team comprised of whoever conducted the interview, the departing employee's direct supervisor, and any other directly concerned parties should review the data gathered during an exit interview. When analyzing positive feedback, note if the beneficial aspects of the organization are purposefully done within the organization – or if they are 'accidental assets?' If the departing employee is complimentary about purposeful and strategic workplace practices or norms, then those initiatives should continue. There may also be instances where the benefits of a particular working environment are not intentional. For example, if a departing employee cites a low salary as their reason for leaving but highlights their work/life balance because the offices are close to their apartment, this does not indicate that the organization is good at helping employees maintain a healthy work/life balance. Instead, it may indicate a need for additional information from remaining employees. If a departing employee identifies issues that negatively impacted their experience with your organization, then you need to investigate the source of those issues and determine a plan of action for addressing them prior to beginning the search for a new employee. If there are remaining questions after a series of exit interviews, a useful follow-up tool is an employee satisfaction survey. They serve a similar purpose as the exit interviews, except they are for current employees (Allen, Bryant, and Vardaman, 2010).

Determining what the new hire will do

A common mistake organizations can make when hiring is assuming that they simply need a new person to do whatever tasks their predecessor did. Much like people, organizations evolve and so should organizational structures and the various roles within those structures. One way to determine what is needed of a new hire is through a job analysis. Job analysis is the process of determining what people do at work, helping to identify gaps or redundancies throughout the organization to maximize efficiency. There are many reasons to conduct a job analysis, including designing jobs and teams, classifying jobs, determining training and job safety requirements, and establishing employee evaluation processes. Conducting a job analysis as part of the hiring process helps organizations hire the right person to do the work needed for the organization to thrive.

Job analysis methods range from simple to complex with regard to the time commitment and labor intensity required. There are three main categories of job analysis methods: work-oriented, worker-oriented, and hybrid. Work-oriented methods focus on analyzing the work that is being done, whereas worker-oriented methods focus on the workers completing the work. Hybrid methods seek to analyze both the work being done and the workers doing

the work simultaneously. For an in-depth conversation about all of the methods available see the *Job Analysis Handbook* (Brannick, Levine, and Morgeson, 2007; Breauh, 2017; Landau and Rohmert, 2017; Moscoso et al., 2015). While the task inventories method is often used within larger organizations, it can easily be adapted for use in small and mid-sized organizations – those organizations that are least likely to have a dedicated and specifically trained Human Resources Department.

Task inventories

A task inventory is a listing of tasks associated with a particular position. This task list is often constructed by looking at the various objectives or goals of a specific position and breaking those goals down by the tasks required to achieve them. Ideally, a task inventory questionnaire would be developed and administered by a trained job analyst. For some arts and cultural organizations, hiring a job analyst would be cost-prohibitive – but those organizations can conduct their own task analysis. Starting with internal documents such as previous position descriptions and informal interviews with staff can provide much of the background information necessary to begin constructing a task inventory. Another useful tool would be O*NET, a website run by the U.S. Department of Labor that houses a wealth of information about various occupations (www.onetonline.org). Additionally, smaller organizations could reach out to other arts organizations and create a collective among staff with similar positions across organizations in order to gather information and insight. For an accessible discussion of how to go from inventory construction to analysis, see Highhouse et al. (2016).

Once the task inventory is constructed, job incumbents and their supervisors assess whether or not the listed task is done in the position specified. This is important as there are many organizations where a task is assigned to one person but done by another. This can happen for a number of reasons, including a mismatch of skills and abilities (e.g. the staff member responsible for completing a task is unable to do so because they lack the skills, so another staff member with the required skillset takes on the task), an error in the way the task was originally assigned, or it can be a function of employee preference (e.g. if it is the secretary's job to walk to the mailroom, but a junior staffer enjoys the walk, so the junior staffer may take responsibility for getting the mail each day). Regardless of how or where the task has migrated it needs to be accounted for during the task inventory process. Once all of the tasks under the purview of the identified position are identified, they are each rated on the difficulty of completing the task, the difficulty of learning how to accomplish the task, and how often the task is required.

Task analysis not only provides information on the everyday tasks associated with a particular position, but it also can also provide useful information for organizations looking to hire staff that will operate in a managerial capacity. Many managerial tasks are difficult to observe and analyze with traditional job analysis methods. In order to account for the nuanced and often semi-specialized mental work of managerial-level staff, Page (1988) developed the Management Position Description Questionnaire (MPDQ). The MPDQ takes roughly 2.5 hours to complete and provides information about the requirements of the managerial role in questions with the use of a Likert-scale ranging from 0 (Definitely not a part of the position) to 4 (Crucial significance to the position) (Page, 1988, p. 864). Asking current or recently departed managers to complete the MPDQ can yield insights about the accuracy of current managerial position descriptions.

Results from task analyses are also useful in determining the appropriate title of a position. For example, regardless of whether the Marketing Associate works in a theater company, dance company, or museum – the fact that they are a marketing associate comes with certain duties that can be expected across organizations. While there will certainly be some variations based

on organizational context, size, and structure – the role of job classification and titling is to allow potential applicants the ability to have some reasonable assumptions about the kind of tasks required in a specific role. Mistitling a position can have a profound impact on an individual's career – especially when considered from an equity perspective. Organizations sometimes will arbitrarily label something a “manager” role when the work being done is more in alignment with that of a “director.” Much more than being a semantic choice, this difference in the title may negatively impact someone's career path – as many who are hiring look at previous titles more than they look at the bullet points on the resume that explain what was done in the role. Organizations or departments working within the confines of a government or higher educational structure may not have many choices for the position title – as certain titles come with required responsibilities, clearance levels, salary ranges, and prior approval. Even outside of stricter organizational structures titles are often used as a justification for pay ranges – for example, managers routinely make less than directors. Organizations should be prepared to adjust titles (and compensation!) to reflect better the role individuals play.

Writing position descriptions

Position descriptions are an organization's first and best chance of getting potential applicants to apply. While some applicants will have previous experience with an organization from their community programming, shows, or even as a volunteer, it is the position description that will serve as a primary point of contact for many. It is very important to make a good first impression.

When organizations fail to make a good impression on potential applicants, it results in a less diverse and often less qualified candidate pool. A well-crafted position description not only attracts the right kinds of applicants (those that are qualified and interested), but it also discourages the wrong kinds of applicants. This can save an organization a significant amount of time reviewing applications. Position descriptions can vary greatly depending on industry standards, national and local legal requirements, and cultural norms, but there are some consistent elements: a header and organizational introduction, a list of the responsibilities/tasks required of the position, a list of qualifications, compensation information, and finally any equity or employment statement the company may have adopted.

Header and organizational introduction

Most organizations will post their position descriptions on a job board of some sort, many of which require a subject line. This is usually the very first thing that potential applicants see. Similar to a subject line in an email, your position description header should be a pithy summary of what you are looking for. The formula that is most often used is: organizational descriptor + seeks a(n) + adjective + position title: ABC Dance Company seeks a dynamic leader to serve as Executive Director.

The organization introduction should be a condensed organizational profile that provides enough information for readers to determine if the organization's mission is one they want to support. To avoid overloading potential applicants, some organizations provide direct links to specific web pages and social media outlets that demonstrate the organization's mission in practice.

Tasks/responsibilities

Ideally, there should be 5–12 tasks or responsibilities listed for a typical job (Brannick, Levine, and Morgeson, 2007; Moscoso et al., 2015). If it is determined that more than 12 tasks are of

top priority for this position, then it is likely that there needs to be more than one hire. While including too many tasks in position descriptions is something that can happen accidentally, many organizations purposefully overload their position descriptions hoping that they will get someone that can do as many of the tasks as possible. This is problematic because “add-on” tasks are often not directly related to the position they seek to fill, outside the scope of the associated position title, and not in alignment with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required. Most importantly, overloaded position descriptions serve as a deterrent for otherwise qualified applicants who see the laundry list of tasks and fear they will be overworked. There may also be applicants who do not feel qualified to apply because they are only comfortable with a subset of the tasks and responsibilities listed.

Qualifications

For some art organizations, especially those embedded within colleges and universities or public arts agencies that are run as government entities, qualification requirements are established by a separate office. For all other organizations, it is the organization’s responsibility to determine the required qualifications for each position. Many qualifications pitfalls occur because arts organizations are looking at the position descriptions of peer institutions. Despite the seemingly innocent way that qualifications are recycled throughout the field, the inclusion of unnecessary qualifications reifies systems of inequity. Organizations often confuse qualifications, a term that – when used by itself – usually connotes a requirement, with *desired* or *preferred* qualifications. This mistake creates unnecessary barriers to entry that causes organizations to miss qualified applicants. For example, a position working in the box office for a theater organization may list a Bachelor’s degree as a requirement. However, an applicant with an Associate’s degree in Accounting may also be qualified for the position. While an organization may *prefer* someone who has completed a Bachelor’s degree, the skills required for the job could be acquired with an Associate’s degree. Qualifications should focus specifically on the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to complete job tasks (i.e., the ability to use accounting software, or reconciling sales at the end of each performance), rather than relying on the shorthand of a degree name to convey the organization’s intent. Many organizations struggle with to articulate requirements for a position without relying on pre-established notions of education that are built on systems of inequity. Having a frank conversation within the organization about qualification equivalencies is important: is there an amount or type of experience that could be considered equivalent to a Bachelor’s degree? Conversely, some organizations still struggle with the idea of the professionalization of the field – which has seen a significant increase in the number of arts/cultural management programs offered, and a steady increase in the number of students pursuing a formal education in a field that was built on limited or no formal training. In those instances, is there a degree type (e.g. Associate’s or Bachelors) and area of study (Arts Management or Finance) that could be considered the equivalent of a specific type or amount of experience? When looking for a Marketing Associate, that kind of bullet point would look like the following:

Required qualifications:

- Bachelor’s degree in Arts Management or related field (e.g., Marketing) *OR* 3 years’ experience working on social media marketing

In the preceding example, the “or” is italicized to emphasize the fact that potential applicants could meet the required qualification with either the degree or three years’ experience – as some applicants might miss the very important “or” among the rest of the text.

Another common pitfall with qualifications is mistaking the skills that are required at the time of hire with those that can be learned on the job. An entry-level development position may require knowledge of Tessitura (a specific audience engagement and box office software program) – but the organization should think about whether or not Tessitura knowledge is something that is needed on the first day of the job, or if it is something that can be learned after someone is hired. If there is room for someone to be trained to use Tessitura after they are hired, then the position description should focus on other qualifications, especially skill sets that are needed immediately or are not as easily teachable within the working context.

Working conditions

A “Working Conditions” section should be included when there are elements of the position outside the scope of assumed working conditions for a given position. If an employee needs to be able to lift 40 lbs as a regular part of their position, that requirement should be mentioned in a Working Conditions section. However, the necessity of these kinds of requirements should be carefully considered as they may preclude someone with a physical disability from applying – when they may be otherwise qualified for the position.

A growing number of positions within arts and cultural organizations require workers to leave the office in order to communicate directly with community partners, to coordinate performances, or to meet with donors and other constituents. These types of requirements should also be listed a Working Conditions section so that applicants may decide if the position is a good fit for them. Allowing potential candidates to determine if they could be successful in a position given the working contexts prevents awkward, and potentially illegal, conversations about a candidate’s personal life during the interview phase – as the applicant will have already determined their willingness to travel as required for the position.

Red flag phrases

In position descriptions, there are some common phrases that organizations use to help potential applicants get a sense of how it is to work within the organization. However, many commonly used phrases have become euphemisms for problematic working contexts or behaviors and are red flags to jobseekers. There are blog posts, listserv notices, and affinity group discussions highlighting phrases to look out for in position descriptions – especially among underrepresented groups. Here are examples of a few phrases to avoid and a brief explanation of their negative associations.

“Multitasker” and “Fast-paced”; “Ability to work under pressure”

The combination of “multitasker” and “face-paced” indicates that the workflow is not organized. That combination and “ability to work under pressure” convey that the organization is constantly under heavy deadlines and there is no consideration for work-life balance.

“Willing to help out across the organization”

It is assumed that this phrase means that the organization is understaffed and that there is no plan in place to rectify that situation. This most likely means that individuals are asked to do the work of a few people – and there is no guarantee that those jobs will be in the same function area (e.g., doing work tasks that are all related to marketing or development).

“Hit the ground running”; “Thrown in the deep end”; “Self-starter”

These phrases indicate that there will be no onboarding process and little to no training. It is assumed that new employees will have to learn everything on their own and under pressure.

“Sense of humor required”

This phrase is often used in situations where nothing is funny, and laughter is supposed to be used to either diffuse a tense situation, or you need to laugh in order to avoid crying. Either way, it is not good.

Phrase or concept repetition

This signifies that you and your organization has recently suffered from some internal issue and are trying to make sure you do not repeat past mistakes with this new hire. However, it leads potential applicants to ask what was wrong behind the scenes that prompted such an anxious position description.

“We’re a family/like a family”

Over time, this phrase has come to be associated with negative and emotionally abusive behavior that employees must grin and bear because “we’re a family” and family, for most people, means that you forgive behaviors that you would not normally allow or forgive from strangers or coworkers. Another negative connotation with this phrasing is the assumption that it is a close-knit group that may be unwelcoming for newcomers. Starting a new job can be an intimidating social experience, and the thought of having to insert oneself into an exclusionary social group can be daunting.

“Benefits: making a difference”

This phrase, or any other “feel good” information inserted where information about compensation is supposed to go, is inappropriate. This is not the place to be witty. Compensation is a serious part of the equation for many applicants. Additionally, given the wealth of information available about how most salaries in the arts and culture can lag behind other sectors – rest assured that those who choose to pursue a career in the arts know that there is an element of altruism involved when it comes to compensation.

“Salary commensurate with experience”

This particular phrase is problematic because it is a sneaky way to avoid inputting specific salary range information. Part of the decision-making process when individuals are applying for jobs includes determining if they can afford to take the job, should it be offered. Providing applicants with all of the information they need to make an informed decision to apply should be the main goal of creating a position description.

Encouraging a diverse applicant pool

Many organizations are increasingly interested in attracting a diverse applicant pool as efforts to create a more diverse and equitable sector continue to flourish. In the past decade, organizations

have come to understand that a diverse staff is integral to attracting diverse audiences and better financial performance (Hunt, Layton, and Prince, 2015). Recruiting a diverse applicant pool requires some additional work in determining where and how to advertise open positions. Organizations that advertise new positions in the same ways and places they have advertised all of their other positions will attract the same kind of people they have always attracted.

Ensuring a diverse applicant pool for any open position requires ongoing relationship building. Opportunistically tapping into “diverse networks” to advertise a position sends the message that the organization is more interested in engaging in tokenism than in shifting its organizational culture and truly embracing diversity.

Some ways to recruit a diverse applicant pool:

- Reach out to identity-specific affinity groups and community groups
- Complete a search for local print or online outlets that serve racial/ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ community, and networks that support individuals with cognitive or physical disabilities
- Seek out connections with Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions
- Reach out to identity-based professional development groups at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

There are also a number of groups in the United States that exist at various organizational levels, from Facebook groups to established 501(c)(3) arts service organizations, that focus specifically on advocacy, opportunities, and mentorship for artists and arts administrators of color such as:

- Arts Administrators of Color (www.aacdmv.org/)
- Women of Color in the Arts (WOCA) (www.womenofcolorinthearts.org/)
- National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (www.nalac.org/)

Another plan to increase diversity within the organization is through internship and volunteer programming. Diversifying these aspects of an organization is another way to build a network of potential applicants that are already familiar with, and dedicated to, an organization.

In addition to the preceding suggestions, it is important to consider relationships outside of the arts/arts organizations. Are there local community centers serving specific cultural groups or members of the disability community? Are there chambers of commerce that serve underrepresented communities? Developing ongoing relationships with an array of partners will increase organizational reach and provide a network to advertise positions as they become available.

Requesting and reviewing materials

It is common practice to request a cover letter and a resume from job applicants. Some organizations may request a writing sample or something that demonstrates specialized knowledge if it aligns with the advertised position. Organizations that ask for a lot of materials quickly regret it, as they then have to review all of those materials.

Many larger organizations have stopped requesting salary history information as a part of their application process. Basing current pay on what someone has made in the past reifies inequities in compensation for women and minorities – two groups that are routinely underpaid. Instead, companies are opting to base salary and benefits on what each position calls for and what they require of people upon hire. Unfortunately, smaller organizations are often slow to

create systemic change and are more likely to continue discriminatory practices such as requiring a salary history or engaging in interview questions that are in poor taste (Hunt, Layton, and Prince, 2015), often because of the desire to hire “like” individuals and the general lack of oversight that exists within smaller organizations.

Despite some resistance to the work of creating and maintaining equitable hiring practices, the past decade has seen more organizations become increasingly aware of how implicit bias may play a role in the way they review application materials. Research has identified implicit bias against “ethnic sounding names” (Kang et al., 2016), a higher penalty for typos in application materials for women and minorities, and a bias against experience that is not articulated in implicit cultural or industry norms – even when those industry norms are not universally accepted across an entire sector (Hunt, Layton, and Prince, 2015). A discussion of how implicit bias can work against DEI initiatives is covered in chapter 23, *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Arts in America*.

Interviews

Deciding who should be involved in the interview process can be tricky. Some organizations opt for quicker interview sessions that only involve the position’s direct supervisor and sometimes that person’s supervisor. This gives applicants a good overview of the position and the supervisory context but does not give them a true feel for the entire organization and how their work would fit into the overall structure. This has prompted many organizations to hold longer interview sessions that include a tour of the organization and meetings with each department as well as community partners. Exposing applicants to a variety of institutional stakeholders gives those making the decision information about the applicant from multiple vantage points. For the sake of equity, if a longer form interview with multiple stakeholders is done, it is important to try and give each candidate the same type of interview experience. Uniform applicant evaluation materials should also be used to gather information about the candidate post-interview.

Prepping those that will be a part of the interview day is an important step that many organizations miss. Applicants are also using the interview to determine if the organization will meet both their personal and professional needs. Therefore, it is important that all interviewers be aware that candidates use the behavior of those they encounter during the interview process as an indicator of important organizational characteristics like leadership style, communication style, and the overall culture of the organization.

Specific interview questions, especially those that provide insight into how each candidate thinks and works, will vary depending on the organization and the position. However, the types of questions utilized by arts and cultural organizations tend to be behavioral and competency based. Behavioral questions ask candidates to provide information about past behaviors and choices, while competency questions ask candidates to connect past behaviors and decisions to job competencies. These types of questions have the highest predictive validity rates and have come to be industry standard – at the expense of questions like “What kind of superhero would you be?” or opinion-based questions. Unfortunately, there are many organizations, especially small and mid-sized ones, that still ask questions (either directly or indirectly) about an applicant’s race or national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation, pregnancy status or number of children, age, disability status, genetic information (e.g. HIV/AIDS status), or citizenship status. These types of questions are unnecessary, inappropriate, and illegal in the United States. Organizations asking these questions often go unchecked because candidates are in a vulnerable position and those within the organization who might not agree with the tactic

say nothing against it. These organizations may not be held accountable in an official forum, but they are discussed at length within networks (both in person and online), and their applicant pools do tend to shrink for subsequent jobs, whether or not they are aware of it.

Notifying candidates

Organizations that map out the entire hiring process at the onset are those that are most likely to get their top choice candidate. Some organizations do not account for how busy organizational decision makers can be, especially if their decision must be approved at the executive or board-level. Organizations that have long delays between position posting and the initial candidate outreach or between the interview stage and making offers may find that their top choice candidates are not willing or able to wait. After all, interviews are conducted, it is important to get decision makers into a room and while information about the candidates is fresh. As a courtesy, organizations should let people know if they were not selected as early as possible. As the number of applicants per opening has steadily increased, it has become increasingly common for job seekers to apply and never receive a response. The time it takes to draft a general response for unsuccessful applicants at the initial screening or interview phase and a more personalized note for those who were interviewed but were not chosen is a small price to pay in order to maintain a positive reputation among job seekers.

A final note

While this chapter focused on the lesser-known elements of the strategic hiring process, the more common aspects, such as making a final selection and making an offer, should also be considered carefully for how they can be both strategic and equitable. Organizations that figure out ways to address both needs are best equipped to choose candidates that suit the organization's needs, avoid dysfunctional turnover, and achieve organizational goals while creating or maintaining a good reputation within the field for being a good place to work. This is especially important as word of mouth is one of the best recruitment tools.

Conclusion

Arts and cultural organizations have made important strides away from exclusionary hiring practices such as relying solely on personal networks created from systemic inequities. Additionally, succession planning is becoming a strategic practice for use throughout the organization (Groves, 2007; Griffith et al., 2018). The creation and significant growth of both undergraduate and graduate programs in arts and cultural management (Redaelli, 2016), calls for diversity, equity, and inclusion within all aspects and levels of arts and cultural institutions (Arts Consulting Group, 2017), and the continued diversification of individuals seeking careers in this sector (Cuyler, 2015) have resulted in significant changes at the entry- and mid-levels in the field. These factors have impacted the labor market by increasing the labor supply and have, in many cases, created a more educated and diverse pool of applicants. However, these changes have largely missed the executive level. There are some notable exceptions as some organizations, such as the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the National Endowment for the Arts, have welcomed their first non-male or person of color Executive Director. There is still a long way to go toward making sustained change in the makeup of executive-level staff in the arts and cultural sector. Even with the growing number of arts-focused consulting agencies, who

specialize in executive leadership searches (usually for larger organizations with big budgets), the pool of “viable” applicants, and those ultimately chosen by the board of directors is still usually male. Even when gender diversity exists, racial, ethnic, and class diversity often does not.

As the field strives to become more equitable and healthier, there is a noticeable divide between organizations who have adapted to create and improve upon equitable hiring practices in order to diversify their board and staff and those organizations who have not. Likewise, organizations that have problematic, toxic, or discriminatory organizational cultures are experiencing excessive turnover as employees no longer put up with the behavior that was considered a normal a decade ago. While all organizations are trying to do more with fewer resources, it is the organizations who engage strategic staffing principles and have a functional organizational culture that succeeds in times of smaller budgets, more competition for funding, and the need to nimbly navigate both internally and externally induced organizational change.

References

- Allen, D.G., Bryant, P.C., and Vardaman, J.M. (2010). Retaining talent: Replacing misconceptions with evidence-based strategies. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 24(2), pp. 48–64.
- Arts Consulting Group. (2017). *Inclusion, diversity, equity, and access: Why now in the arts and culture sector?* Arts Insights. B. Thibodeau and W. Lynch-McWhite, vol. XVII, Issue 12.
- Bechet, T.P. (2008). *Strategic staffing: A comprehensive system of effective workforce planning*. 2nd ed. New York: American Management Association.
- Brannick, M.T., Levine, E.L., and Morgeson, F.P. (2007). *Job and work analysis: Methods, research, and applications for human resource management*. London: Sage.
- Breaugh, J.A. (2017). The contribution of job analysis to recruitment. *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Recruitment, Selection and Employee Retention*, pp. 12–28.
- Cuylar, A.C. (2015). Exploratory study of demographic diversity in the arts management workforce. *Grant-makers in the Arts Reader*, 26(3), pp. 16–19.
- DeVos Institute of Arts Management. (2015). *Diversity in the Arts: The Past, Present, and Future of African American and Latino Museums, Dance Companies, and Theater Companies*. Washington, DC: DeVos Institute of Arts Management.
- Griffith, J.A., Baur, J.E. and Buckley, M.R. (2018). Creating comprehensive leadership pipelines: Applying the real options approach to organizational leadership development. *Human Resource Management Review*, 29(3), pp. 305–315.
- Groves, K.S. (2007). Integrating leadership development and succession planning best practices. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(3), pp. 239–260.
- Highhouse, S., Doverspike, D., and Guion, R.M. (2016). *Essentials of personnel assessment and selection*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Hunt, V., Layton, D., and Prince, S. (2015). *Diversity matters*. New York: McKinsey & Company. Available at: www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/why%20diversity%20matters/diversity%20matters.ashx
- Kang, S.K., DeCelles, K.A., Tilcsik, A., and Jun, S. Whitened resumes: Race and self-presentation in the labor market. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 61(3), pp. 469–502.
- Landau, K. and Rohmert, W. (eds.) (2017). *Recent developments in job analysis*. Vol. 24. Taylor & Francis.
- Moscoco, S., Vilela, L.D., and García-Izquierdo, A.L. (2015). Work analysis for personnel selection. In: I. Nikolaou and J.K. Ostrom, eds., *Employee recruitment, selection, and assessment*. Hove: Psychology Press, pp. 21–38.
- Page, R.C. (1988). Management position description questionnaire. In: S. Gael, ed., *The job analysis handbook for business, industry, and government*. Vol. II. New York: Wiley, pp. 861–879.
- Pynes, J.E. (2009). *Human resources management for public and nonprofit organizations: A strategic approach*. 3rd ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Redaelli, E. (2016). American cultural policy and the rise of arts management programs: The creation of a new professional identity. In: J. Paquette, ed., *Cultural policy, work and identity*. London: Routledge, pp. 159–174.

- Schonfeld, R., Westermann, M., and Sweeney, L. (2015). *Art museum staff demographic survey*. New York: The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
- Varela, X. (2013). Core consensus, strategic variations: Mapping Arts Management graduate education in the United States. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 43(2), pp. 74–87.
- Word, J.K.A. and Sowa, J.E. (eds.) (2017). *The nonprofit human resource management handbook: From theory to practice*. New York: Routledge.