

Questions to Consider When Switching Sectors

You have already decided that you would like to find a career in the nonprofit sector, but how do you know what opportunity is right for you?

How do you ensure that you find a place where you can have meaningful impact and use your skills effectively? Through Bridgespan's work with senior leaders who have transitioned into the nonprofit sector, we have begun to synthesize a series of critical questions for individuals making the decision to join a nonprofit.

The decision to change careers is highly personal and unique. These questions are only a starting point for you in contemplating a transition into the nonprofit sector. By considering these questions you will better understand the organizations and positions in which you can have your greatest personal impact.

- How entrepreneurial is this organization? How entrepreneurial can I be in this particular management role?
- Does this organization seem open to the application of business discipline to its operations? Which organizational systems and/or procedures resemble my for-profit environment?
- Is there a business practice embedded in the organization—e.g., venture capital or entrepreneurship? Will my for-profit experience support this organization's efforts to apply business practices to their social change mission?
- What are the specific job requirements for the position? How will my for-profit skill sets enable me to perform my job responsibilities?
- How comfortable do I feel managing individuals who have diverse professional backgrounds or leading a staff that may be staffed in different geographic locations?

- How do I influence people? Would I feel comfortable managing volunteers and board members over whom I do not have direct supervisory authority? How would I motivate them to help me implement the mission of this organization?

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