

Making the Jump

A Live Discussion from the Chronicle of Philanthropy

This online discussion occurred on Tuesday, January 29, at noon, U.S. Eastern Standard Time on www.philanthropy.com.

Careers in the nonprofit sector are attractive to many people in the corporate world who are looking to use their business experience to help the greater good. But making the jump from the for-profit world to a charity can be a culture shock.

What should those who are looking to transition to a career in the nonprofit sector do to prepare themselves for their new roles? What skills do they need to hone? What cultural changes can they expect?

The Guests

Paul Rosenberg, a partner with the Bridgespan Group in Boston, a nonprofit organization that provides strategic-planning advice to charities. Mr. Rosenberg was previously an executive for companies like Bain & Company, Grand Circle Travel, and the Kensington Investment Company.

James Weinberg, founder and chief executive of Commongood Careers in Boston. Commongood helps social entrepreneurs recruit and hire workers and helps workers learn more about careers in the nonprofit field.

Kathleen Yazbak, managing director of national relationships for Bridgestar [an initiative of the Bridgespan Group] in Boston, an executive search firm for charities.

A transcript of the chat follows:

Peter Panepento (Moderator):

Hello, and welcome to today's discussion about making the jump from the business world to a career in the nonprofit sector. We have three excellent guests lined up to take your questions—Paul Rosenberg, James Weinberg, and Kathleen Yazbak. All three have unique perspectives on this important topic. Today's discussion is an opportunity to talk directly to those who have either made the jump or can help you learn what you can expect as you search for—or begin in—a new career. We have already received

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some excellent questions, but we have plenty of time for more. Please click on the "ask a question" link to submit your query.

Question from Robyn Lieberman, philanthropic consultant:

As a consultant I have seen many nonprofit organizations romanticize and clamor for what a for-profit professional can bring to the field. Unfortunately, I have also seen the match disappoint on both sides. In addition to the skills that the new employee can bring to the nonprofit, what should nonprofits be doing within their culture to help leverage the business experience? How can long-time social change activists work most effectively with these new recruits?

Paul Rosenberg:

In my experience, the key is to have the nonprofit activists see that there is a path to "do more good better." In other words, they all care passionately about making a difference. If they can begin to see that applying business techniques, and welcoming a colleague who is skilled in those techniques, will help them to do more, then the leverage becomes much greater. I would start any integration process for a business person entering a nonprofit with an organization-wide discussion of "how using these techniques will help us do more of what we want to do."

Question from Dan O'Neil:

I have been working on overseas development projects, mainly rural development and institutional development work for most of the last 20 years. I would now like to come back to the US and work domestically. Do you have any recommendations as to how to make this transition?

James Weinberg:

There are a fantastic group of internationally focused nonprofits in the US, many with HQ offices in New York, DC, and California. These groups place a high value on individuals with international experience. It might be a good place to start. Other than that, just try to utilize your networks as much as possible, informational interview, and focus on your transferable skills. All the best!

Question from Ginny Waller:

I am an attorney who has spent the last seven to eight years volunteering with the local Bar and other nonprofits. I finally made the leap this past month to leave the practice of law to pursue a career in the nonprofit community as a non-lawyer. Do you have any ideas of how I can strengthen my resume and sell myself to the nonprofit sector as an executive director, director of programs, director of membership, etc.?

Kathleen Yazbak:

Congratulations on your career decision! Now you can focus full time on translating your experience into a compelling story for your future nonprofit employer. Your volunteer experience COUNTS—it is critical to give as much detail (responsibilities, outcomes, etc.) as possible so that a nonprofit hiring manager can see in what you've done how it would directly translate into success in his/her organization. One thing you might do is to research job descriptions for the roles that interest you—and itemize for yourself, line by line, what you would say you bring to the table. This will allow you to reflect on your own skills and learning areas, and show an employer you've been thoughtful about what the transition would look like.

Question from Lisa, small nonprofit:

I have a question about a similar kind of career transition: What should those who are looking to transition from a career in the nonprofit sector to a career in the for-profit sector do to prepare themselves for their new roles? What skills do they need to hone? What cultural changes can they expect?

Paul Rosenberg:

The sad fact is that transitions of the type you describe are more difficult than the other way around. In other words, the key is to get the prospective for-profit employer to see the relevance of the nonprofit experience and nonprofit skills. This can often best be demonstrated through interviewing. Giving a real live example of how you managed people, or how you did analysis that is similar to what would happen in the for-profit world will be most useful here.

Question from Brett Grand:

I always see courses and articles about how to make the jump from for profit to nonprofit. But this transition is relatively easy. My question is how to make the jump from the lower paying nonprofits to higher paying for-profit careers.

James Weinberg:

It's true that moving from a nonprofit to a for-profit career can be difficult. One of the hardest things to overcome are misperceptions held by those who have not been exposed to the sector. You could have been the development director of a \$5 million organization, but some in the for-profit sector may think that you have just been "volunteering" the whole time. My advice is to focus on your transferable skills, articulate the "real world/real business" nature of the organizations in which you have been working, and push hard for an interview, which will give you the opportunity to more directly explain how your previous work has prepared you for a new role.

Question from Leigh Ferst, PAVA Foundation board of directors:

How valuable is board experience in the absence of staff work at an NPO, if an executive wants to make the move?

Kathleen Yazbak:

Leigh, this is HUGELY important—it will show an organization that you know about nonprofit organizations, how they run, etc. The level of detail you can provide about your board/volunteer work is critical—it really does count as relevant job experience during a transition.

Question from Danny:

I currently have the opportunity to work for an agency that is hybrid; one side is for-profit and the other side is not-for-profit. As I work with this organization, my biggest concern is being able to explain my work to not and/or for-profit entities in the future. What pitfalls should I be wary of as I document my work on my resume?

Paul Rosenberg:

I would describe your experiences as if they were truly two separate entities, using two separate listings on your resume. That way, for for-profit employers, you will get the full benefit of having them see that you have experience in the for-profit world, and vice-versa. This should give you a strong position as you seek employment with either type of organization, as you can point to solid experiences on both sides.

Question from Linda, job seeker:

Why is it that middle-aged corporate moguls decide that when they would like to "semi-retire," they seek a new career in nonprofit management? This is infuriating to those of us who have been trained in nonprofit management, have paid our dues in the rank and file, don't need to be re-educated, and are being passed over for these exact upper-level nonprofit management positions.

Kathleen Yazbak:

For me, it's about the right person for the job. I regularly tell clients that if they have a successful, internal candidate that meets their criteria 70 percent, they are far better off grooming and training that internal person than going outside to recruit. Cultural fit is critical, AND people love learning new things and stretching themselves in different ways... The risk of a match not being successful with an external recruit is higher. The important thing is to be clear about what skills/knowledge already exist, and to have a plan for how to learn the new things.

Question from Stephen Bauer, American Humanics/Nonprofit Sector Workforce

Coalition:

Besides specific work skills, what personal/character qualities do those that do make the jump from for-profit to nonprofit seem to have that help them successfully navigate the transition?

James Weinberg:

I would say at least three things: 1) Passion and commitment to the specific mission and work of the organization into which you are transitioning; and that passion should be logical and deeply rooted, going a lot further than "just wanting to help people." 2) Humbleness and humility, admitting that you still have a lot to learn about the sector and the organization, and that you are excited about learning from all your new colleagues. 3) Flexibility, knowing how to go with the flow, adapt to changing priorities, and succeed in a resource-constrained environment.

Question from John C. McGee:

Moving from the for-profit to the nonprofit sector assumes a transferability of skills, does that same assumption apply to those who want to move from one segment of the sector to another—say from social services to consulting, or from education to the arts?

Kathleen Yazbak:

It depends on whether content-specific knowledge is required. If you're in a functional role—say finance—you could conceivably "transfer" more easily, if funding streams and reporting requirements are similar. I urge people to dig deep on WHAT IS REALLY NEEDED, and tailor your experience to just that.

Question from Steven, job search:

I am an attorney with one year experience in public relations and event planning. I also have a graduate certificate in NYU for marketing and events. How can I take my experience in development and fundraising in a large nonprofit institution?

Paul Rosenberg:

I suspect that the skills you have developed as an attorney and an event planner are both highly relevant to getting a position in fundraising in a large nonprofit. A lot of that work requires persuasion, a highly logical approach, and organizational abilities. Having said that, you may want to try to affiliate with one of these organizations first, before you seek employment there. For example, volunteering to help in fundraising is often a great path to get to know an organization, and that can then be parlayed into a position.

Comment from Bill Lawry, Students in Training:

NOT A Question but an addendum to Linda, Job Seeker. You'll have to do a better job of selling yourself—usually that means at least three levels up. If you don't you could 'bust your butt' for years and no one would even know you exist much less want/be ready for a promotion.

Question from Eddie Nichols:

I have been a fund raiser in the nonprofit sector for over five years and worked for national organizations. What can I do, besides getting a CFRE certification to make myself a better candidate as executive director (ED) for a local nonprofit chapter?

Kathleen Yazbak:

Eddie, one thing you might do is highlight more of your experience in team management, strategy, and relationships with board members. If you look at most ED job descriptions, fundraising—your area!—is usually top of the list of requirements. If you can find an organization that raises money from similar types of donors (so you can speak to how to work effectively with those donors), you can position yourself, especially if you can also point to team leadership and strategy development/implementation experience. I'd urge you to spend some time on our job board (free of charge) to really study ED job descriptions, and then take your own experience, line by line, and do a self-assessment.

Question from Bill Lawry, Students In Training (SIT):

In my past career I was a project manager and software developer. Now I am operations manager at SIT. The key has been for me to be a good sounding board, a spark plug, and a fulfiller. Of course that makes for 12- to 14-hour days. Is there a general set of self-evident priorities that nonprofits hold dear that will help me put some order in the way we do things? Thanks!

James Weinberg:

Thanks, Bill, unfortunately, I am not sure that I completely understood your question. Could you try re-phrasing it? I think that perhaps you were inquiring about how to prioritize the myriad responsibilities and tasks in your new role. If that's the case, I would say that senior managers whose roles are spread impossibly thin are huge problems in the sector. I would try to clarify with laser-like focus what core elements of your role will have the biggest impact on the organization and work with your colleagues to find ways to delegate, postpone or just discontinue the extraneous elements of the role. Best of luck!

Question from Danny:

What are the contracting advantages of being a hybrid company?

Paul Rosenberg:

If by contracting you mean making arrangements with various vendors, there are several. First, using nonprofit status in contracting can often allow you to obtain preferred pricing. Second, there may be sources of funding available to nonprofits that are not in the for-profit world. On the other side, as long as you are careful to protect your nonprofit status, there may be revenue generating potential in for-profit elements that would not be present in the nonprofit world.

Peter Panepento (Moderator):

We're approaching the halfway point in what has been a very lively discussion. We have a lot of great questions to come—and we invite you to add more to the queue by clicking on the "ask a question" link. Our experts have all made this jump themselves and can also take your questions about their own experiences in making the transition.

Question from Regina Cronin, recently left private sector and looking to enter nonprofit:

I have begun doing some freelance for a nonprofit and have noticed that there are a lot of legacy employees who have been with the organization a number of years but who are not efficient, on time, or productive in their manner of work... and seeing such an environment gives me pause when considering becoming a part of the org full-time. Help!

Paul Rosenberg:

I've always felt that businesses do less important things with brilliant efficiency; and that nonprofits do very important things with brilliant inefficiency. So it is true that there are some cases where one must sacrifice some efficiency in the name of greater passion and dedication to causes that really matter. Having said that, times are changing. The nonprofit world is becoming more efficient because the stakes are too high not to. In a gentle way, helping longer time employees see that by becoming more efficient, the organization can do more to help people, is a way to use your business background to have an enormous positive impact on the organization.

Question from Leanne Armstrong, student:

I would like to serve in a leadership position at a cultural center or museum (but not as a financial director). In your opinion, which master's degree would serve me best: MBA, MPA, or a specialized nonprofit master's, such as ASU's MNPS?

Kathleen Yazbak:

The nonprofit-specific programs are gaining a lot of momentum from what I can see, and it will show a real desire to focus on nonprofit work. That said, MBAs are quite coveted. MPAs can sometimes be

construed as targeting skills for more government-sector work (might be more perception than reality). If indeed you might be looking at more programmatic work (versus "not finance" as you mentioned) a more generalist, but sector-specific degree might serve you well.

Question from Rex Dunn:

I'm a 30-year employee of an international oil company with great experience. I want to stay in the international community but am uncertain where to start.

Kathleen Yazbak:

If there's one thing that I can say about any major career transition, it's that the research you do will be critical: about roles, organizations, issue areas that interest you, etc. There are ways to identify internationally-focused nonprofits via <http://www.guidestar.org> or with plain Google searches on the Internet. The more honed in you can be about keyword searches, the more targeted the information will be. So, for example, you mention "international" but you might want to focus on Asia or Africa specifically... or you might say that international human rights is an issue area you're particularly passionate about. Any segmentation will allow you to conduct useful market research, from which you can hopefully build a web of contacts.

Question from Sara, national nonprofit:

When making the transition from for-profit to nonprofit, how can one find out the "corporate" structure of the nonprofit?

Paul Rosenberg:

I presume what you mean is governance. There are really three pieces to that issue, in my view. There is the structure inside the organization; the relationship between the board and the staff; and finally the way decisions actually get made (or don't get made). Each of these three is important to figure out. Having said that, it's not so easy to do. Interviews are one source, of course, but I would try to locate someone who has left the organization. They are most likely to give you the real scoop, as long as you appropriately discount it if they left disgruntled.

Question from Betty, small nonprofit:

What do you think are the skills most important and transferable to a career in development, specifically in higher education or in an academic medical center?

Kathleen Yazbak:

Bridgestar focuses on senior functional searches—marketing, finance, operations—but we are not specialized in development. I think James Weinberg should answer here, too, so I'm pulling him in. It strikes me that a track record of relationship building with specific kinds of people (e.g. donors that such an organization will want to target) will be critical. Being able to speak knowledgeably about how one runs a sustained campaign of deepening relationships with a client base is also important.

Question from Carol Davis, independent consultant:

I am an instructional designer and trainer. I design, write, and often deliver training programs. I've worked for a major management consulting firm and a major nonprofit. I've written several grants over the last year (most of them were on a volunteer basis). Can you recommend ways to make contacts to obtain part-time grant writing opportunities? I live in N. VA

James Weinberg:

In my experience, Carol, there is a tremendous need across the sector for high-quality grant writers, both full- and part-time. Organizations have concerns when hiring along these lines that A) you won't be able to produce quality work that they will have to spend too much time reworking, or B) it will take you too long to get to know their organization well enough to serve them in this role. Address both by developing a solid "portfolio" of work that you can share, ideally that cuts across multiple organizations in a similar mission area. In terms of finding a role, you could check out job boards like Idealist and Craigslist. Or, because the need is so ubiquitous, you can just find five to 10 organizations that you really like, and cold call the development directors straight out to explore the opportunities. Especially in fast-growing nonprofits, many should be amenable. Finally, you may not need to restrict your search to N. VA—I have worked successfully with several part-time grant writers over a long-distance relationship. Hope that helps!

Question from Ann Bard:

I have been working in the for-profit sector as a technology director for the past 16 years. I would like to move into the nonprofit sector and also transition out of technology as I also have years of experience in the performing arts and in animal care and welfare and would like to focus in these areas as they are more deeply felt for me. Any advice for someone trying to transition out of a field, i.e. technology? Should I allow my other diverse experiences speak for themselves? Do I need to explain why I'm making the transition? etc. Also, regarding compensation: I understand that I will be taking a substantial reduction in compensation to work in the nonprofit sector, but is the perception from the nonprofit sector that those of us coming from the for-profit sector have unreasonable expectations of compensation? What is your

recommendation on how to enter into this dialogue once we become a viable candidate? Thanks so much.

Paul Rosenberg:

One place to start would be to visit one of our websites, bridgestar.org, and visit the "bridger" portal. Bridgers is the term we use for people from the for-profit world seeking to bridge to the nonprofit world. I think you have a great reason why you want to transition, and you shouldn't be shy about expressing it: it is that you deeply care about certain issues and want to make a difference in them. This was the basis of my own decision to leave Bain & Company to become a partner at the Bridgespan Group—I wanted to apply my private-sector skills to issues that I care deeply about. In terms of compensation, it depends. I think that, once you get into the interviewing process, it is fine to talk about your own needs, to see if you can satisfy them in a nonprofit position.

Question from GA, product manager:

In your opinion, what skills will transfer to nonprofit development position? I've worked as a product manager and product marketing manager for a Fortune 500 company, as well as various manufacturers and others for the past 10 years. I've managed both people and processes, I've had profit and loss responsibility, and have been fully engaged in the marketing and sales process, but have not been "in sales" so to speak. I know I can do a lot of things, but what do nonprofits want to hear about the most? Thanks.

Kathleen Yazbak:

Besides ensuring you can speak knowledgeably about an organization's donor base—and your understanding of that donor base, its needs, etc. —we have found, in our research (available for free on www.bridgestar.org and within our "bridger" portal) that three things often transfer from for-profit into nonprofit: 1) "Doing more with less"—really showing that you know how to work, and are successful working, with tight margins... being resourceful is critical. 2) Multi-disciplinary project experience—that you have worked with diverse teams and led them to alignment, e.g. that you have worked with multiple stakeholders. 3) Flexibility and agility... being someone who has a proven ability to drive clarity in a fast-changing, high-growth environment

Peter Panepento (Moderator):

Don't waste your opportunity to get your questions answered. Our experts have time for a few more questions—so please get your query in now if you would like a response. Click on the "ask a question" link to post your question.

Question from Loring Lin:

Following up on Robyn Lieberman's questions, what are the specific techniques that businesspeople bring to help nonprofits "do more good better?" Is it clear that long-time nonprofit professionals don't have these values?

Paul Rosenberg:

Nonprofit professionals often have the values, but some of them don't have the same tools and training. For example, in working with one nonprofit, I found it very useful to use traditional, for-profit analytical techniques around customer segmentation to help them develop better ways to serve various sub-segments of the overall groups of kids they were trying to serve. We have often also found that doing rigorous analysis of the actual costs associated with each activity within a nonprofit will help them allocate resources to the most efficient programs, so that they can serve more kids, or whomever their key service group is. These are ways that I have used modified forms of business analysis to further nonprofit objectives.

Question from Ruth, reference librarian:

I am interested in switching from a career in librarianship to a career in the nonprofit sector. Would nonprofits consider my prior experience in academic libraries as an asset (I assist faculty and students with research and answer reference questions) or should I focus more on furthering my education in nonprofit management through coursework, seminars, volunteering, etc.?

Kathleen Yazbak:

You raise a tough question, Ruth! The important thing for me that would guide my answer has to do with what you'd be looking to do from a functional perspective. Your research experience could lend itself toward many different roles within nonprofit organizations. I'd start with researching which issue areas you care about, and then look at specific organizations within that issue area—how are they organized? What are they looking for? What roles seem like an interesting fit for you? You can run a self-assessment against specific roles, and decide whether or not you think further learning would be an asset. Don't get me wrong—learning in a formal environment is ALWAYS an asset—I just would want you to know exactly what skills you'd want to target.

Question from Debbie, Bookworm Gardens:

I am just breaking into the nonprofit world with a passion for philanthropy. I have worked as a ropes course facilitator with many business leaders. I am concerned about not having a business degree. Do you have any suggestions to prepare myself?

Kathleen Yazbak:

A business degree isn't a prerequisite, Debbie. It strikes me that your background in leadership development might be an interesting angle upon which you could, and should, capitalize. I know of many youth mentoring program models that seek to build confidence—similar programmatic work to what you've done on the for-profit side. There are also nonprofits—like Bridgestar—that care a lot about leadership development. I've seen leadership institutes at higher education institutions as well. If you were to align your skills with such a program, you'd be directly applying your for-profit skill to the nonprofit environment.

Question from Jillian Glazer, Idealist.org:

Are there things I can incorporate into our nonprofit career fairs that would be useful in serving those trying to make the shift from other sectors into nonprofit work? (i.e. guidelines for navigating this sort of event with a nonprofit focus... "a suit and tie may be overkill but do plan to dress professionally..." etc.)

James Weinberg:

Thanks so much for the question, Jillian. I think that this is a great direction for creative thought! What I hear you describing sounds something like a one-page info flyer on tips for making the switch and/or tips for sector-switchers at career fairs. I would be happy to work with you in developing this, and perhaps we can post online in advance and/or hand out at the sign-in desk? Perhaps also hosting a regular workshop that is more tailored to those making the switch. We have also found that each person's story is so unique along these lines that, if resources permitted, I think hosting one-on-one, 15-minute advising sessions would be great too. Thanks!

Question from Charles, self-employed:

I am an Indianapolis, IN, attorney with approximately 10 years experience in the life insurance industry, most recently presenting and explaining estate plans to individuals. I am investigating the possibility of pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector but am unsure of where (position wise) I would have the best opportunity. One contact I have in the nonprofit sector has suggested planned giving. While my past experience has acquainted me with some of the aspects of planned giving, I would probably need some exposure to this area. My nonprofit contact has suggested a planned giving seminar at the Center on Philanthropy. I would like to know what kind of prospects there are in the planned giving area for someone with my background and what recommendations you would make for additional training/seminars?

Kathleen Yazbak:

Yes, given the technical nature of planned giving as a field, I would urge you to learn more. I would also think that a certificate program, and the faculty leading such a program, would be excellent resources to you as you embark down this new career path. Given your life insurance experience on the for-profit side, gaining further understanding of the whole world of estate planning would be a useful set of skills to have in your toolkit.

Question from Peter Panepento (Moderator):

Paul, in making your transition, what was one thing you wish you had done during your business career that would have better prepared you for your role in the nonprofit world?

Paul Rosenberg:

I wish that I had had more experience while I was in business applying my skills in a complicated, multi-stakeholder environment. Frankly, it's so much more straightforward when you are operating in a world where everything is about maximizing shareholder value, as I was. I wish that I had used a bit more bandwidth while I was still in business to do pro-bono projects that would help better prepare me for the complexities and less clear metrics of the nonprofit sector.

Question from Leanne, student:

When making hiring decisions, what do you think would be most valuable to an NPO, an MBA, MPA, or a specialized master's in nonprofit?

Kathleen Yazbak:

It really depends on what the role is—it's true that for a finance role, an MBA and/or CPA is fantastic. Master's in nonprofit management shows your commitment, above all, to the sector, which is also attractive. MPAs sometimes have a connotation of being government-sector specific, but this isn't always the case. I'd urge you to identify what kind of nonprofit (size, issue area) you care about, what type of role you think would be a fit, and build from there.

Question from Peter Panepento (Moderator):

Are there any habits that workers from the business world have to lose when they accept their first job with a charity?

James Weinberg:

That's a really tough question, and one that depends largely on what types of roles you have had in the private sector, and what roles and organizations you pursuing in the nonprofit sector. To speak in broad

generalizations, however, I would say: 1) Nonprofits are often more collaborative and less hierarchical than businesses, so any habits around competitive ladder climbing, etc., should be left behind. 2) Humility combined with high skill is also prized by many nonprofits, so behaviors that run counter to that or seem showy don't go over well. 3) Most companies left their big expense accounts behind in the 80s anyway, so this is less of any issue, but many nonprofits operate in an extremely resource-constrained environment, so there are adjustments to be made there. 4) There is more individual self-reliance and less support staff and middle-management in the nonprofit sector, so to the extent that people work largely through managing others and delegating, the transition can be difficult. 5) Some—not all—nonprofits can be bureaucratic, so it can sometimes take politicking and patience to get things done.

Question from Trinh Bui, small nonprofit:

I have been working as a volunteer for the same organization since 2004, from PR [public relations], marketing, event planning, program writing, etc.... and my experience is invaluable. Is it necessary to get a master's degree in order to work in the nonprofit field at an administrator or at the manager level? I feel that I will gain so much more experience in the field as opposed to spending two years hitting the books and having very little time for actual experience. Thanks.

Kathleen Yazbak:

Graduate degrees often help people when they are at a crossroads and trying to figure out how to get to the "next level"—they learn theory, cases, skills, and methods for doing that. If you're able to gain that in your work experience and through the colleagues/leaders with whom you work, you're in a wonderful position. Ensuring that you will continue to have learning opportunities is critical.

Question from Peter Panepento (Moderator):

How important of a role will workers with business experience have in the nonprofits of the future? Will they be leaning more or less heavily on these employees in the coming years?

Paul Rosenberg:

I think that as demand for talented managers in the burgeoning nonprofit sector continues to grow, that there will be twin demands: first, for a continuation and expansion of the flow of talent from the for-profit to the nonprofit world, and second, for an expansion of training and development of first-class managers within the sector itself. That is why we created Bridgestar as a part of the Bridgespan Group. We saw the need to help on both of those flows. Bridgestar does this both by helping with talent matching, and by helping nonprofits develop their internal capabilities to develop high-level talent.

Question from Stephen Bauer, American Humanics/Nonprofit Sector Workforce

Coalition:

One of the concerns of the current leadership of the nonprofit sector is the lack of retirement plans and other benefits to support retiring from the field. What has been your experience in navigating this with professionals that want to transition from for-profit to nonprofit?

James Weinberg:

It is true that many organizations in the sector have been slow to develop competitive retirement plans for their employees. There are many reasons for this and a variety of possible solutions, but that's a different question. I would just say to the sector as a whole that rolling out these types of benefits may be easier and cheaper than you think. Anyway, to the jobseeker question, if you are moving from a for-profit to a nonprofit organization that does not have any forms of retirement options, you should make sure to have a solid private financial consultant to help you make the right moves. If the nonprofit you are moving into has those benefits, they may be able to help you with roll-overs, etc.

Question from Anna, job seeker:

What are some ways in which I can target my resume better to reflect the fact that I have international work experience, from serving as a Peace Corps volunteer and the fact that I have a graduate degree in Philanthropic Studies that will allow me to have a more successful job search?

Kathleen Yazbak:

These are important experiences that you have—your resume should clearly state them, and any cover letter you write should be extremely tailored to highlight these assets!

Question from Carol Davis, independent consultant:

Are you aware of any nonprofit career fairs in the near future? Thank you. This has been an especially informative hour!

James Weinberg:

Check out Idealist! Thanks!

Peter Panepento (Moderator):

In case you are new to the site, we offer a bevy of career resources for those in the nonprofit world: <http://philanthropy.com/jobs>. For a list of other resources, go to: </jobs/resources/links.htm>.

Peter Panepento (Moderator):

Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. I hope you all found the discussion useful. Thanks, also, to our guests—Paul Rosenberg, James Weinberg, and Kathleen Yazbak—for their insights. We'll see you again next week for a discussion with Matt Flannery, co-founder of the popular online microfinance portal Kiva.org.

View this and other online discussions from the Chronicle of Philanthropy at:

www.philanthropy.com/live/2008/01/careers/.

Bridgestar (www.bridgestar.org), an initiative of the Bridgespan Group, provides a nonprofit management job board, content, and tools designed to help nonprofit organizations build strong leadership teams and individuals pursue career paths as nonprofit leaders.