

Helping Internal Hires Succeed in Their New Roles

When a nonprofit promotes one of its employees into a new role, the transition from employee to senior leader can sometimes be a bit tricky. But there are some steps you can take to make the internal hire's transition into the new job go much more smoothly.

1. **Announce the decision.** Make both an external and an internal announcement about the hire, explaining that the organization ran a full search and the internal person was chosen for X, Y, and Z reasons. In the announcement, members of the leadership team should note that the board was a part of the search process as well.
2. **Clearly define the new role to the rest of the leadership team.** Arrange a meeting between the internal hire and the relevant senior leaders at the organization—before the promotion's start date—to clearly define the new role and its responsibilities, ensuring the role does not become just an expansion of what the person is already doing.
3. **Fill the new leader's old job before s/he starts the new one.** Try to fill the new leader's former position quickly. Ensure that there is a genuine transition from the old job to the new one.
4. **Provide visual cues that reinforce to staff the employee's new, larger role.** Provide the new leader with a new workspace and include him or her in all relevant senior management team meetings.
5. **Publicly support the new leader's decisions.** The executive director (ED) and other members of the leadership team should outwardly defer to the new hire, thus clearly delineating his or her new authority. For example, if a staff member asks the chief operating officer (COO) for a decision about something that falls under the new hire's authority, the COO should send him or her directly back to the new hire.

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.

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