



ILLUSTRATION BY MIGUEL DAVILLA

What are we waiting for? The critical need to invest in emerging nonprofit leaders

By Trish Kerlé

According to the Urban Institute, the number of nonprofits (including associations) registered with the IRS grew 27.3 percent from 1995 to 2005. At the same time, we've heard for years that the sector will soon experience significant turnover in leadership. Consequently, nonprofits will require an unprecedented number of new leaders in the near future.

While the statistics seem to warrant a sense of urgency from the current leadership of the nonprofit sector, it appears that nonprofits are behind the business sector in preparing emerging nonprofit professionals (e.g., generations X and Y and mid-level employees) for a leadership role. For example, while businesses fill more than 60 percent of senior positions through promotions, nonprofits average closer to 35 percent. And while many successful business CEOs spend more than half their time on people-related issues, nonprofit executive directors devote a majority of their time to fundraising.

While few nonprofits have the bench strength to promote from within, many can do a better job of investing in the professional development of their people. As stated by The Bridgespan Group, "leader-

ship capacity is what matters most to the long-run effectiveness of any organization, including nonprofits." And ready or not, generations X and Y have high expectations regarding growth opportunities in the workplace.

Regardless of how a nonprofit approaches professional development for its emerging leaders, these contributions should be viewed systemically, since building the capacity of a single staff member can potentially reap bounty for the whole organization. In addition, developing junior and mid-level staff can sup-

port a pipeline to leadership for members of communities typically underrepresented in senior positions, which, in turn, can support an overarching strategy of building a more inclusive organization.

Investing in emerging leaders can include offering feedback, a formal mentor program, manager training, developing a top-down and organizationwide commitment to diversity and inclusion, and individual and team coaching.

Despite the popularity of executive coaching, coaching can also be of tremendous benefit to emerging leaders. According to an International Coaching Federation study released in 2009, the ROI for companies can be significant, with 86 percent of those able to provide figures to calculate company ROI indicating that they had at least made their investment back. More significantly, this study of 2,100 coaching clients in 64 countries found the top-five positive impacts of coaching were enhancements to self-esteem and self-confidence, relationships, communication skills, interpersonal skills, and work performance. Investing in individual and/or team coaching would likely bolster the capacity of emerging nonprofit leaders as well as support the future success and sustainability of nonprofit organizations and the sector.

Trish Kerlé coaches all levels of nonprofit professionals. She is the former director of diversity and inclusion for ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership. Email: trishkerle@gmail.com

ASAE CAREER HEADQUARTERS www.careerhq.org

If you're looking for the next step in your association management career or looking for high-quality candidates to fill open positions at your organization, check out CareerHQ.org—the best source of association jobs and resumes. In addition to helping you find your next job—whether it's as CEO, director of technology, or membership coordinator—ASAE's career services department offers such services as executive coaching, resume writing, and more. For more information, contact Catherine Lux at clux@asaecenter.org.

Are there certain career-related topics you would like addressed on this page? If so, please email your questions or topic ideas to careerhq@asaecenter.org. We look forward to hearing from you!