

# Meet The New Boss (Same As The Old Boss)

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by Andrea

One of my mentors says this so often he should have it tattooed on his palm:

If you do what you've been doing, you'll get what you've been getting.

You can't really argue with that. It applies whether you are trying to lose weight, improve your tennis serve, or create change within an organization.

Let's talk about how this plays out at the top of your org chart. Let's talk about replacing your Executive Director, your CEO, or your President.

If your search committee considers only people already in ED, CEO, or President positions, your organization will miss out on outstanding candidates.

First, unless your organization has a staff of 2, you should have at least one internal candidate. If not, you're not providing the kind of leadership development and professional courtesy your staff deserves. Talented people on staff will get the message quickly that they can't move up unless they move on.

Second, even if your organization hasn't taken a strategic approach to long-term staff and leadership development, other organizations have. Why not take advantage of their hard work?

Consider candidates from slightly larger organizations, especially if you aspire to be a slightly larger organization.

Furthermore, look for evidence that candidates from institutions of any size understand how to grow a program. If someone can demonstrate how they drove growth in prior positions (e.g. raised 34% more from events, recruited 30% more advocates for Project X), and can explain how that growth is being sustained, chances are they will understand how to translate your desire for growth into measurable action.

Something else to consider.

Hands are wringing like mad in the nonprofit sector over the anticipated shortage of leaders now that baby boomer have begun retiring. At the same time, development directors and advancement professionals are salivating over the much-ballyhooed greatest transfer of wealth.

I'd like to point out a key link between these two phenomena. Those people retiring are the same generation as the people from whom the wealth will be transferred.

Might I suggest, then, that as you cast your eyes about for new leadership, leadership that can drive growth and capture some of that transferred wealth, it makes sense to look to younger generations. Try X for now, but remember to nurture Y in the wings.

Those Gen-Xers who've been working under the boomers now have 15 to 20 to 25 years' experience in this sector. Trust me, they are ready to lead.

And you want them to lead. They're the ones with friends who are becoming the next generation of foundation board members. They're the ones who have relationships with up-and-coming executives who are stepping into President and CEO jobs.

Finally, something else to consider. This process is about more than filling your top position. This is a chance to market your mission to a select group of people who won't end up being your leader, but will end up being leaders elsewhere. Don't miss this chance to show yourself in a good light.

If ambitious VPs and senior managers are told upon applying for your top position that the committee only wants to consider people who are already EDs and CEOs, word will get around. Your candidate pool will shrink. Those who weren't considered will remember your cautious ways when they are heading up new initiatives and looking for partners. And when they are looking to hire their senior people.

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