

Doing Good As an Encore Career

Hoosiers in Central Indiana have big hearts. Residents of the Indianapolis area volunteer to fight wildfires, rescue victims of earthquakes and restore power after storms. Closer to home, the nonprofit workforce is an important component of the local economy.

As Boomers plan to extend their careers, working for a not-for-profit organization may be a viable choice. The same job functions of information technology, strategic planning, human resources, communication/media relations, business development and finance that exist in the private sector also are careers in nonprofits.

It is important for employees to believe in the mission of an organization, whether it is a nonprofit or private sector, explains Nancy Ahlrichs, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, chief talent officer for United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI). “The mission is everything,” she explains, “otherwise it is just a job.”

Stacey McCreery, founder and president of ROI Search Group, says her executive recruiting and consulting firm looks for what drives candidates. “When we talk to candidates, we find out what is really important to them. Asking those questions is really the difference, rather than pitching jobs.” McCreery had personal experience of moving from a manufacturing

job to helping children and adults with disabilities. “I found my passion was key, and it showed in my work. It doesn’t feel like work but, more importantly, you give all your heart to it,” says McCreery.

At UWCI, Ahlrichs is implementing several strategies to continue attracting and retaining high-quality candidates. “We serve



a six-county area, so we have a diversity and inclusion strategy to reflect the people we serve, and we value a multigenerational workforce,” Ahlrichs says. “United Way wants a culture that is a welcoming place to all.”

With Indianapolis’ unemployment rate near 3 percent, human resource professionals like Ahlrichs are focused on succession planning. She says to be sustainable as an organization, it is important for UWCI to continue developing employees to promote

from within when possible. Other initiatives include leader and team member needs assessments and training, which also support succession planning.

Ahlrichs explains that an organization-wide change management strategy supporting UWCI’s new business model should have a greater impact in the community.

“We are introducing resilience as a skill and weaving in the topic of people’s comfort level with change.”

McCreery has advice for nonprofit leaders: “I would take time to identify what is most important. Sometimes organizations are so ready to find the perfect fit, they speed along the process.” McCreery advises that finding the right employee takes time, and investing in the process leads to better long-term hiring outcomes for nonprofit

organizations.

For those seeking an encore career with a nonprofit, it is advisable to volunteer first. This provides an opportunity to meet other volunteers and staff as well as experience the day-to-day issues the organization faces. The nonprofit’s website and charitableadvisors.org

list current open positions. ■



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