

## **Recruiting Senior Administrators: Own the Process ... And Don't Hire Resumes!**

*Peter Hutton, Partner, Boston, MA*

A few thoughts for Heads as they hire senior administrators:

First, retain a search firm, a search firm that genuinely understands your school's culture and needs. You are really busy and you do not have a database of 20,000 plus candidates. The candidate you need may not be in the usual places and you need help finding that person.

Many schools form a faculty lead search committee to run the search. They vet resumes with the search firm, conduct preliminary interviews, and present the Head with candidates to bring to the campus. While this feels like a democratic and inclusive process, it is a terrible idea! This person will report to YOU. You need to own the process. You know best about the kind of person you need to work with. You know how the person will mesh with, balance and counterbalance within your management team. You fully understand the nuances of the job in a way a search committee does not. There are plenty of ways to run an inclusive process. But you need to own it. This is no time to delegate.

What about internal candidates? This can be really tricky. If people come to you expressing interest in the position and you do not see them as a fit, tell them that immediately and do not put them through the search process. They may be disappointed and angry, but no one appreciates a sham interview. And 99% of the time if you know the person is not a fit so does everyone else.

OK. What if there is an internal candidate you are fully committed to hiring? Then do it! Be honest. As I said no one likes a sham interview and running a sham search is even worse. It's expensive, dishonest, and disrespectful of other candidates.

So who needs to be involved? The candidates need to spend 1-2 (preferably 2) days on campus. Remember while you are interviewing them, they are interviewing you. If the search is for an academic administrator - think division director, dean of students, head of DEI - include faculty, staff, students and select parents. No need to include trustees. If this is a position that interacts with trustees - development, admissions, CFO, CMO, assistant head - then absolutely include a small group of trustees who will be working with the candidate. Caution: Be careful with which parents you include. Guess which parents will want to be involved. All of them. Stick with parents with a title like head of the PA.

Design a form, preferably something that can be completed in 5 minutes, that gives everyone who meets with candidates a chance to provide feedback. This is a great way to get student feedback. I always loved the insight from student tour guides.

Discuss compensation, including benefits, with finalists during the visit. It is really deflating to make an offer to your candidate of choice only to be rejected because you are far apart on compensation. Your search firm can give you guidance on salary ranges. I feel it is appropriate to include that in a position statement. "Compensation is competitive" says

nothing.

Next: Transition to the school. But that's another post!

*In 1992 Peter Hutton became CEO of Beaver Country Day School, at the time a struggling and under-enrolled, under-financed school. Through creating a laser focused organizational culture he built it into a school with the strongest brand of Boston area independent schools, and into one of the most innovative schools in the country. Hutton believes that strong leadership—i.e. leadership having a point of view—creates a high functioning organizational design that creates a culture passionate about vision, nimble about strategy, and always meeting the needs of the customer.*