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Friday, July 11, 2008

Nonprofit chamber hopes to attract next generation of executive directors

Wichita Business Journal - by [Josh Heck](#)

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A casual scan through the Nonprofit Chamber of Service 2008 membership book might not immediately reveal a problem, but Perry Schuckman sees the potential for trouble on the horizon.

The executive director of the nonprofit chamber says about one-third of executive directors in the 170-member group are considering retiring at some point within the next five years.

That number includes nearly half the organization's 15-person board of directors.

Who will replace these leaders is unclear.

Most people in their late 20s and early 30s don't appear interested in taking on leadership roles in a nonprofit organization, Schuckman says.

That's why the nonprofit chamber is sponsoring a panel discussion in August to outline the credentials required to run a nonprofit organization. It's Schuckman's hope the event will spur interest in finding the next crop of nonprofit leaders. The panel will include a collection of nonprofit executive directors who have been in their positions less than two years.

The challenge is getting the right people interested in leading nonprofits, says Jan Davis, executive director of the Boys and Girls Club of Southcentral Kansas and a panel member.

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"You have to have the heart for it," Davis says. "You have to believe in the organization."

Succession Planning

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With baby boomers approaching retirement age, the need to train the next generation of leaders is essential, says Deborah Donaldson, director of human services for Sedgwick County.

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"Succession planning is critical," she says.

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Sedgwick County has opened some of its succession planning training sessions to members of the nonprofit chamber, which, Donaldson says, represents a large portion of the services that are offered in Sedgwick County.

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"It certainly is in our interest that they are well run," she says.

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There are many ways to implement succession plans to ensure that nonprofits continue to be well run.

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Local nonprofit executives say organizations should first look internally for a leader, but should not be opposed to searching for an external candidate.

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Mark Eby is an executive director who didn't move up through the internal ranks.

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"I think helping kids was what drew me to Big Brothers Big Sisters," he says. "I wanted to make a difference in the community."

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Eby -- who will be a panel member for the Aug. 12 discussion -- filled a vacancy with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Sedgwick County more than a year ago. He says strategic planning for the future was one of his top priorities when he came on board. And succession planning was a component of his strategic plan.

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What: Nonprofit leadership panel discussion.

When: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Aug. 12.

Where: KPTS Channel 8, 320 W. 21st St. North, Wichita, Kan., 67203.

Cost: \$10 for members, \$35 for nonmembers.

To reserve: (316) 440-6744.

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