

Carey Nieuwhof:

Welcome to this month's Leaders Circle Backgrounder. We're going to talk about The Keys to Finding and Recruiting Great Leaders. And what I want to give you and your team in this session is a filter. Because I don't know about you, but there always seems to be a talent shortage. And it seems to be getting even more intense. There's a war for talent right now. And that's understandable for a number of different reasons.

Carey Nieuwhof:

First of all, when it comes to recruiting staff, a lot of your staff have more options than ever before. People are working for themselves. The gig economy is growing. People realize that, well, if I don't work for you, I can probably figure out what I want to do next. And there is just a real talent war going on right now. And a lot of us have trouble competing in that field.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Secondly, it can be really difficult to spot great leaders. Sometimes we end up recruiting based on whose available rather than who is really capable. And capability generally beats availability when it comes to building a great team. And you'll start to look at this teaching that I'm going to share with you in a few minutes, through the matrix of your team. And you may get a sinking feeling as a senior leader that you've got some people on your team right now who don't really fit the bill. Maybe they've been there a long time. You inherited some of them. Or you hired somebody and you're realizing, wow, that wasn't really the best hire I've ever done.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so I'm glad you're watching the backgrounder or listening to the backgrounder, because I think you'll have the opportunity to kind of go through it and say, okay, I got a little bit of homework to do maybe, with some of my team members and just flag that. They will also have probably some homework to do with their existing team. So as you begin to apply this filter to looking for new talent, it will also be a way of evaluating your existing team, whether that's staff or volunteers. And going, uh oh, I think we've got to shuffle the deck a little bit. So just know that, that's a little bit of a challenge that you could be running into as you process the content individually for yourself, but also with your whole team this month. So with that in mind, let's jump into this month's training in Leader Circle.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Welcome to this month's Leaders Circle. In this session, I want to show you how to spot great leaders, how to find and recruit great leaders. And this can be a real challenge, right? And maybe you're familiar with this. So you end up going to a conference, or you read a book, your listening to a podcast, you jump on a webinar and you're like, oh, I wish we had leaders like that in our organization. I get that. In a connected world, it's very easy to look at organizations that have amazing leaders, and then focus on the leaders you don't have. And then when you look back at your context, it's hard not to just get overwhelmed and discouraged.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The number one issue that I identified when I surveyed over 1400 leaders, was that they said, we just don't have the right number of leaders. We are struggling to move volunteers to becoming actual leaders. We're struggling to find good staff. And so it's a challenge. You're not alone. Well, of course, you

know this right? Great leaders do not magically appear and they don't randomly assemble. But here's the other thing. For the most part, growing organizations and great organizations, don't buy great leaders, they build them. And that can sound very overwhelming, right? It's tempting to say, well, I'd like to get this person from this organization, this person, and this person. I'll put a dream team together.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And the challenge with that is, all the research shows there's a very good chance those dream teams don't work out. A lot of people don't leave the chemistry that made them great at where they used to work. Doesn't make them as great as yours.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So most of your talent is going to come from within. I would say about 90 to 99% of your day-to-day leadership, volunteers and staff are going to come from people who are already in your orbit, people on the inside of your organization, customers, clients, congregation. And just drawing from my context. When I began, I started at three very small churches that had been in decline for decades. They weren't exactly brimming with top-notch leaders. I did the circuit on a Sunday morning and the average attendance of the churches at the time was six, 14 and 23. Not making that up. Really, really small. And they had been stagnant for years. Like from before I was born.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so what do you do in an organization like that, that number one, doesn't have a lot of people. Number two, tends to attract the kind of people that want to be part of dying or stuck organizations. How do you not get discouraged or just throw in the towel? Well, you can start by casting a really clear and compelling mission and vision. And start challenging the people that are in your organization. You can pray. In my case, I got on my knees. It's like, God send us leaders. That would be a great thing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So the key to building a team when you're in a very small or stuck context is you start where you are. Even when you think you don't have the right people. So that's what I want to look at by going through five principles that will help you start where you are. And step number one is simply this, look for the best leaders you can find. Yes, sometimes that will be overwhelming, but believe it or not, you have leaders in your organization. Maybe not fortune 100 caliber leaders, maybe not startup entrepreneurs that are blowing things up in Silicon Valley. But you've got to learn how to spot the leaders.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And here's how you can tell who the leaders are. They're leading something. I know. Let me say that again. You're like what? Okay. You can spot a leader because they're leading something. Maybe they're not leading in your organization. Maybe they're not volunteering. Maybe they're not on staff, but they're leading somewhere. So here's what you'll start to notice. Right? I had to look over those three original churches and I had to find people who were leading somewhere else. So maybe there's somebody who's running a shift at the local coffee shop and doing a great job. Maybe there is a parent in your organization who's running the entire neighborhood, right? The playgroups, organizing the moms, petitioning the local city council to install new playground equipment. And she's a leader. Or maybe there's somebody who's running a great business or someone who's got an incredible side hustle. Or there's somebody running a music studio. Or a high school student who just happens to be

running for school council, president. Right? So they're leading something. How can you tell if they're leaders? Well, they have a track record and when you look behind them, people are following.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So those are the kinds of people who make things happen and you have them. They may not be serving in your current organization, but they're there. So that's principle number one. Number two, is look beyond your current structure. So the best leaders you have are probably not if you're really small, on your board or your current team. And this can get a little bit awkward at times. So, when I went to those original churches, we had some really well-meaning people, some wonderful people like, love God, love people, but they weren't great leaders. So this conversation starts to get awkward. One of the realities of many small organizations, churches, businesses, is that leaders don't always end up in a position of leadership. As awkward as it is, you need to have the critical conversation. You need to be able to make progress. So gracious, humble people will receive that well. I had to sit down with a number of board members who didn't have the gift of leadership. And after a period of time, build a relationship and a rapport say, I wonder if you could better serve over here or doing this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you have to build the organization of the future in the present. And you do it by finding the best leaders you can find, whether they're officially in leadership or not. And then what you end up with and you've got to kind of apply this matrix over your entire organization, is you want to make sure that you have leaders leading. Sometimes people are in positions of leadership because they're loyal or faithful. Or they've been around for a long time. Or to be fair to them, sometimes they end up on a board, or on staff, or in leadership because well, "Nobody else applied and I was available, and so I volunteered to do that". And you want to approach them with dignity, and respect, and humility. And a lot of you now, you kind of know what I'm talking about, right? As a result, you end up with good people who don't necessarily hold the gift of leadership in positions of leadership. And that needs to change over time. Give yourself a couple of years to make that transition, but definitely make that tradition.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then a third thing, and this is related, is that you've got to start embracing excellence over inclusion. And again, in very small organizations, another awkward reality is that we have not only non leaders leading, but non admin people administering, non-marketing people marketing, non sales people selling. And you end up with in a band, we did a lot of music in our church and do a lot of music, non singer singing, non-musicians playing, non communicators communicating, and so on. And the challenge there, took me a long time to figure it out, is small declining or stagnant organizations tend to value inclusion over excellence. Inclusion over excellence.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what that means is somebody who can't sing says, hey, I want to sing on the music team. And you're like, well, who's going to tell him no. And so it's like, okay, you can sing on the music team. And then you say to the sound guy, can you turn down his microphone? Can you turn that down? Why? What's underneath that is you can't bear the thought of hurting Jake who wants to sing, or the drummer who can't really drum. So it's like, well, we'll just put them on the drums. And least we've got somebody now. And that's what happens. You end up with people who don't have the gift of music, playing music. And nobody really wins in that scenario. So now, if that is the best vocalist you've got, the best drummer you've got, sure. Go with that. It will get better over time. But usually that's not the issue.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Some people have the gift of singing. Some people don't. Some people I have the gift of playing guitar. Some people don't. Some people have a gift of communication. Some people don't. And in the same way you wouldn't buy a cell phone designed by a non-computer engineer or someone who was bad at that. Or in the same way you wouldn't get your open heart surgery done by a non heart surgeon. You want the best. It's the same for your organization. You want people in the area of their gifting, leading in the area of their gifting. But that means you need to have some difficult conversations.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so the upside is you start with the best that you have. Get the best graphic designer you can find doing graphic design. Get the best available singer, singing. Get the best available drummer, drumming. And keep building the team. So the sign of a great leader is someone who is not threatened by other people. You also have to get over the, oh, I'm the leader. I'm going to do everything syndrome. Get some really good people around you and deploy them. So the next challenge, and the next thing to pay attention to, is you then have to separate the leaders from the doers. You need a lot of doers in your organization. Particularly the larger you get, the more you need. But when you're staffing, you're hiring people or you're stacking those top volunteer positions. You need to separate the leaders from the doers.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One mistake in staffing is that people hire doers. I got too much to do so I'm going to hire you. You can just do it. Now the reality is, you need to be a multi-million dollar organization before you can really afford to pay somebody \$40,000 a year to sit there and enter data in a computer. Because it doesn't scale. Somebody who just sort of does a job, it doesn't really work. What you want to be doing is you want to have leaders on your team, particularly when you're small. You want to have people who can mobilize and support other people. You want to have people who can recruit volunteers if you lead in a volunteer organization. You want to have people who can motivate and inspire others. And what is the difference between a leader and a doer? Well, here are five that I've noticed.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So the first thing is, and we've hinted at this already, leaders have followers. Right. Doers don't. So if they don't have anybody following them, they're probably not a leader. They're a doer. Leaders second characteristic is leaders make things happen. Doers respond to what's happening, but leaders can often create something out of nothing. They're the people to get things going. So doers will respond to what's happening. Leaders make things happen. Third characteristic, leaders love responsibility. If you give a leader something they're like, thank you. I will take some more. Doers kind of run from responsibility. They're like, I don't want that. That's too much. Okay. Just put me in the corner here. Tell me what to do. I'll do it. And listen, you need doers, but don't put them at the top level of your organization. They need to be serving somewhere else. So leaders love responsibility, doers love tasks. Number four, leaders lead other people, doers only lead themselves. This is critical.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So a leader will say, yeah, I'll take this team of 10 and I will equip them. A doer is like, nope, I'm working over here all by myself. Don't bug me. I'm going to get it done. And again, you need doers. You just don't need them in leadership responsibilities. And number five, leaders love a challenge. Doers often get overwhelmed by challenges. So doers are often just overwhelmed. And so leaders just say, yeah, give

me more, give me more. And that leads us to the fifth point. We should camp on that for a little bit. Give your leaders a significant challenge. One of the challenges I face all the time as a leader is to reduce the level of commitment. I might say, oh, it's okay. It doesn't really matter. Don't worry about it. No, that's all right. And that's a mistake. You know what? Your highest capacity leaders, your best leaders, they want a significant challenge.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what you want to do very counterintuitively, is you want to raise the mission, raise the level of responsibility, and you will raise the level of leadership in your organization. One of my best friends is a guy by the name of Frank Bealer. And when he was in his 20s at 23, he became the CEO of an insurance firm. And he moved to Charlotte and started attending a growing church called Elevation Church. And Frank got to know, it was in the early days of Elevation Church, Steven Furtick, their senior pastor. And he and Steven became friends and Steven recruited him. And Frank worked like a ridiculous work week. He was young in his 20s. CEO of this insurance firm, which was growing and winning national awards. And what he did on his only day off on the weekend, was he started serving at Elevation Church. Eventually, he went to running the entire children's ministry and set up and tear down at one of their locations.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So on his day off, he took his family. He has four kids. He took his family to church on a Sunday morning first thing before the sun rose. Made sure everything was set up, ran all of children's ministry in his spare time, unpaid as a volunteer. And when you talk to Frank about it, and you say, Frank, why would you do that? He said, well, listen, if they had asked me to do less, I probably wouldn't have done it. I probably would've just gone to church or slept in on a Sunday morning. But because he's a high capacity leader leading at a very high level, he responded to a high level of challenge. He went on ultimately, to work at the church. And now he's the CEO of the Phase corporation, which is actually building a brand new model of church across America.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So Frank's an example of what happens when you spot a leader, right? Frank was a leader. He was already making waves in the community. He was a leader, not a doer. He had all those characteristics. He could create followers. And he's somebody who really responded to a high level of challenge. So if that's where you find yourself looking for a better team, start where you are. Start looking for the best leaders you can find. You know they're a leader because people are following them. And past performance is the best indicator of future potential.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I hope that's a very helpful filter for you as you start to think about, okay, how are we going to build our team? How are we going to build some volunteers?

Carey Nieuwhof:

And listen, today our church, which I've now handed off to the next generation, is over 1500 people on the weekends. And we have some of the most incredible people leading, and singing, and doing all the design work, and all the stuff that goes into creating a church of that size. But it started with a handful of people and trying to find the very best talent we could. So as you go out and look for your next hire, your next recruit, keep these filters in mind. Now, we got some more in the team application guide for

you that will help you put wheels on this. I hope that the team conversation and application is robust and real. But remember, the best leaders in the world don't buy great teams, they built them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, now that you've heard the whole teaching, you're probably like, yeah Carey, there's some board members I've got to have a conversation with. There's one or two staff members I need to have a conversation with. And I get it. And what I would say is, be cautious about it but firm. And you probably want to attack that little by little over the next number of months or years. And the other thing I would say too is, and this is something I didn't do well in the early years of my leadership. But if you got to make a change, if you got to tap people on the shoulder and say, hey, next time we do board of director elections, I wonder if there's another place you can serve. Make sure, I got this advice years ago from somebody and it's helped me so much, make sure that whoever you're transitioning off, can leave with their dignity. Okay. You want to make it so that, hey, we value you. This may not be the right role for you. But we're going to help you find a role where you really thrive.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then as you use the filters that I shared in this unit of the Leader Circle, I think you'll be able to spot talent. Another thing, and we've hinted this in other units of the Leader Circle, is use your personality profiles. You're going to start to connect the dots. So when I look at my team at the church, my team, these days in my company, we use things like Working Genius, Leading From Your Strengths, I-9 and RightPath. And you'll begin to realize that there are some common characteristics of your top performers. That they have certain characteristics, certain things that are true about them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then what you want to do is like, you know what? People who are, for example, in the RightPath framework that I often use, if people have the three A's, they're high achiever, high activity, and high ambition, they're probably going to do really, really well in our organization. If they're low in two out of three of those areas, they're probably not going to survive very well. And again, that's at the top levels of the organization. You'll start to notice things like that. So I would go over your personality profiles of the existing team members you have, and then look for some of the consistent practices you can find. Anyway, have a lot more coming up in the Leader Circle. Thank you so much for listening to this Backgrounder. Really hope this helps you and your team.