

## Stop Looking for the Unicorn! How to Expand Your Candidate Pool



If you're like most employers, you've been facing a dearth of qualified applicants in recent months. Why? It has to do with the way job seekers have shifted their requirements. Work-life balance, remote work, culture, and compensation are among some of the priorities that have risen to the forefront for most candidates. In addition, many people are looking for a career pivot only to

be thwarted by "unicorn" job requirements. So, the question for association leaders is: Will you start flexing to the job market or continue to miss out on great candidates? It takes foresight, strategy...and yes, being open to people who "don't check every box twice" to become competitive in today's candidate-centric market.

Join us on Friday, February 4, at the **Omni Richmond Hotel** where Shira Lotzar, a seasoned association recruiter, career coach, and executive coach will facilitate a thought-provoking discussion that will encourage you to rethink your hiring approach – and more importantly, your mindset - so you can start expanding your candidate pool and continue moving your association's mission forward.

Register at [vsae.org/calendar](https://vsae.org/calendar)

## Improving Communication—and Culture—From a Distance

There's a familiar line in the business world that says culture is "the way we do things around here." Reading a couple of recent studies around leadership in the pandemic era, I think that line ought to be more specific: Culture is the way we communicate how we do things around here.

In a remote or hybrid environment, the risks of being misunderstood intensify. Zoom calls and email flatten everything to pixels, making it more difficult to discern which issues are truly high priority. That point is made in *State of Association Workplaces Post-Pandemic Survey* (Visit VSAE blog for link to the survey), recently released by Achurch Consulting and Association Trends. Based on the responses of

354 association leaders and decision-makers surveyed last May, the study found that many associations are still uncomfortable when it comes to transitioning from in-person work.

One piece of evidence of that is the survey's finding that 70 percent of respondents say they're concerned that there are now "fewer opportunities for organic communication and relationships." Similarly, 62 percent cited concerns about a "change in workplace culture/morale."

These two issues, the study's authors conclude, are connected. "In the remote environment, communication becomes exponentially

*continued on page 4 >*

### DON'T MISS IT!

#### SEMINAR SERIES WITH LUNCH

**Friday, February 4**  
Omni Richmond Hotel

#### SCHEDULE

9:00 am  
Registration Opens

9:30 - 11:00 am  
Seminar:  
**Stop Looking for the Unicorn!  
How to Expand Your  
Candidate Pool**

11:00 - 11:30 am  
Reception

11:30 am - 12:45 pm  
Luncheon

**REGISTER AT**  
[VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR](https://vsae.org/calendar)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**FRIDAY, MARCH 4**  
**Seminar Series with Lunch**  
Richmond Marriott Downtown

**MARCH 10**  
**NOVA Seminar Series  
with Breakfast**  
DoubleTree by Hilton  
McLean Tysons

**THURSDAY, MARCH 24–  
FRIDAY, MARCH 25**  
**Meeting Planner Summit**  
Renaissance Portsmouth–  
Norfolk Waterfront Hotel

**FRIDAY, APRIL 1**  
**Seminar Series with Breakfast**  
Hilton Richmond Downtown

**VIEW UPCOMING EVENTS AT**  
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Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge

# Leadership reflections



Terry Monroe, MBA, CAE  
VSAE Executive Director

**"We must never become  
too busy sawing to take  
time to sharpen the  
saw."**  
Dr. Stephen Covey

## When Did You Last Sharpen Your Saw?

Happy 2022! With each new year comes...resolutions! Typically, they are of a personal nature – exercise more, lose weight, spend more time with family, etc. However, another way to approach the new year is to commit to sharpening your saw. This concept was popularized in Steven Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

The concept of sharpening the saw is based on this parable:

A woodcutter strained to saw down a tree. A young man who was watching asked "What are you doing?"

"Are you blind?" the woodcutter replied. "I'm cutting down this tree."

The young man was unabashed. "You look exhausted! Take a break. Sharpen your saw."

The woodcutter explained to the young man that he had been sawing for hours and did not have time to take a break.

The young man responded, "If you sharpen the saw, you will cut down the tree much faster."

The woodcutter said "I don't have time to sharpen the saw. Don't you see I'm too busy?"

How many of us have taken time to sharpen our saws in the past two years? The truth is both in our personal and professional lives, we all can benefit from sharpening the saw. Covey identifies four areas of focus - physical, mental, spiritual, and relationships.

### Time for a Tune-Up

The importance of physical maintenance cannot be overstated. Exercising more and eating better are essential to the concept of sharpening your saw. Easy to say, and even easier to put off, this should be another appointment in your



calendar. Dedicate time for this and make it a priority. For me, it's taking long walks with my wife and our dog (the dog on the other hand, would prefer to nap). Getting adequate rest is also important. Grant yourself permission to wind down each evening. Turn off that screen before bedtime (especially if it's work-related). Get a good night's sleep (and repeat each night).

### Mental Well-Being

We all know what stress can do to us. The good news is there are many ways to reduce stress and stay sharp mentally. Meditation, reading, podcasts, movies, the list goes on. Take time to unplug from your screen; at work, if you manage others, give them permission to unplug as well (e.g., no work email on weekends). Be on the lookout for burnout, or "presenteeism," employees coming to work but not fully engaging. Consider ways to create a more flexible work environment – research finds that 75 percent of employees want flexible work hours yet only 45 percent of employers offer them.

### Living With Purpose

Spirituality is personal and can mean different things to different individuals. What fuels my soul and gives me a feeling of purpose (outside of VSAE) is helping others in my community. I do this through Circles Ashland, a program

*continued on page 4 >*

more important, and teams must be far more intentional with how and when they engage with one another,” says the report. “With a myriad of new communication tools and seemingly 24/7 accessibility to remote teammates, it is all too easy to interrupt employees’ work time or invade their personal hours regularly and without awareness.”

Culture is made—or undone—in those interruptions and invasions. And moreover, a lack of intentionality can sow confusion about

respondents say they’ve received training on communications in a remote-work environment, and only 36 percent on “social connectedness and culture.”

The unique circumstances of the pandemic have exacerbated these issues—not only is the work environment different now, so are the particular pressures organizations face in terms of meetings, education, and other ways of serving members. The problem is equally pronounced in the corporate world: A recent

**“In the remote environment, communication becomes exponentially more important, and teams must be far more intentional with how and when they engage with one another.”**

what needs to be prioritized. One valuable recommendation the report makes is to broaden the palette of communication tools that an organization uses. Email can make everything seem important (or not), so using IM tools like Slack for quick exchanges or Microsoft Teams for collaborations can help workers keep communications in the proper context.

But technological tools, of course, aren’t solutions in themselves. According to the report, leaders in general, and middle managers in particular, need better training on how to cultivate relationships with their employees and better convey which messages matter most. “Middle managers are the crux of communication and workflow within a team,” the report states. “In the remote environment, their role becomes even more critical as the culture carriers of an organization.”

Training on those points have been spotty, according to the study: 56 percent of

CEO survey by a leadership consulting firm found that “just 44 percent of CEOs said they were fully aligned with their teams, and even fewer said the same about their boards.”

With that level of disconnect, the need to properly communicate the importance of the work you do—and helping teams do the same—becomes all the more urgent.

What does your organization do to clarify communication remotely?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Mark Athitakis**, a contributing editor for *Associations Now*, has written on nonprofits, the arts, and leadership for a variety of publications. He is a coauthor of *The Dumbest Moments in Business History* and hopes you never qualify for the sequel.

whose mission is to inspire, inform, and equip individuals, families, and the communities in which they live to resolve poverty and thrive. VSAE also is committed to community service; please consider getting involved in the Community Service Committee. Contact Katherine Garner (kgarner@vacb.org) for more information. Find something that fills up your spiritual cup, and commit to carving out time for it.

## Relationships Matter

COVID has made us cherish what we may have taken for granted – our personal and professional connections. Seeing the joy in everyone’s faces as we returned to in-person events last June at the VSAE Annual Conference is a memory I’ll always cherish. For 2022, continue to build your relationships; spend time with friends, listen to them, see how you can help them. Make the effort to increase personal connection with remote employees. For example, video chat (and yes, calling still works!) instead of sending an email.

Living our best lives and being fulfilled both personally and professionally begins by taking care of ourselves. Our loved ones need us, our friends need us, our organizations and members/customers need us. Don’t ignore your own needs and remember that the best way to help others is by helping yourself first. Next time you feel stressed, unproductive, dull, or worn down, take some time to sharpen your saw!

## Call for Content Leaders!

Proposals are now being accepted for these 2022 in-person events:

**AMC Summit** (July)

**CEO & Senior Staff Retreat** (September)

**Monthly Seminars** (September, November)

**NOVA Seminars** (September, December)

**Fall Conference** (October)

Learn more at [vsae.org/content-leader-opportunities](https://vsae.org/content-leader-opportunities)



# How to Hire the Right People: 4 Questions to Ask

When you are growing a business, it is inevitable that you will face the need to hire people to help you handle the increased demands of your day-to-day operations. The availability of information has made it possible for people to hone their skills and grow their knowledge base. For a business owner, this means that you have a large pool of talent from which to find the best people to add to your team. It means that you're more than likely to find someone you can rely on and build a relationship that can be long-term and fulfilling.

Unfortunately, the larger pool of talent also means that you are going to have to exert more effort into finding the right people. You may face the challenge of hiring someone who does not mesh well with your team. You can also end up hiring someone who looks good on paper but cannot meet the requirements of the job. Not only do these challenges endanger the investments you make but it also makes it unnecessarily hard for you to grow your business, especially if you're worried about your team's performance and productivity.

As such, if you're in the market to grow your company, here are four questions you might want to keep in mind when considering job candidates:

## 1 Do they match the skills you're looking for?

Often, the problem with hiring new people to add to your team is that some of them may fall short of the skills they need to complete the tasks you set out for them. There are two things you can do to prevent this outcome.

First, you need to create a job posting that is as detailed and as specific as possible. It has to have information on your expectations, the job's requirements, the qualifications you're looking for, and, of course, the salary.

Second, you might want to invest in skills and knowledge tests, especially if the position you're trying to fill requires technical knowledge. Though implementing such tests may take investments and make the hiring process longer, it'll be worth the pay-off once



you see that your new hire is equipped to handle the job.

## 2 Do they have natural abilities that can benefit you?

Another thing you may want to look for is the natural abilities of your candidates. These abilities refer to a unique skill set that your candidates may have. It may come in the form of the things they love doing, like working with numbers or organizing Excel sheets.

You may also be looking for personality-based natural abilities, such as working with people or interacting with clients.

To make the process of identifying these natural abilities easier, you need to detail them in the job posting. Be as clear and concise as possible, and be sure to set your candidates' expectations properly. You may also want to figure out a more subtle way of identifying their natural abilities—some interviewees are prone to saying they have specific capabilities just to get the job.

## 3 Do their values match with yours?

The third factor you may want to look at is the values and principles of the person. In this regard, you might want to keep your company goals and vision in mind. Make sure that you're looking for people who have the values you're looking for in terms of their drive to achieve a goal, their work ethic, and their personality.

The right person may not look the best on paper but actually have the attitude, skills, and natural abilities that can enable them to grow with you and your company.

Honesty, trustworthiness, and accountability are only some of the values you look for if you want someone reliable. Being agreeable and well-mannered might be perfect if your company interacts with clients regularly. Never forget your company vision and mission when you're scrutinizing your candidates' values.

## 4 Are they willing to learn?

Hiring a person requires more than thinking about how they can help you right now. If you want someone who can grow with you and your company, they must be willing to learn.

Whether in terms of training or in getting the experience they need to take on more responsibilities, make sure that your candidates understand your company goals and are willing to achieve them with you. Gauge if they are people with whom you think you can build a long-term relationship. Finally, try to see if they're a great fit for your team before you hire them.

There's a lot that a new hire can do to help you realize your vision for your company. In the right environment and with a great manager, new talent can push you to be better, to be more productive, and to be more driven.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GoalMakers partners with leading organizations to customize their digital learning program, GoalMakers Master Managers, for their employees and industries.

Learn more at [goalmakers.com](https://goalmakers.com).





## ASSOCIATION BOOKSHELF

What are you reading? If you have a book you'd like to recommend to your association colleagues, let us know! Send the title and author, along with a brief description, to **Lorraine Meade** at [lorraine@vsae.org](mailto:lorraine@vsae.org) and look for them in future newsletters.

### *Let It Go, Just Let It Go!*

by Kent A. Rader

Kent Rader is a clean comedian that we have had at our conference. His book is basically a guide to reducing stress. To quote Michael Johnson, Ph.D., "The lessons contained in Kent Rader's *Let It Go, Just Let It Go!* are simple yet profound. Most importantly, his thoughts, words, and insightful stories point us in the proper direction for solutions...inside."

Julie Moore

VA Assisted Living Association

### *Love is All You Need*

by Jennifer Arnold

*Love is All You Need* is about the revolutionary bond-based approach to educating your dog. This guidebook teaches me how to teach my new 9-week-old Labradoodle, Chellbe, how to think for herself and make good decisions that we both want.

Charles Waddell

Sheraton Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel

### *Thrive; Strategies to Turn Uncertainty into Competitive Advantage*

by Meridith Elliott Powell

Meridith Elliott Powell was the Keynote Speaker at the Independent Insurance Agents of Virginia's 2021 Convention. Her presentation blew everyone away and she couldn't sign copies of her book fast enough! *Thrive* is a road map of how to grow in your business in highly shifting, constantly changing economic times. She shares stories of struggles, overcoming adversity, and how leaders and organizations thrived through it.

Nicole McAllister

Independent Insurance Agents of Virginia

## NOVA Seminar Series with Breakfast

VSAE introduces a fresh style of knowledge sharing and engagement for Northern Virginia's association community, designed to unpack big issues quickly and provide insights and tools that are scalable across associations.

Join us on **Thursday, March 10**, at the **DoubleTree by Hilton McLean Tysons** for a seminar facilitated by **Christina Lewellen, MBA, CAE**, Executive Director of the **Association for Technology Leaders in Independent Schools**.

With so much to cover, this rapid-fire program will move quickly through the most pressing issues facing associations, focusing on quick case studies and lessons learned. This approach makes the most of your valuable time, providing a comprehensive overview. The topics are big, but the discussion will be nimble.

Sponsored by **Lansdowne Resort, Cavalier Resort, and Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau**.

Learn more and register at [vsae.org/calendar](https://vsae.org/calendar)

## THINGS TO DO IN '22!

**Meeting Planner Summit | March 24-25**  
Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel

**Annual Conference | May 1-3**  
Lansdowne Resort

**AMC Summit | July 12**  
Omni Charlottesville

**CEO & Senior Staff Retreat | September 12-13**  
The Cavalier

**Fall Conference & Expo | October 5-6**  
Greater Richmond Convention Center and Hilton Richmond Downtown

**Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction | December 2**  
Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa Short Pump

## INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE

The Spring CAE Exam Study Group begins **Tuesday, February 22** and meets virtually for 9 weeks, ending in time for the exam in May. This is a group facilitated by current CAEs. Candidates who fully participated in a VSAE Study Group have had excellent pass rates. The study group is free for VSAE members, but registration is required.

For more information and to register, visit [vsae.org/cae-information](https://vsae.org/cae-information). If you have any questions, please contact **Terry Monroe**, Executive Director, at [terry@vsae.org](mailto:terry@vsae.org) or (804) 249-2234.

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

For meeting planners, Newport News offers the vitality of a big city alongside the hospitality and charm of a small town. As such, conference attendees can enjoy everything from a world-renowned museum that highlights more than 3,000 years of maritime history to creative dining experiences in chef-owned restaurants.

A stunning new gem in Newport News is the Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center, which recently opened on the campus of Christopher Newport University. The center presents works by nationally and internationally recognized artists. Its spacious lecture hall is an ideal place to host an off-site meeting or breakout session. Additionally, the center's magnificent rotunda topped by cascading glass domes would be perfect for an evening reception.

For some “after-hours” fun, a live music venue, Good Vibes, recently opened in City Center. It can accommodate 1,100 people and includes a VIP Lounge that can hold 50. National touring acts, music festivals, block parties, and stand-up comedy are some of the shows currently being booked, while a massive Bloody Mary bar and brunch buffet featuring live music beckons on the weekends!

For outdoor enthusiasts, Newport News is home to 30+ parks, including Newport News Park – a 7,700-acre oasis that is nine times larger than New York City's Central Park. Park activities include fishing, boating, archery, hiking, biking, golfing, disc golf, and even a ropes course – a great team-building activity for groups.

Energy is circulating in and around the newly established Yard District in the downtown area. With the name paying homage to Newport News Shipyard (as well as invoking a “backyard” feel), the Yard District is emerging as the place for restaurants, libations, and entertainment in the city's downtown

## NEWPORT NEWS TOURISM



area. Look for additional eateries and events like art shows, food truck rallies, live music, and more in 2022.

The city's stylish and modern conference center is located in trendy City Center at Oyster Point and boasts 25,000 square feet of total meeting space for corporate retreats and can accommodate 1,600 guests reception-style. Its elegant grand ballroom, one of the largest in Newport News, offers seating for 880. The conference center, unique meeting venues, hotels, and restaurants are conveniently located within a short drive of the Newport News/Williamsburg Airport and the Amtrak train station.

Virginia is within 500 miles of 55 percent of the entire U.S. population. To learn more about meetings in Newport News, download our Newport News Group Planner at [nnva.gov](http://nnva.gov). For a personal touch, call **Cheryl Morales** at **757-926-1428** or send an email to [moralesca@nnva.gov](mailto:moralesca@nnva.gov).

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## AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH

**Dick Covert**, CAE has stepped down as Executive Director of **Master Pools Guild** and will stay on as a consultant. **Teri Wiltshire**, CMP has been promoted to Executive Director.

**Jenny Toomey** has joined the **VA Agribusiness Council** as Director of Member Services and Events.

**Gabrielle Webster** has been promoted to Executive Director at **McKenna Management, Inc.** and they have moved their offices to WeWork at Navy Yard in Washington, DC.

## RENEW FOR '22!

**PAYMENT MUST BE MADE BY JANUARY 31 TO REMAIN ACTIVE.**

1. Log into **vsae.org** with your member credentials.
2. Click "Mbr Center-My VSAE" on the menu bar, then click on "My Profile."
3. Click "Your Organization"
4. Click "Invoices."
5. Pay online via credit card or print and mail with a check.

### QUESTIONS?

Contact Tami at [tami@vsae.org](mailto:tami@vsae.org).



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