

DON TEBBE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
TRANSITIONS

HOW TO HIRE AND SUPPORT
A NONPROFIT CEO

SECOND EDITION



BoardSource®

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Chief Executive Transitions: How to Hire and Support a Nonprofit CEO was created to help board members hire a new chief executive and manage a successful leadership transition. It covers the three stages of the transition — Prepare; Search and Select; and Onboard and Support — and the six tasks that boards face in guiding their organization through these stages:

1. Understand and guide the transition.
2. Prepare for a leadership change.
3. Ensure leadership continuity.
4. Manage communications.
5. Search for, select, and hire the chief executive.
6. Onboard and support the new CEO.

The book is organized in three parts:

- Part I, Understanding Chief Executive Transitions and the Board’s Six Tasks, provides an overview of the six tasks followed by an in-depth look at each.
- Part II, The Tasks in Action: Building the Transition Plan, includes a step-by-step checklist for planning a CEO transition, with supplemental checklists for special situations.
- Part III, Transition Toolkit, contains a collection of templates and tools that the board and the task force in charge of the process can use or customize to help manage the transition.

The ideas in this book are the result of my own experiences — first, as an executive transition consultant to more than 100 nonprofits since the early 1990s, and second, as cofounder and transition practice leader of a consulting firm that worked with 30 to 40 nonprofits annually on executive search, transition, and succession planning projects. The book also draws on interviews with other transition experts and members of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management’s affinity group for executive succession and leadership continuity. Some of the concepts and ideas in these pages have their origin in the author’s participation in a national learning community of nonprofit advisors convened by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in the early 2000s.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

Chief Executive Transitions was written primarily for boards and board members of nonprofit organizations, including the following:

- **Boards preparing for a future chief executive transition.** The current CEO’s departure date is more than six months away, or there isn’t yet a definitive date.

How this book will help: By offering a view of the road ahead, as well as ideas for strengthening the organization and preparing for a successful transition.

- **Boards facing an imminent chief executive transition.** Either the executive has left or is planning to leave within the next six months.

How this book will help: By providing an immediate guide to leading and managing the executive search and transition.

- **Boards in the midst of an executive transition.** The transition is in process, and the board is about to hire (or has recently hired) a new executive and is looking for ways to help the incoming executive get off to a better start.

How this book will help: By suggesting approaches to ensuring a long, prosperous tenure for the new CEO and building a sound partnership between the executive and the board.

- **Boards that have experienced a failed transition or high level of turnover in chief executives.** A recently hired CEO quit abruptly, or there's been a proverbial revolving door on the executive's office.

How this book will help: By showing the board how to strengthen its hiring and selection process and explore legacy issues affecting executive turnover.

- **Boards facing a challenging executive transition.** Either the previous CEO was terminated or the departure has left the board with serious questions about the organization's circumstances and stability.

How this book will help: By suggesting ways to drive out the uncertainty and get to a place where the next actions are clear.

Regardless of the particular situation that prompted you to pick up this book, it carries a hopeful message for all readers: *While executive transitions pose many risks and challenges, they are also an opportunity to sustain good works and to strengthen organizations so they can increase their mission impact.*

Hiring the chief executive may be the most crucial responsibility of a nonprofit board. This book will help your board carry out this responsibility with confidence and success. Let the journey begin!