

# **Avoiding Nepotism when Hiring an Executive Director**

**By**

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“Jim has been a long-serving member of our association. He is currently on our executive committee. Jim has mentioned that someday he would like the executive director’s job.”

This scenario is more common than you might think in associations and societies. This member could be a business executive, an engineer, scientist, educator, health care professional, or otherwise associated with the industry the organization serves. The question for the search committee or other entity responsible for hiring the executive director, to ask is: “Does this person have the credentials, experience, and background to be an effective executive director (or CEO) of the organization?”

Hiring someone like Jim, who has political clout within the organization but does not have experience as a staff CEO, may not be a wise decision. Associations and societies are hybrid organizations that deliver a combination of mission-driven services to members and, at the same time, conduct a number of for-profit initiatives in order to pay the bills.

Do you have good reason to consider hiring a member who has expressed interest in the executive director’s job? If you must consider this person, we recommend that you engage in a competitive recruiting process. Establish objective criteria with regard to the experience and qualifications necessary for the position. Use a third-party recruiter who understands associations and societies to interview and assess the finalist candidates and make their recommendations.

When a longtime member expresses interest in the executive director position, it can put you and/or the search committee in an awkward position. You don’t want to alienate a dedicated member, but you also must be positive that you recommend the correct candidate for the position. By engaging a third-party recruiter, you can avoid the appearance of nepotism and help avoid hurt feelings.

## **Also of Interest**

For a complete discussion on this topic, Harvey Kane and I have co-authored two articles on this subject.

PM -80, *Hiring a Society/Association CEO Part I; Overview, Tips, and Guidance*, 2020, 8 pages

PM-81, *Hiring a Society/Association CEO Part II, Where to Find Candidates, Search Committees, and Best Candidates*, 2020, 8 pages

To request these articles, contact me via email at [jack@johnbmchugh.com](mailto:jack@johnbmchugh.com) **LinkedIn** [www.linkedin.com/in/john-b-mchugh-21651811/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/john-b-mchugh-21651811/)

## **McHugh- Beacom Executive Recruiting Services**

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- I-1, *McHugh Interviews McHugh on Consulting*, 2013, revised
- I-11, *McHugh Interviews McHugh on Executive Recruiting*, 2011

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