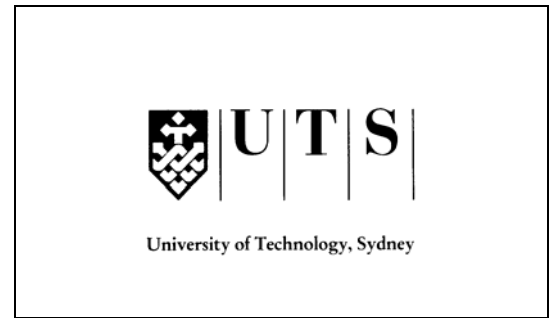


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“WARM HEARTED, GENUINE, COMPASSIONATE SEEKS...”

AN EXPLORATION OF RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING FOR

MANAGERS IN AUSTRALIAN NONPROFIT SOCIAL SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

Recruitment practices play a key role in organisational success (Cable & Judge, 1996). Designing an effective recruitment advertisement is critical in establishing the first link to appropriate potential employees (Backhaus, 2004). A consistent finding is that people join, succeed and stay with organisations where there is a strong alignment between the organisational culture and values and the individual’s values and direction. People ‘seek jobs with employers whose moral values match their own’ (Scott, 2000). It is a key in the perfect match.

Organisational values are particularly important in nonprofit community service organisations where they not only define the core business but also are the organisation’s *raison d’être*. It is where people chose to work and volunteer their time and money to see such values enacted (Jeavons, 1992; Hudson, 1999). It makes sense that the inclusion of organisational values is an important consideration in advertising social service positions. However, this study of advertisements for managers in nonprofit social services from the Australian press over the years 2002 to 2006, reveals more than just a design to recruit the best staff. It reveals raw material for cultural and occupational analyses (Cullen, 2004). It explores who the ads are targeting and how that first link is framed. The results raise interesting and timely questions about employment in social services in post-welfare state environments common in Western countries around the world.

NONPROFIT COMMUNITY SERVICES

Nonprofit community services in Australia include: children's services, supported accommodation, community access and independent living support, child protection and substitute care, youth work, family support, individual and class advocacy and community development (Lyons, 2001). Organisations, commonly known as 'charities', were the first providers of community services. They have a long and established history in the community as services where the purpose and intent are one. Organisations like the Salvation Army, Anglicare, Mission Australia, Red Cross and Save the Children were built on values such as 'the commitment to a just society' and 'the creation of a world that no longer tolerates poverty'. During the era of the welfare state, their values distinguished them from government provision and consequently they were known as Non Government Organisations (NGOs). In a neo liberal, post welfare state context the binary is different. It is now between for profit and nonprofit organisations. Nonetheless, the distinguishing factor remains the same and it is the organisational values; the single purpose of service provision without political, shareholder or profit imperatives. The organisational values are one of the central reasons why people choose to work and volunteer in nonprofit organisations and they are the reason donors give; bequests are left and philanthropic foundations fund. They have defined nongovernment, nonprofit organisations' purpose, work and practices for centuries.

OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

There are some universally accepted differences between the nonprofit sector and the government and business sectors in Western countries. The first major difference is the legal restriction on the distributions of organisation earnings.

Nonprofits have an inherently different 'bottom line' their purpose is not to create wealth for their shareholders. They can generate income from for-profit businesses but they cannot distribute the profits to 'individuals who exercise control over it, such

as members, officers, directors, or trustees.” (Hansmann, 1996). Their primary task or purpose relates directly to their mission. In business the primary task or purpose relates to making a profit (Dartington, 1998). The particular activity a nonprofit engages in is ‘of primary concern, not subservient to an overriding financial bottom line’ (O’Neil & Young, 1988: 3-4).

The second difference is the value expressive (Jeavons, 1992); the selfless service orientated to social change (Drucker, 1990). The mission of a nonprofit embodies and reflects its values (Hudson, 1999). Consequently, Jeavons (1992) claims, they are legitimately held to higher ethical standards than the other two sectors.

The last difference is in the nature and culture of the work environment. The internalised performance standards, professional codes, and collegial work culture is more likely to operate and influence the decision making in a nonprofit than market behaviour or bureaucratic controls (Mirvis, 1992). It is well recognised that nonprofit employees are paid considerably less than their for-profit or government counterparts (Hallock, 2002). The common explanation for the choice to work in the sector is because of the nature of the actual work and the values and goals of the employees. It suggests that a trade-off exists between extrinsic remuneration and the intrinsic satisfaction gained from working in the sector (Onyx, 1998; Preston, 1989).

In respect to the challenges of successfully operating a nonprofit community service organisation in Australia, Lyons (1992) reported that the sixteen Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) he interviewed saw three significant differences in managing a nonprofit organisation. They were:

- the variety of revenue sources,
- the extensive use of volunteers,
- and

- the complexity of governance.

Nine of the CEOs stated categorically that managing a nonprofit organisation was quite different to managing a business or government agency of similar size.

CHANGING POLITICAL CONTEXT

Between 1996 and 2000 the number of nonprofit community services in Australia increased by 10% and the number of for-profits increased by 32% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). These figures reflect a decade of significant change for nonprofit community services with the out sourcing of traditional government services, outcomes based government funding agreements and competitive tendering with for-profit businesses.

In the 1990's, Australia engaged a period of intense reform in government-community sector relations (Painter, 1997). The reforms relate to a post welfare state environment and were driven by ideological beliefs commonly referred to as 'economic rationalism' (Pusey, 1991) and 'neo-liberalism' (Baldwin, 1993). During this time funding agreements between state and community service organisations became contractual. Greater emphasis was placed on quantifiable outputs and increased productivity. Observers of the effects of these changes argue that they have contributed to an increasing lack of 'human-ness' in caring for people and communities (Allen & Potten, 1998; Keating, 1997). Other scholars have emphasised how these policies have created a dichotomy between so-called 'backward looking' organisations with a welfare and welfare state culture and 'forward thinking' organisations with a business orientation and modus operandi.

In addition to the dichotomy in the sector as a result of government funding requirements, outcome-based funding has created conflicts of interest for some

community service providers. The 'welfare to work' employment services field, once a public service, is one such example. Both for-profit and nonprofit organisations successfully tender for the contracts thus creating a quasi 'market-place' in which organisations compete for contracts and 'bid' for individual clients. For profit organisations are regularly accused of unscrupulous strategies for achieving their employment outcomes such as focussing on those clients who are most work-ready, while avoiding the long term unemployed. For nonprofit services such strategies create significant tensions between the social service missions of the organisations and the economic imperatives of outcomes based funding (Frumkin, Andre-Clark, 2000, p151). Moreover, in Australia employment service contracts include a requirement to financially penalise clients, on income support, who do not comply with activity tests (Zigarus, 2003). Reducing the income of people already living below the poverty line clearly challenges social service missions that espouse the eradication of poverty and the achievement of a compassionate and just society (Eardley, Abello & MacDonald, 2001).

CHANGING EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT

In this new funding context, some Australian organisations made public statements defining themselves in corporate terms and alluding to significant cultural change.

For example a recruitment campaign for a CEO of a large disability service commenced its advertisement with ...

“Not-for-profit' organisations have changed – no longer are they staffed by volunteers or seen as second rate positions.’

A Sydney Morning Herald (June 2002) article described senior executive movement between the sectors emphasising an increasing likeness between the nonprofit sector and for-profit business. The Director of a leading centre for philanthropy and nonprofit studies was quoted as saying,

'charities that did not recruit top business managers were a recipe for disaster' (Brisbane Courier Mail, 2002)

Such messages are also characteristic of recent academic literature. Stein (2002, p.1-3), for example has argued that transition to the nonprofit sector could provide welcome respite from the ever-present threat of redundancy in the business sector. These calls for cross sectoral career paths echo the literature on the 'boundaryless career' (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) that describes the recent phenomena of career paths that are not bounded within specific organisations but grow through competency development as a result of job mobility between organisations and in some cases industries.

RECRUITMENT AS A LENS FOR VIEWING THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

In such a challenging time of change it is reasonable to assume that management and leadership is paramount. The point of designing a recruitment campaign for a manager and leader is a common point of organisational reflection when identity is reviewed and needs are determined. It makes it a useful lens through which the impact of current circumstances can be explored.

The critical role that effective recruitment practices play in organisational success and leadership has received considerable attention over the years (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1989, Wanous 1992). A consistent finding is that people join, succeed and stay with organisations where there is a strong alignment between the organisational culture and values and the individual's values and direction. People 'seek jobs with employers whose moral values match their own' (Scott, 2000, p.425). As stated in the introduction, organisational values are particularly important in nonprofit community service organisations where they not only define the core

business but also are the organisation's raison d'être. Moreover, a clear alignment between organisational mission and values and an organisation's strategic direction and activities is essential to an organisation's success and essential for a healthy work environment (Vogelsang, 1998). Within an organisation it is the organisation's leaders that are significant in forging the mission and values within and through out the organisation's activities (Hesselbein, 2005).

A crucial step in finding the right person to lead within an organisation is designing an effective recruitment advertisement (Backhaus, 2004). But Job ads are not just a statement about the ideal person required for a particular position; they are also 'public documents that provide raw material for cultural and occupational analyses' Cullen (2004, p.282 - 283).

Given these findings and the 'values expressive' nature of nonprofit community services, it would seem logical for organisations to strive to appoint leaders whose values align with their own and for that to be paramount in recruitment campaigns. Furthermore, given the distinctly different management challenges in nonprofits such as revenue sources, volunteers and governance; it would seem logical that at minimum, knowledge of nonprofits would be important in applicants and consequently requested in advertisements. However the previously mentioned evidence in the changing employment context suggests that this may not be the case. For these reasons, this study specifically asks:

1. How do the community service industries in the nonprofit sector image themselves through their recruitment advertisements?
2. What are the organisational priorities for employment?
3. Are there any implications for employees pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector?

4. Are there operational implications for community service industries in the sector?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology in this study draws on the two previous studies of recruitment advertisements, Backhaus (2004) and Cullen (2004). It analysed the content of 512 recruitment advertisements for managers in nonprofit sector community service organisation. They were randomly selected from The Sydney Morning Herald, the leading newspaper in New South Wales over a five-year period (2002 to 2006). The frequencies of variables identified in the content analysis are compared.

To identify organisational core purpose or mission and values, Vogelsang's (1998) definitions were used. The mission is...

"...the primary and sustaining reason why an organization exists. It is an agency's particular and unique niche or place. A Core Purpose is not an agency's core businesses or services but the underlying reason for those services. If an agency stopped doing this, it would no longer be what it is."

Core values are...

"...principles, tenets, and standards that provide a basis for action and a foundation for decision making. Core Values become mental habits that influence how people act toward each other, clients, the public, and external stakeholders. Core Values rarely change; activities and services often change to be more in line with Core Values."

Other variables identified were: industry (e.g. aged care, housing, family services); location (capital, regional or country); position level; qualifications and experience.

RESULTS

For the purposes of this study the data used is descriptive. Frequency data is represented in percentages. There were 512 advertisements included in the sample.

Service Type	% of 512
Aged Care	11
Disability	18
Substitute Care	1
Housing	4
Children's Services	7
Youth	9
Family Services	6
Counselling	2
Employment	8
Health	17
Multifunctional	12
Not Stated	5
<i>Religious</i>	32

Table 1
Distribution of advertisements by service type

One hundred and sixty six services were provided by religious organisations. The services are only listed once so, for example, if a service offered accommodation to people with a disability it is listed as a disability service not an accommodation service. Local Council, i.e. local government services are not included, which excluded many childcare, and aged care services.

Year published	02	03	04	05	06
% 512	18	20	20	21	21
Regional location of service	Capital	Regional	Country		
% 512	81	16	3		

Table 2

Distribution of advertisements by location and year of publication

The geographical distribution of the location of the services advertising reflects the general distribution of services between capital, regional and country regions (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

Position level	CEO	Report to CEO	Divisional Manager	Team Leader
% of 512	11	20	48	21

Table 3

Distribution of advertisements by position level

The designation of the positions was determined by title, description, reporting and supervision requirements.

% of 512	Qualifications	Experience
CEO		4
Sector		40
Industry	27	50
Business	16	50
Management	8	79
Relevant	26	
None	27	
Essential	36	
Desirable	16	

Table 4

Distribution of advertisements by qualifications and experience

Sixteen advertisements requested more than one type of qualification. However the total number of advertisements that required essential and/or desirable qualifications was only 217. Forty advertisements did not specify any required experience and 369 advertisements required more than one type of experience. Sector experience referred to the nonprofit sector and industry experience referred to the specific service type for example, disability, aged care, and housing.

		CEO % of 55	Reporting to the CEO % of 104	Divisional Manager % of 247	Team Leader % of 106
Qualifications	industry	28	20	24	35
	business	14	18	13	0
	management	6	13	8	2
	relevant	32	27	23	27
	none	20	22	21	36
Experience	sector	54	34	40	39
	industry	40	52	48	43
	business	77	80	42	15
	management	94	90	80	58
	CEO	40			

Table 5

Qualifications and experience requested by position levels.

Table 5 only refers to the position levels because there was no notable difference between the qualifications and experience required for locations or service type.

Mission/Core Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working to assist young people develop the qualities to be responsible citizens and leaders in the community • We can provide hope, dignity and a future to those affected by unemployment • Empowering members so that they can achieve a quality of life comparable with that of their able-bodied peers • Brightening the lives of seriously ill and hospitalised children and their families throughout Australia

Table 6

Examples of nonprofit mission statements/core purposes from the advertisements

Core Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values include integrity, justice, compassion, respect accountability, working together and commitment • Commitment to encouraging community involvement in the planning and development of programs and services • Commitment to working within a feminist framework • Welcoming enabling and affirming aged care • Holistic care within a people centered care model • Consumer participation • Committed to cultural diversity • Build community capacity in response to homophobia • Provide quality and loving care for aged and disabled people in the name of Jesus

Table 7

Examples of core values from the advertisements

% of 512	Explicit	Implied	Not Stated	Essential	Desirable
Mission	25	16	59		
Values	15	16	69	18	4

Table 8

Frequency of mission and values included in advertisements

Advertisements that explicitly stated the organisation’s mission and/or core values did so in the style identified in Tables 6 and 7. Implied mission and core values were referred to but not described. For example:

- A readiness to work with in the organisation’s value statement will be highly regarded.
- Give direction and leadership towards the achievements of the organisation’s philosophy, mission and strategy.

There was no notable difference in representation of mission and values for position level, location or service type.

Some organisations used recruitment companies; however there was no notable difference between the content of these advertisements and those placed by organisations directly.

DISCUSSION

Essentially this study is looking at nonprofit community service organisations and how their recruitment advertisements reflect what is important to the sector at the moment in this time of change. It assumes that organisations will design advertisements themselves or with a recruitment company, that will attract their ideal candidate. In this respect it is an interesting lens through which to view the demands on the sector and the way organisations are attempting to meet those demands through employment. The results of this study reflect a nonprofit industry that is sending mixed messages about what it wants in managers and what it values in skills, knowledge and attitudes. These messages are unpacked and viewed through the research questions.

How do the community service industries in the nonprofit sector image themselves through their recruitment advertisements?

The literature suggests that given the distinct operational characteristics of the sector; the importance of values alignment between employees and organisations for productive employment; and the key role of leadership in management positions; the advertisement would at least include the mission/purpose of the organisation and the organisational values. This is not the case. Only a total 41% of the advertisements referred to an organisational mission and only 25% stated it explicitly. Only 31% of the advertisements referred to organisational values; half stated them explicitly and

only 18 % saw values alignment as essential. Moreover only a quarter of the advertisements explicitly stated the core purpose of the organisation and 59 % did not refer to it at all. An explanation could be uninformed and/or inexperienced advertising. However a substantial proportion of organisations used recruitment companies and there was no notable difference between the content of these advertisements and those placed by organisations directly.

It is reasonable to conclude from these results that nonprofit community services are actively choosing not to image themselves as purposeful, values driven organisations. Furthermore, it is reasonable to conclude that there is not a consistent alternative image that is being projected either. Moreover, taken as a whole, the advertisements reflect a sector that appears to be confused about its identity and image.

What are the organisational priorities for employment?

Just over a quarter of the advertisements required industry qualifications and just over a third stated that qualifications, irrespective, were essential. Sixteen percent specifically required business qualifications. An explanation for business qualifications could be that some nonprofit community service organisations operate for profit businesses as a way of mobilising resources. Nonetheless it is not their core purpose. Only 8% requested management qualifications, even though all positions were management positions.

More revealing is the experience requested. Management experience was the most sought after, which is understandable given that all position involved management responsibilities. At an aggregated level business experience was slightly more desirable than industry experience or sector experience. At a disaggregated level, business experience was required by some advertisements for all four position

levels. The request for business experience was greater than nonprofit sector experience for CEO positions, positions reporting to the CEO and divisional managers. However, at the senior levels of management 77% of the advertisements for CEOs and 80% of positions reporting to the CEO requested business experience; as opposed to 54 % and 34% of the positions requesting nonprofit sector experience respectively.

It is clear that management experience is the overriding priority for management positions in nonprofit community services irrespective of the position level. The literature suggests that managing a nonprofit organisation is quite different to managing a business of similar size yet at the senior levels of management the sector appears to be prioritising business experience over nonprofit experience.

Are there any implications for employees pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector?

What this means in real terms for employees pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector is unclear. Actual appointments would be a better guide. Nonetheless the advertisements do give some career indications for those aspiring to be the 'ideal' candidate. Values alignment is less important than the literature would suggest. In terms of specific qualifications, industry qualifications are still preferred. Experience is the issue. Even at the lowest management level, team leader, over half the advertisements required management experience. It begs the question where does one get the experience in the first place? It appears that the sector is favouring buying in the experience rather than growing its own. Moreover, as previously mentioned, at the senior management levels, business experience was required for over three quarters of the positions. This would suggest that employees in the nonprofit sector aspiring to senior management positions need to gain some experience in business. It echoes the theory of the 'boundaryless career'. However

this study suggests that not only does the individual have take responsibility for their own career development and actively look for opportunities to develop competencies across organisations and industries but, it is almost essential, to also look across sectors.

Are there operational implications for community service industries in the sector?

The priority that the nonprofit sector is placing on business experience probably reflects the tensions and pressures the sector is experiencing to be economically successful in a competitive, outcomes driven climate of uncertain funding.

Nonetheless, with little more than half the ads requiring sector experience for CEOs and substantially less than half for the other levels of management, it is difficult not to conclude that the sector devalues its own work experience. Given the distinct operational characteristics and specific management challenges of the nonprofit sector this is concerning. If these organisations were to employ the 'ideal' applicant that they are seeking, it is reasonable to assume that at the senior management levels there would be a considerable loss of nonprofit experience and expertise.

The very binaries through which the sector has been distinguished, government nongovernment, for profit nonprofit, reflect the importance of an alternative and choice in community service provision; important for service users, employees, volunteers and donors who place purpose and values at a premium. Emulating the business alternative may have short term benefits for the individual organisation but as a whole the sector and the community will be the poorer for it. Given the importance that the literature places on values and the low priority given to values in the advertisements, perhaps it is time for the sector to return to its roots and regroup to face the challenges of the 'neo-liberal' market place.

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