



CLIENT SUCCESSES

SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY, PENNSYLVANIA DIVISION

INDUSTRY:
NON-PROFIT

ABOUT THE AMERICAN
CANCER SOCIETY,
PENNSYLVANIA
DIVISION:

- > One of 13 geographic divisions of the American Cancer Society.
- > Headquarters in Hershey, Pennsylvania.
- > The Division employs nearly 350 people.

A CHALLENGING POSITION SUPPORTING A GREAT CAUSE

For nearly a century, the American Cancer Society has fought to save lives by helping people stay well and get well, by finding cures for cancer, and by fighting back against the disease. With close to 350 employees augmented by thousands of volunteers, the Pennsylvania Division of the American Cancer Society is one of the strongest and most active of the Society's 13 divisions.

As a non-profit organization, fundraising is vital to the Society's efforts. To that end, a key position within the Pennsylvania Division is that of Community Income Development Specialist (CIDS). With 70 employees holding this title, the position represents 20 percent of the Division's workforce.

"We have cancer patients suffering every day, and we want to get the best talent in that fight," says Michelle Ricks, director of employee performance and development.

While the Division is a non-profit, the CIDS

position is, in many ways, akin to a sales role with significant management responsibilities. The job entails raising funds by recruiting businesses to promote employee contribution campaigns; overseeing local events such as the organization's signature Relay for Life fundraiser, golf outings, and galas; and managing a large volunteer base that assists with myriad tasks, from staffing events to administrative support. To be effective in this challenging position, a CIDS must be able to lead effectively, build rapport, gain trust, and delegate to win.

Compounding the pressure is the fact that the individuals hired as CIDSs are often recent college graduates, with minimal experience managing events or people. Nonetheless, they are required to oversee hundreds of volunteers, many of whom are older and have extensive experience with the organization and its activities.

"Working for a volunteer-based organization provides many excellent opportunities to build relationships. There are volunteers who consistently exceed expectations and truly make my life easier by simply being proactive and easy to work with," says Liz Kauffman, a CIDS in the Division's Central Region. "In a perfect world, every volunteer relationship would follow this model, however, this is not a perfect world and unfortunately there are some difficult situations to address."

As the expectations for the position are high, turnover has been high as well. While the benchmark annual turnover rate for sales positions is more than 25 percent, in 2006 the rate for the CIDS position was 40 percent.

Feedback obtained from exit interviews revealed that the turnover issue could be traced, in large part, to the hiring process. The Division was not selecting the candidates who were the best fit with the CIDS position, so those individuals who were hired were unlikely to be successful and engaged in the job. Another finding of the exit interviews was that the specialists were not benefiting from appropriate training and other developmental support during the critical first 12 months on the job.

To address these issues, the Division recognized that it needed to do a better job of hiring the right people for the CIDS position, setting them up to succeed, and ensuring they viewed their time in the job as a positive experience.

HIRING AND ON-BOARDING FOR SUCCESS

To identify the criteria that needed to be used to hire CIDS and also what they needed to know and do to be effective, the Division brought together its leaders and others familiar with the demands of the job to conduct a job analysis using DDI's *Success ProfilesSM Card Sort*. The *Success ProfilesSM Card Sort* tool simplifies the analysis and description of a job in light of its relationship to overall organizational goals. The tool, which was used to identify the critical competencies for all positions within the Division, also helps articulate what's specifically required for a job by using structured language with clear links to specific competencies.

"I've been with the American Cancer Society for over 10 years," says Brant Woodward, vice president of income development. "In those years I've recognized that specialists do need specific skills to be successful. The Card Sort allowed for an easy process of mapping out the necessary competencies."

With the job competencies clearly identified and linked to organizational goals, the Division implemented DDI's *Targeted Selection[®]* behavioral interviewing system, which provides hiring managers with a process for gathering job-relevant data from candidates and for using this data to make highly accurate hiring decisions. *Targeted Selection[®]* also trains interviewers in the skills needed to make a positive impression on candidates.

While the new hiring approach enabled the Division to better hire those individuals who are a good fit for the CIDS job and the American Cancer Society's organizational culture, a comprehensive on-boarding program was implemented to get new hires up to speed quickly and give them a strong foundation of skills and useful information.

Through this on-boarding process, a newly hired CIDS spends one week learning about the American Cancer Society and the Pennsylvania Division and the following week shadowing an incumbent CIDS. Then, over a five-week period, each new CIDS completes a curriculum of courses from DDI's *Interaction Management[®]: Exceptional Leaders . . . Extraordinary Results[®] (IM: EX[®])* leadership development system and *Techniques for a High-Performance Workforce[®]* workforce development system. These courses include Influencing Others, Working as a Team, Feedback Fundamentals, Working Through Conflict, and Making Meetings Work.

Danielle Lavetan, a CIDS who completed the curriculum, found the courses to be valuable: “All of the DDI courses have been helpful to me in my work. I’ve learned how to keep myself and my committees organized with agendas, state objectives and clear goals of what we are trying to accomplish, and make sure everyone has a role on the committee.”

From his viewpoint, Steve Massini, a 25-year society volunteer is also seeing the impact of the Division’s revised hiring and training practices. “The quality of staff is remarkably improved,” he says.

STRENGTHENING THE EMPLOYEE-MANAGER RELATIONSHIP

The improved selection approach and the on-boarding program represented huge steps forward in making the CIDSs more effective and successful. But the Division realized it needed to take additional steps to further bolster the organization’s culture.

One important step was developing the skills of the CIDSs’ managers, so that they could “keep up with,” and better support, the development their teams were receiving. The Division designed a manager development program, a four-day academy which featured a curriculum of DDI *IM: EX*® courses that target the skills leaders need to lead and develop their teams. These courses included Essentials of Leadership, Coaching for Success, Coaching for Improvement, and Getting Started as a New Leader.

Also, to ensure that the CIDSs’ job performance was evaluated using the same criteria used to hire them, the Division linked the competencies to its performance management system.

SEEING AN IMPACT

Having implemented integrated selection, on-boarding, leadership development, and performance management initiatives using a single competency library, today the Division has become a true competency-based organization. What’s more, it accomplished this feat by implementing the full slate of initiatives in just two years.

“The strategic and cultural impact of these competency-based systems is tremendous compared to where we were in 2006,” says David Burns, executive vice president for HR and learning and development, citing the importance of strong senior management support to the results the Division has realized.

While it used to take two to three years for a CIDS to become acclimated to the position, it now takes just one year. In fact, newly hired CIDSs are raising funds at a level similar to those hired using the old selection process and who have been in the job for five years. What’s more, surveys of volunteers reveal that current CIDSs are proficient in providing positive feedback. And, in one of the most important areas of improvement, the turnover rate for the CIDS position plummeted from 40 percent to just 13 percent by the end of 2009.

As for the impact of training on the Division’s leaders, a measure of leadership behavior change showed significant improvement in how frequently leaders indicated they often or almost always displayed key leadership behaviors. Observers of these leaders (subordinates, peers, and supervisors) also reported that the leaders improved in their use of the key behaviors.

Even more important, the Division has seen an increase in its rankings in the Best Place to Work Survey, recently finishing 18th on a list of 50 Pennsylvania employers.

“In the end, it’s about having ‘A players’ in ‘A positions,’” says Frank McGrady, the Division’s chief operating officer. “That will allow us to continue to save lives, while fulfilling theirs.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

- > Annual turnover reduced from 40 percent to 13 percent within three years.
- > Newly hired CIDs raising funds at a level similar to those with five years’ experience.
- > Division rose to 18th place in Pennsylvania Best Place to Work rankings.
- > Surveys of Division volunteers reveal that CIDs have become proficient in providing positive feedback.
- > Leaders have shown significant improvement in the frequency of displaying key leadership behaviors.

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