

# Asking Accordant

## Filling the Gaps and Uncertainty in Team Membership



The Great Resignation is just one of the recent phenomena impacting philanthropy teams and beyond. While health organizations are doing their best to [retain leaders](#) and team members, there continues to be struggles in team gaps and open positions. Because these challenges repeatedly surface in leadership conversations, several of our Accordant team of experts address some strategies for pushing through tough employment times.



As people leave organizations and leaders struggle to replace employees or reassess positions, what are some strategies to help fill the gaps, onboard new hires and help keep the remaining team members from burning out?

## ANSWERS:



**[Andrew Watt, FCIOF](#)** | Accordant Senior Principal

Don't stick with boring, routine structure and the ways things may have been before the pandemic. Establishing teamwork is a priority. Make sure there's a plan for covering all absences before they happen (or now if you haven't already). Whether people leave due to new opportunities, illness, short-term sabbaticals or dismissal, leaders must equally disperse responsibilities while personally stepping up to help as well. Building strong teams and ensuring all involved are familiar with the work of each team member and their roles helps to ensure people know how to step in should it be needed. Use time during team meetings for one team member spotlight to review roles. Also, make sure people are compensated for additional efforts as they cover for absent colleagues and are recognized for efforts above and beyond, while also ensuring additional responsibilities don't become the norm.



[Heather Wiley Starankovic, CAP®, CFRE](#) | Accordant Principal Consultant

Make sure your strategy stays front and center. With each change, implement a strategic exercise to determine what will continue, what will be delayed, what can be done differently and what can be stopped completely. Focus on strategy should involve your entire team in planning, problem solving and trust building to ensure the team knows you have their backs during unexpected changes regarding staffing and turnover. Use these times of transition as a great opportunity to enhance and elevate program initiatives, strategies and objectives for the most efficiency, effectiveness and engagement with donors. Reassure donors that the mission continues despite staffing changes.



[Michelle Rovang](#) | Accordant Principal Consultant

Turnover is expected, especially during unprecedented events and times. As people leave organizations, there is an opportunity to assess and determine team needs moving forward. While assessing for future plans, there is a risk in forgetting to protect remaining team members. Recognize that flexible working arrangements attract and secure quality candidates in a competitive market, as well as retain some of the best employees. Likewise, rather than viewing current employees in their current roles, stretch your perspective and their skill sets to create career growth experiences, especially with Millennials and Gen Z employees who are looking for ways to grow and progress. In a [recent poll by Monster](#), 80% of respondents do not believe their current employer offers growth opportunities. Best practices in employee development reflect individualized plans that are specific, timely and relevant. Younger and diverse employees reflect a much greater likelihood of success and retention when paired with peers and mentors and bolstered with necessary resources. While there may be a tendency to view this as a human resources role, leaders and middle managers play a pivotal role in supporting this type of development. During the times of employee “stretching” and added responsibilities, it will be even more vital to develop and maintain [a culture of gratitude](#). Everyone can serve as a philanthropy voice when they exude gratitude for the health care organization. One of the easiest ways to keep your philanthropy leaders and team members is to [highlight and promote organizational values](#) to develop more organizational advocates.



[Erin Stitzel, FAHP, CFRE](#) | Accordant Principal Consultant

In health care philanthropy, being able to work closely with key internal allies like physicians, C-Suite leaders, clinicians, nursing leaders, patient experience specialists and service line leaders is essential to help strengthen the process to identify, cultivate, solicit and steward donors. With the pandemic forcing most health care philanthropy colleagues to work from home, it became nearly impossible for colleagues to navigate within their hospitals and clinical care settings to build and strengthen relationships with key allies. Innovative organizations are progressively working through this and promoting their strategies as they interview prospective team members. As new colleagues are hired within organizations, it is essential that health care leaders ensure a strong onboarding process to help new members become familiar with navigating their hospitals and clinical care settings, whether onsite or from remote locations. New colleagues should get a complete tour of the hospital and other key clinical care settings

in which they will be collaborating. Leaders should provide a checklist of key internal allies the new colleagues should meet soon after their hiring and provide introductions to cultivate and build these important internal ally relationships. Leaders and colleagues must prioritize onsite time within the four walls of the hospital, service lines and assigned clinical areas of focus. It's vital for team members to attend huddles, department meetings, Daisy Award presentations or to round with C-Suite and nursing leaders. These types of interactions between the philanthropy team and the hospital's leadership, clinicians and front-line staff will not only enable new philanthropy team members to gain the confidence and skills needed to build robust partnerships with internal allies but also help retain those who feel valued and prepared.



**[Jessica Carswell, CFRE](#)** | Accordant Senior Consultant

Be honest with your team about the current situation and the likely burden. Determine what can wait and what can truly stop until the staffing is back in place. It may be that some initiatives are deemed unnecessary and can be eliminated to alleviate some added responsibilities. When you lose a key player, acknowledge it and talk with team members about how this impacts their work before simply redistributing the workload. Ask them for their input and suggestions. There may be more gaps than you realize or opportunities for individuals to step up. Team members are also great resources for referrals to fill open positions.



What health care philanthropy, leadership and community health advancement questions do you have for Accordant? Please email us [HERE](#).