



SONY



my  
first

~~staff member~~



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# My first staff member

## Key issues

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# Background

- Smaller CEE-members indicated that they wanted to hire a first staff member but they lack experience in personnel management (Workshop CEE-meeting 2023 in Tbilisi).
- The CEE-hub has 36 affiliate members: 14 with staff in place and 22 without.
- Early 2024 nine affiliates with staff were interviewed to learn from their early experiences with paid staff.

# Part I - Dilemma's

- Stress or strategy
- Selection of candidates
- Onboarding a first paid staff member
- Position of the senior staff member
- How to build trust

*(Handout 1)*



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# Stress or strategy

Hiring a person because of stress and burnout of board members

or

Because your strategic plan indicated a mismatch between ambition and capacity

## **Quotes**

- *An active but overworked board was the reason to hire the first two part-time employees*
- *Discussion and writing of the first Strategic plan [let to the] decision to go for a small staff in a couple of years.*

# Selecting candidates

Editing Wikipedia is a necessary skill

or

Experience with Free Knowledge is the essential requisite

## **Quotes**

- *Discussions led to an Initial board decision to attract an active editor with affinity to offline work.*
- *Decision to hire an 'outsider'. We were fully aware that this was the first step in creating a new organizational entity (paid staff) and felt it best not to appoint an experienced volunteer.*

# Onboarding a first paid staff member

Tasks

or

Responsibilities

## **Quotes**

- *All tasks and responsibilities remained with the board.*
- *Micromanagement gradually disappeared in 2014 - 2019 as the staff took over responsibility for the smooth running of projects.*
- *It was difficult for some board members to adapt to their new role. It took time and guidance from the chairperson to make board members aware that their role had changed.*
- *Job descriptions for staff members have been in use from the beginning. There are no job descriptions for individual board positions.*

# Position of the senior staff member

Super secretary of the board

or

Team leader of staff

## **Quotes**

- *There was not one board member with HRM in his portfolio. An employee's performance and rewards of a staff member were discussed with his 'counterpart' on the board. Both small and large HRM decisions were ultimately made in a board meeting.*
- *We should have hired the ED sooner.*
- *Basically, the ED at the beginning was just an overpaid secretary, nor was there really much of a staff to manage.*
- *The chair of the board also acts as ED*



# How to build trust

How to build trustful relations between board, staff and community:

On a personal level

or

On an organizational level, via planning, procedures and reporting

*(Line-up, choose position)*

# Part II Specific issues

- Dismissal
- Checklist



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# Dismissal

Several affiliates reported that they had to dismiss their first member after one year in service

- mismatch with the community
- changing perspective on the role of staff

*(Handout 2)*

## **Quotes**

- *The employment contracts with two staff members were terminated after about a year because they did not seem to be a good fit for the work and the community.*
- *We waited too long with the dismissal of the first employee. We needed change, but because of the personal relation we were not bold enough to proceed.*

# Checklist

- What needs to be done when you want to hire your first employee?
- Examples: search, finances, employment contract, insurance, workplace, etc.
- What more can you name? Let's make a checklist together.

*(Handout 3)*

## Observations

- The decision to hire a first staff member is very much influenced by the stress level of board members
- A transformation in the deployment of staff: from 'helping the board' to 'helping the volunteers'
- Informal personal communication is the preferred way of dealing with difficulties and barriers
- A first staff member ends his or her career with the affiliate in a year

## Observations

- On average, the number of employees per affiliate grew from 1 to 5,3 in 9 years and 4 months.
- A team leader position was created only after negative experiences with HRM-issues
- Paid staff ensures continuity and extension of the external network
- Hiring the first staff member increases the workload of the board, while the benefits only become noticeable after some time

# Thank you !



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- Please share some feedback (subjects, timing, format)
- For personal contact see: [User:Grijz - Meta](#)
- For more support on governance issues: [Board Member Support - Meta](#)

## Quotes from the interviews ++

### ***Pros after hiring***

- *Stability and continuity. One-off activities transformed into action programs.*
- *Life became much easier and less stressful for board members. They feel they can rely on their staff.*
- *It becomes easier to comply with WMF demands.*
- *It gave a boost to content development with external parties. Several memorandums of understanding were signed off with official national organizations.*
- *There are now twice as many WP-articles published per year.*



## Quotes from the interviews -/-

### **Cons after hiring**

- *Onboarding took more effort than expected. It is difficult to manage professional development of staff if you are a small organization with just 1-3 employees.*
- *The work is less “community driven”. It is more difficult for the board to give volunteers a proper role in setting up new projects or other initiatives.*
- *It was difficult for some board members to adapt to their new role.*
- *Wikipedians are mostly unsuitable for hiring, or for the ones who might be suitable, already have better-paying jobs. So onboarding increases board responsibilities significantly.*