



## ***A Board Chair Perspective on Executive Transition: Chatting with Shané Harris, Former Board Chair, Newark Trust for Education***

Shané and the NTE Board partnered with Support Center in 2015 – 2016 to utilize a comprehensive Executive Search and Transition Management (ESTM) approach to conduct the search for the next CEO for Newark Trust for Education and to manage the transition dynamics. Support Center recently sat down with Shané to get her take on the experience and learning NTE had utilizing a full-phased approach to search and transition management. Here's what Shané had to say...

**Support Center (SC):** *What made you and your Board choose to use a multi-phased approach over a traditional executive search for the Newark Trust for Education?*

**Shané Harris (SH):** First off, trust is an important component of a search process. We had an existing relationship with Support Center and we trusted the organization. We appreciated that the full executive transition process tapped into multiple capacities of both Support Center and the Newark Trust for Education and focused on clarity about where our organization is in the universe of nonprofits in our community and region. The approach offered a “full service” process that went beyond just “search”.

**SC:** *Support Center utilizes a multi-step process that we call Executive Search and Transition Management (ESTM). This includes an organizational review, an inclusive and expansive recruitment phase, and onboarding for a newly hired executive director. How was this process different from a search firm in facilitating your executive search?*

**SH:** The multi-phased approach offered by Support Center was more comprehensive - looking at how we could maximize the opportunity in a search to benefit the entire organization as opposed to just fulfilling the need to secure a new CEO. The Board understood that the process would make the most of the opportunities available during a search (and minimize the risks) and the transition committee (as opposed to a search committee) expanded the way we thought about the process.

**SC:** *What surprised you about your experience with the executive transition process?*

**SH:** *I think nonprofits often think about finding their next CEO as a “search only” process. But the Support Center team managing the process asks an organization to be ready to consider all things about the transition. Most nonprofit organizations are not ready for leadership transition. When we started the work with Support Center, I thought, “Oh wow! We haven’t thought about all the things that need attention during this change!”*



*Shané Harris is the Vice President of Social Responsibility and Partnerships, at Prudential Financial and President of the Prudential Foundation. Shané formerly served as the chairperson of The Newark Trust for Education (NTE).*

*The Support Center transition team helped us understand the value of having a professional, trained interim executive. The interim added an element of “emotional intelligence” that we really needed for the search. Support Center helped us understand what the job of an interim is during a transition and what the job of the interim is not. They also spent the time to help us be clear on how you find the “right” next leader and how you go about finding and assessing the talent your organization needs.*

**SC: *What did you value most about Support Center’s multi-step process?***

*SH: I really appreciated the first phase assessment and how the transition consulting team was able to provide an objective view of our organization’s strengths and weaknesses. And the interim executive added an element of being a “neutral partner” – invested in the process but with no desire to have the long-term ongoing CEO job. The interim was neutral, not biased...a critical friend to the Board and staff and a trusted facilitator.*

*Also, the Support Center team provided some reality checks for the Board – helping us identify and understand our gaps, forcing us to take a hard look at our strategic plan and where we really wanted the organization to be going. We discovered how valuable it was to spend the time to assess and plan up front. If we didn’t spend this “up front” time, we would have paid for it on the back end – running the risk of hiring a poor match for our vision, goals, and needs.*

**SC: *What makes the Support Center Executive Search and Transition Management service unique?***

*SH: The transition consulting team brings an intimate understanding of the nonprofit sector; an in-depth understanding of the needs of nonprofit organizations. And they are comfortable with NOT having a linear path. The Support Center team understood and respected the complexities we needed to be mindful of in this process. They also understood the importance of stakeholder engagement in the process and helped us figure out how to maximize that engagement.*