

## Looking for leaders? Look homeward first

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Government bodies and quasi-government bodies often make the mistake of conducting a “national search” after a top official resigns or is dismissed.

Scouring the country for the right executive may be a smart move for some organizations, but publicly launching a national search should only take place after local candidates are thoroughly vetted and deemed unqualified for the job.

Failure to evaluate and consider local talent first sends a message to our community — and the nation — that Miami lacks homegrown leaders, when the opposite is true. It also discourages our best and brightest from remaining in South Florida, perpetuating the ‘brain drain’ that has long plagued our region.

The latest culprit is The Beacon Council, which recently initiated a national search to find their former CEO’s replacement. The Beacon Council’s mission is to stimulate economic development in Miami-Dade County by luring new companies and helping existing companies grow.

Let’s face it: Miami-Dade County can be a complex place to conduct business. It’s difficult to imagine that a candidate from outside our region will prove more qualified than someone local.

The learning curve confronting a new CEO from Idaho or Indiana will be steep. Who is going to teach that person about the ins and outs of Miami — the cultural sensitivities, the right organizations with which to partner, the nuances of our language makeup, idiosyncrasies of the political landscape?

You need not look far for examples of so-called “national searches” that ultimately ended up leading to exceptional local candidates. After months of searching for a new city manager, Miami Beach found the right man for the job in Miami native and Harvard graduate Jimmy Morales.

Years back, the departure of Miami-Dade Public Schools Superintendent Rudy Crew (himself a product of a “national search”) led to the hire of Miami’s own Alberto Carvalho, who is one of the most effective public servants our community has ever known.

I wish The Beacon Council well in its search for a new CEO. This is an important hire at a critical time. Our local economy is still fragile and Miami is poised to factor into the expansion plans of companies from around the world. The Beacon Council must play a role in spurring job growth and charting our economic future. I believe the right candidate is here among us.

Rather than searching far and wide for natural leaders, groups like The Beacon Council should be looking right here in our own back yard for candidates with Miami roots and a first-hand understanding of our community.

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