

Next Gates CEO Probably Won't Be a Microsoft Executive

By Doug Donovan

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The next leader of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is unlikely to be a Microsoft executive, says Jeff Raikes, who announced on Tuesday that he is stepping down as chief executive of the world's largest philanthropy. Mr. Raikes and his predecessor, Patty Stonesifer, were both high-level executives at the company that Bill Gates co-founded before they took their roles heading his family foundation.

The appointment of someone from outside the Gateses' circle of Microsoft associates would mark a big change at the foundation and could quiet criticism that the billionaire philanthropist and his wife are too insular because they, along with Warren Buffett, are the foundation's only trustees.

The trustees "will look well beyond Microsoft," Mr. Raikes said in an interview on Tuesday. "Their goal is to look for folks who have cross-sector experience. I don't anticipate there will be a focus on Microsoft."

The job vacancy will be a plum opportunity: The foundation has \$36.4-billion in assets and 1,151 employees, and the position comes with a handsome salary. Mr. Raikes received \$975,000, according to the foundation's most recent tax forms.

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But observers say Mr. Raikes's statement that a new chief executive could emerge from beyond Microsoft is a significant change.

"It's encouraging to hear that that might be on the table," said Aaron Dorfman, executive director for the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. "That could be extremely beneficial for the Gates foundation."

Mr. Dorfman's organization has criticized the foundation for having a small board and for hiring chief executives who all have the same corporate background.

"By having CEOs who have the same experiences as board members, they're missing out on the potential benefits of broadening the circle to include people who bring a different perspective to solving these really thorny problems," he said.

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