

## Phoenix Suns hope to name a new GM within days

Written by

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Ideally, the [Phoenix Suns](#) would have their new General Manager - or whatever the person will be called - in place before mid-May when all the draft prospects attend the annual combine to interview, measure and work out for the teams interested in drafting them.

Makes sense to me.

Babby hopes to name a new GM by that time. So far, he has not faced any roadblocks in his recruitment process to raid another front office of their talent evaluator, regardless of the teams' playoff situation. If a team is going to make someone on their staff available for interviews, they don't make them wait out the playoffs. Without confirming names, Babby has all of his candidates lined up and ready to go.

According to Rick Bucher's posting on social media, [the front runner for the Suns' GM position is Milwaukee Assistant GM Jeff Weltman](#).

Weltman was a finalist for the position in 2010 but, according to Bucher, Suns managing partner Robert Sarver pushed to add a disciple from the [Spurs](#) tree. The Suns tried to interview Spurs staffer Dennis Lindsey and failed to convince Dell Demps to join them, eventually settling on Lance Blanks.

This time around, it appears the Suns are looking in more directions. Jeff Weltman reportedly [received permission last week](#) to interview with the Phoenix Suns and fits the profile Babby wants.

Per Frank Madden with [Brewhoop.com](#), Weltman is the brightest light of an otherwise struggling front office:

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The Bucks' front office has deservedly taken plenty of heat for the Bucks' lack of results over the past five years, but Weltman might be the person they can least afford to lose. In my interactions with him I've found him to be approachable and open-minded, and he's generally considered to be a very analytical guy with a strong knowledge of the CBA.

Longtime NBA scout and front office executive, Amin Elhassan, endorsed Jeff Weltman as a full-time GM. Amin, currently writing for ESPN, was most recently an Assistant Director of Basketball Operations for the Phoenix Suns until a year ago. He knows how the Suns front office worked, and has ideas on how it could improve going forward.

"Jeff Weltman is a respected talent evaluator in this league, a really smart guy," Amin said. "He should already have been a full GM somewhere."

Fox Sports Arizona writer Randy Hill, who has covered the NBA for decades, [had this to say about Weltman](#) in a column last weeken.

According to league insiders, the 48-year-old Weltman has had considerable talent-evaluation input dating back to his work as director of player personnel for the [Los Angeles Clippers](#) . Weltman, the son of former ABA and NBA personnel executive Harry Weltman, got his first job as the Clippers' video coordinator.

Hill's article goes on to cite Weltman's work with the Clips, [Nuggets](#) and Bucks as an assistant GM.

Weltman's overall influence in all these maneuvers is open to outside speculation, but among his peers, he's considered a very good evaluator of talent. Whether the Suns make the same assessment remains to be seen.

The local fans like Weltman. Well-connected NBA guys like Weltman too. What else do we

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need to know?

Let's find out a little more about Weltman's ability to communicate. Weltman [spoke with BrewHoop's Alex Boeder a couple of years ago](#) during the lockout on the role of analytics in the scouting world.

"Is it the end-all, be-all? No, nothing is," Weltman said in 2011. "At the end of the day -- and I hate to always use that term but it seems like when you when you are talking about this stuff that it reverts back to that -- it's really you are scouting players, and every decision, no matter how much empirical data you apply, is going to come to some sort of gut level.

"Because if you ask the medical guys, they are going to give you a gut level. If you ask the analytics guys, they are going to give you a gut level. There is nothing that can distill it enough to say, empirically, here is the right answer.? So, long way of answering your question, but in a nutshell, we view the analytics as an important part of the process, one of many layers that we try to incorporate. From sight tests, to stats, to medicals, to background work and probably most importantly, to our own scouting evaluations."

Lon Babby called this "the summer of analytics", so it appears that Jeff Weltman would be a good muse for that line of thinking.

Weltman [mentions that there is always resistance to change](#) , then widespread adoption, then pullback when it gets too heavy. That's happened with analytics, and soon to be with technology. And this was before SportVu came into being (the Suns were one of 15 teams recording everything on the court from a half-dozen different angles last year).

Will the new coach be analytics guy too? Weltman certainly was open to that idea a couple of years ago when interviewed by BrewHoop.

"When you think about that a lot of the advanced scouts will now incorporate some analytics data in their reports," Weltman continued. "That kind of lives in those reports a little bit. So they may use some information that was given to them by the analytics guy in the actual game report

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that is put on the chairs of players in the locker room before the game, and put in the coach's report before the game. So you may have an advanced guy behind the bench kind of whispering in the coach's ear some stuff that was passed through the analytics department to him.

"As to whether there will be a specific analytics guy on the bench, I don't know. But I would imagine that if some position like that were to evolve it would be somehow married to the technological breakthroughs, where you can keep those things on a more real-time basis.

"I don't think generally right now teams are looking to expand staffs and that sort of stuff, so I'm not really sure how that will all fit in. That is conjecture. As I said earlier, the cycle with analytics has gotten to the point where I think teams are looking at it as a convention, not as some new-fangled thing that has yet to be tested. And so they are not afraid to incorporate it in the way they do business as a coaching staff. And some teams are going to embrace it more than others, of course."

Over the past few years, the Bucks have had their ups and downs. They [made the playoffs this year in a win-now mode](#), but were [far from impressive](#) and have missed the playoffs in 5 of their last 7 years. They purposely paired [Brandon Jennings](#) with [Monta Ellis](#) (for [Andrew Bogut](#)) and traded the promising [Tobias Harris](#) for two months of [J.J. Redick](#). They signed [Drew Gooden](#) to a big contract. They drafted [Joe Alexander](#) at #8.

But Weltman isn't the trigger man in Milwaukee. John Hammond has been that guy. On the good side, the two of them drafted [Larry Sanders](#), a defensive beast, high-potential PF John

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Henson, SF Luc Richard M'ba a Moute and SG Jodie Meeks recently as well (the latter two in the second round).

Weltman currently works for a win-now team that really ought to just get younger and rebuild. They have been on the edge of the playoffs the last four years (making it once), drafting 10th-15th every year since 2009. This June, they will draft 15th. Again.

He's interviewing with a team that's been on the edge of the playoffs for the last five years (making it once), drafting 13th-15th every year since 2008.

Does Weltman prefer a Suns team that's actually decided to hit the rebuild hard with lots of high picks coming, but has little young talent on the roster?

Or does he prefer a Bucks team still straddling the playoff fence and about to lose their starting PG to free agency, but at least sports young talent in Henson and Sanders?

Stay tuned.