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## Top Tips to Consider When Hiring a Strong Staff

February 13, 2018



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By **JAY SHORR**, BA, MBM-C, CAC I-XII and **MARA SHORR**, BS, CAC II-XII

Selecting the proper employee can make or break your medical practice, regardless of your specialty. At some point in your career, present or past, you've worked with *that* staff: the one filled with drama, disrespect toward leadership and constant turnover. Ultimately, you want to do everything possible to keep from finding yourself in that position again.

Whether you're looking to hire an aesthetician, medical assistant, nurse, receptionist or even another provider, all members of your practice are incredibly important. They represent you, your brand and the manner in which you are perceived by your patients and the public as a whole. A rude receptionist sets the tone for the entire visit, should a patient choose to book that appointment after a less-than-lovely phone interaction at all. From poor bedside manner, to employee theft and clerical errors in your practice management software, curb the issues before they arise with a few of these simple selection tips:

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## Step #1: Recruitment

- Refine the job description so that it's one you're happy with. Examine what the true and current needs for your practice are. If you had employees leave recently, examine the skill set of your current team and look for gaps. Be honest about what you're looking for, and if recent graduates don't fit your search terms... say so in the description.
- Establish what you're willing to pay the position ahead of time. Are you looking for a full or part-time employee? Hourly or salary? What benefits are you willing to provide, if any? Is this person an employee or a contractor? Will they receive a bonus or commission based on certain guidelines? Establish this prior to starting the interview component.
- Once you post the position, carefully scrutinize the resumes as they begin to arrive. Eliminate typos, illegible formats and other initial turnoffs. Review the length of time the candidate spent with his/her previous employers. Warning signs appear when you see a series of five-month employers. You don't want to add your name to that list of short-term employers if you're looking for someone who will help you grow in the long term.

## Step #2: Interviewing

- It goes without saying you'll want to conduct an interview in person... not just over the phone. However, feel free to hold a brief phone interview first to ask any initial questions that may serve as deal breakers down the line. For example, are they looking for full or part-time work, and does this match what you're looking for?
- When you schedule the in-person interview, be sure to not only conduct these with the doctor, but with additional staff members down the line as well. Other team members will pick up on things that you may not, and this allows you the opportunity to sit back and see how the candidate interacts with your other team members as well.
- Ask pointed questions about the candidate's knowledge about both your practice and your industry. For example, find out what they know about your practice, your reputation in the community, and the treatments you offer. Ask them why they would want to work in YOUR office? What do they consider their greatest accomplishments, and what would they like to achieve in the next five years? How do they handle stress or drama in the workplace? Ask why they're leaving their last job as well; you'll be surprised at the answers that some people give!
- Be sure to review scheduling conflicts. If the possible new employee is unavailable during your peak hours, for instance, wish them well on their search, and explain you're not the office for them. You want to make sure that this is addressed right off the bat.
- Consider, when your state allows, a working interview. Use this time to see how your potential new staff member interacts not only with other employees, but with your patients as well. How do they react to the stress load in your office when the phone rings all day, when there's down time... or no moment to breathe?
- Check references for at least three previous employers and verify your prospect's industry-related experience. We've seen people claim they've held jobs that they haven't and, even scarier, claim they've held certifications and degrees that they never earned. Double check as many of these as possible.
- Perform a background check, and consider the results as they relate to the position. A new bookkeeper, for example, should not be hired if s/he has a history of fraud, embezzlement, or bankruptcy. Is a current valid driver's license valid for the position, or does the candidate live within walking distance? Make sure that s/he has a reliable form of transportation to work each day, as well as a valid form of identification.

## Step #3: Orientation and Ongoing Training

- Let your new staff member know right off the bat about your code of conduct. This should include, but is not limited to, your policies on staff uniforms, body piercings, tattoos, hair color, tardiness and cell phone usage on the job. This should all be included in an easy-to-locate Employee Handbook. (We always recommend having ALL employees, both new and existing, sign off on these policies.) This should include a staff social media policy as well.
- Training should occur not only when a new employee starts with your practice, but throughout his or her time with you. Ongoing, clear, concise and consistent training, both in your workplace and taking place as teambuilding outside of the office do wonders for both employee development and morale. When looking at ongoing training opportunities, don't be afraid to recruit outside vendors, as state and local laws apply.
- Meet with your staff members on a regular basis to go over their performance.

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Recognize opportunities for improvement as well as outstanding behavior you wish to see duplicated in the future. Be sure to work with your staff members in a way that offers incentives for them. For example, some people do better being praised publicly, while others prefer to be praised in private. Pay attention to your individual team member's motivators.

#### Step #4: Incentives to Motivate Staff

- From healthcare benefits to cash bonuses, not all incentives have to come in the form of dollars from your bank account. We suggest flexible schedules, when available, or an extra day of vacation.
- Looking for FREE ideas? A certificate to your Employee of the Month costs you only the ink from your printer, as does posting a duplicate version of the certificate in your reception area for patients and clients to see. In addition, include an Employee of the Month section in your office's monthly e-newsletter, and ask your clients to show their gratitude when they see your staff member in the office on their next visit.
- Looking to make an investment in your staff's education, and the education of your practice? Consider taking them to an industry conference. We can almost guarantee they'll come back motivated and servicing your patients better than ever!

Ultimately, hiring and training a strong staff will help grow your practice by leaps and bounds... and it all starts with the right hire.

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