

Help Wanted

Six skills of highly effective practice managers



By Jay A. Shorr, BA, MBM-C, CAC I-VI

The days when an office manager was also the spouse of the physician who came and went as she or he pleased are over. Today, a busy practice needs a reliable practice manager who is more than capable of multitasking.

This can be a difficult position to fill, but knowing what qualities are most important can help make more effective hiring decisions.

The six skills of highly effective practice managers include:



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1 Experience

Search for a practice manager who has been around the block. Make sure he or she has had experience running a practice that is similar in size or scope to yours.

Shorr Thing Interview Tip: Review their resume, and make sure that they have not jumped around too much. Look for a solid

work history and upward mobility. Red flags may include large gaps of unemployment and job hopping, or those who move from one employer to another every 2 years or less.

2 People Skills

Patience, along with the ability to listen and communicate in a caring manner and address any problems fairly

and equitably, are important for practice managers as they will be interfacing with your staff, patients, vendors, and insurers.

Shorr Thing Interview Tip: The candidate should be likable. Are they easy to talk to? Personable? Do they look you in the eye? Have a firm handshake? These are qualities that speak to people skills.

3 Conflict Resolution Chops

A skilled practice manager needs to be able to handle patients' concerns and serve as a buffer when the patient is dissatisfied. He or she must know how to listen, empathize, and address the patient's concerns in a manner that is agreeable to both the surgeon and the patient. It's not always easy being Switzerland, but for a practice manager, it is essential.

Shorr Thing Interview Tip: Ask for a concrete example of a situation where a patient was unhappy, and how the candidate addressed it.

4 Product Knowledge

High-level staff members must have more than a basic knowledge of the services you perform and the products you sell to train new-hires and manage patient expectations.

Shorr Thing Interview Tip: Ask the candidate what they know about the procedures that are performed at your practice. Here, you are looking for honesty. It's OK if they don't know the difference between a transconjunctival blepharoplasty and a subciliary one. A bright candidate can learn these nuances.

5 Financial Acuity

Negotiating with vendors and staff can yield more profit than revenue. This ability is a must for an effective practice manager.

Shorr Thing Interview Tip: Steal a trick from *The Wolf of Wall Street*, and ask the candidate to sell you a pen. See how they approach the salesmanship and negotiation, with you playing the cost-conscious buyer. This exercise may prove telling.

6 Desire for Autonomy

A practice manager cannot be afraid to take control. They must feel a sense of ownership in the practice to be able to make decisions. This autonomy can never be attained if you micromanage your high-level staffers.

Shorr Thing Interview Tip: Provide some scenarios where a stealth decision would be needed, and see if the candidate has what it takes to own the situation. ■

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Make sure to check back for the next installment of "The Shorr Thing," which will take a deeper dive into the ins and outs of hiring your new practice manager.