

Hire Away

The 6 must-ask interview questions for all practice manager candidates



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

You have been searching high and low for the perfect practice manager—the one who will help take your practice to the next level.

It's a critical position to fill, especially as your practice expands.

In April's "Shorr Thing," we discussed the six attributes that can make for an adept practice manager: experience, product knowledge, people skills, conflict-resolution chops, financial acuity, and the desire for autonomy.

Now, we provide the six must-ask interview questions to assess a promising candidate's skills—even if you are hiring from the inside.



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1 What do you know about our practice and the industry?

Do they know who you are, the procedures you perform, the demographics you serve, and who your competition is? These are key indications that they have done their

research and are taking the possibility of a job at your practice seriously.

Matching skills: experience, product knowledge

2 What industry associations are you a member of?

Many aesthetic societies have arms for administrators, including practice or office managers. Membership in these societies is not mandatory, but it certainly tells you that the candidate is active and engaged in the issues that matter to your practice—whether they are the upcoming

ICD-10 conversion or electronic medical record keeping.

Matching skills: experience, product knowledge

3 When was the last time you completed an annual forecast?

Budgeting and projecting are two key responsibilities of a savvy practice manager. Any candidate should have experience completing such a prospectus.

Matching skills: experience, financial acuity

4 Are you knowledgeable about procedures and protocols that keep a practice flowing?

Everything in your practice needs to have proper protocols, including what, when, and how to perform services, order supplies, autoclave instruments, make bank deposits, and handle procedural consents. Policy and procedure designates what needs to be done, and the protocol delegates how to do it. Tell the candidate how things are done, and ask him or her what they would change to boost efficiency. Would their ideas work in your practice? This will give you a good sense about how the candidate will fit in with your culture.

Matching skills: experience, desire for autonomy

5 How many direct reports have you overseen for in the past?

The appointment is likely a promotion as opposed to a lateral move, but this question can help gauge their level of responsibility in their past or present job. There is no magic number, but you want to make sure they will be able to handle your staff. As

a follow-up here, consider asking the candidate to discuss a time when they had to mediate a conflict between staff members.

Matching skills: experience, conflict-resolution chops, desire for autonomy

6 What hours do you want to work?

A practice manager's job does not follow a 9-to-5 schedule. A candidate must be flexible in terms of the hours they are willing to put in. It is also a good idea to see if they are willing to travel. While not necessarily a prerequisite to a hire, some practice managers do travel to industry meetings with or without the doctors they support. Ideally, a candidate would have an open mind about daily schedule and work-related travel.

Matching skill: desire for autonomy

If you like what you hear, ask the candidate if they would be willing to come in to meet other staff members and perhaps work a trial day. If the need to hire is imminent, make sure you know when they would be available to start. A currently employed candidate who is willing to start immediately, without minimal notice to their current employer, will likely leave you high and dry if another opportunity arises for them. This should put up a major red flag. ■

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