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A Step-by-Step Guide to Hiring a New Employee

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Editor's Note: For additional tools and resources related to this topic, visit the **BSM Café** (www.bsmcafe.com).

Given today's challenging economic climate, taking the time to study whether a vacant staff position needs filling is a prudent course of action. Money is tight, and management must be diligent in its staffing expenditures. However, when a new hire must be made, it is critical to have a sound, step-by-step hiring process in place.

Appoint a hiring team. Discovering qualified employees who will be a good fit for your practice is not an undertaking that should be left to one person. Put together a team of at least two qualified individuals. Team members should educate themselves on hiring practices and protocols as well as legal guidelines. A sound understanding of the practice's needs and personnel is essential.

Having a clear and comprehensive hiring process in place is critical to adding quality employees to your team quickly and painlessly.

Create an accurate job description. Don't just use an old job description. Dissect the position in detail to be sure that the related job description accurately reflects the current and future needs of the practice.

Build a concise help-wanted advertisement. The help-wanted advertisement will be based on the job description created in the previous step. Ad rates are not cheap, so you'll want to choose your words carefully. Overselling—or underselling—a position will result in unnecessary contact with unqualified applicants.

Plot your advertising strategy. Create an advertising plan and budget, and follow it as closely as possible. The skill level of the position will dictate where you place the advertisement. Entry-level positions will be filled from the local population, meaning the ad is likely to be placed in community newspapers and the local employment Web sites. A more highly skilled position may require placement in larger, regional newspapers and job websites as well as in professional industry and trade journals.

Rank your responses. Review, organize, and rank the resumes on a regular basis, perhaps at the end of each week or when you receive a certain number of resumes. The hiring team should review them together and share thoughts, feelings, and insights.

Conduct brief telephone interviews. Use this call as an opportunity to "surprise" applicants and catch them without prepared responses. While you are not trying to be tricky, it will be your first encounter with the "real" person and can reveal additional insights.

Conduct face-to-face-interviews. Obviously, this part of the hiring process is the most important. How the candidate responds to the various elements of this stage (punctuality, dress, first impression, communication skills, answers, questions, etc.) is likely to result in either a job offer or a "we'll-keep-your-resume-on-file" exit. A list of prepared questions should be asked of all candidates, and interviewers need to be well-versed on legal guidelines related to what questions and topics can and cannot be covered. Note-taking is mandatory for later discussion. Word questions so applicants must provide expanded answers.

Evaluate the candidates. Hold all evaluation discussions immediately after each interview, if possible. Everything is fresh at that point, and a consensus will be easier to reach.

Contact references. Too few practices actually contact references and past employers. While some references/past employers may be reluctant to provide much detail about the applicant (or too much in the case of "overly friendly" references), contacting appropriate references is a must.

Finalize the offer. While you have a good idea about what the position should pay and what benefits will be offered, the final applicant's resume and experience may prompt some fine-tuning. You may not be making the exact same offer to each finalist (should one not accept the position). Present the offer in a congratulatory manner.

Be Prepared. Occasionally, you will have to enter the "help-wanted" market and you will want to be prepared. Having a clear and comprehensive hiring process in place is critical to adding quality employees to your team quickly and painlessly.



About the author: Allan Walker is director of publication services for BSM Consulting, an internationally recognized health care consulting firm headquartered in Incline Village, Nevada and Scottsdale, Arizona. For more information about BSM Consulting or content/resources discussed in this article, please visit the **BSM Café** at www.BSMCafe.com.

