

Hiring New Employees -- Quickly and Efficiently

Do you have any advice for hiring staff in a hurry? It's been like a revolving door for the last three months. I've hired four different people and one didn't last a week! What can you suggest to help me find someone fast? -- a frenzied doctor

Hiring problems are an unending struggle, and it sounds like you've had more than your share. We need to get it under control. I've heard the statistic that a CA has an average "life" of about 2 1/2 years at any particular office before they "burn out." I don't know who or where that came from, but I won't argue with it. So let's see if we can find you someone who will stay 2 1/2 years! Besides the damage to your practice, there is the emotional toll frequent staff turnovers take on you. I hate to bring this up, but be sure that your behavior isn't part of your problem. Ask a trusted friend for some input. Is your pay rate realistic for hours and your area?

Let's improve the averages by getting more things tilted in your favor. Here's my favorite emergency hiring plan to help you find someone as soon as possible. You'll need to prescreen as many people in as short a time as possible, for quality. Put ads in the paper, call employment bureaus and consider posting a notice in your office.* Emphasize the skills the job requires. Your contacts and interviews will let you decide on their personality traits. If you are already short of staff, don't put the phone # in the ad, just the address. Request that they stop by and fill out an application.

Eliminate anyone who can't spell or follow the directions on the application. Same goes for anyone who takes an unusually long time to fill out the form or makes excessive errors on your skills tests. Eliminate anyone without the job skills you require. Whoever gives them the application should write observations and helpful comments on the form after they return it. Anyone who comes in dressed inappropriately, cocktail wear, too much makeup, dirty or disheveled, or displays bad manners or poor social skills, would be off my list. You don't have time to polish diamonds in the rough!

Ask all the applicants to return at the same time, probably in the evening. Give a brief talk about yourself and your office, followed by a short, concise explanation of chiropractic and your mission in the community. Let them know that you have a unique viewpoint on health. No point in interviewing people with medical prejudices. Don't discuss salary at this point, but give them an accurate idea of the hours you need them to work and duties. You can discuss wages at their interview, based on what you can afford and what skills they bring to the job. There's no point in interviewing someone who can't work your hours. Assign interview appointments, from pre-selected time slot, as soon as possible.

Before you interview, review the applications, correlate and eliminate those where you've made negative observations or have seen a problem. Do the interviews, spending 15-30 minutes per applicant. Remember, this is my plan for screening and interviewing as many as possible, as quickly as possible. The circumstances you've described don't give you the luxury of time. If someone fails to show up, I wouldn't give them another appointment. You want someone dependable and with sense enough to call ahead and explain an unexpected delay. Chances are they would run your office the same way they run their life.

After all the interviews ask yourself if anyone stood out from the group. Ask the best of the group, no more than 2 or 3 back for a final interview. Then make your selection and get started. Save promising applications, just in case. I hope you have an office manual, or at the very least a really clear, concise job description.

Outline what you expect the new hire to do on the first day, the first few days, and the first week. If finding the time to show them what to do is a problem, do what I've done with some of my clients. Video your explanations of how you want each job done. Don't worry about production value, home movie quality is just fine. It may take time, but you only have to do it once.

Now! Let's get a lot of qualified people for you to screen. Eliminate the ones who can't do the job and interview the rest. With a little luck you'll find a real "keeper"!

- If you hire, or even interview a patient, it should be with an understanding something like this, before you interview or hire them: "Mary, I really enjoy having you as a patient and if it turns out that the application/job doesn't work out, I want to know that you can still feel comfortable as a patient here. If you are hired, we'll give it two weeks and then we'll sit down and talk it over. If it's not working out for either one of us, we'll call it quits with no hard feelings. Can you try out the job under those circumstances?"

Note: A new year, a new start and new opportunities to serve for all of us. I hope you'll let me know about your management problems and challenges. Drop me a note or give me a call. I'm happy to give a little free advice, but don't ask me to pay for the phone call!

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