

Building the Championship TEAM

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Growing a practice involves a number of skills, discipline, protocols, strategies, tactics and systems. But it all begins with having the right people in place to advance your practice success.

One vital component for growing your practice is what I call "TEAM" building, an acronym for "Together Everyone Achieves More." Just as sports championships are won when you have the right team, so will the right TEAM produce a successful chiropractic practice.

As you build that TEAM, guide yourself by this important principle: hire cheerleaders; fire sourpusses.

Establish a Job Bank

The first step in the process is recruitment, which is a continuous process, not just when you actually need someone. Most chiropractors don't consider recruiting anyone until they lose someone. This type of recruitment creates unhealthy stress. When you are under pressure to employ a new player on your team, you are forced to cut too many corners and are likely to make a hiring mistake. You can avoid the stress, and possibly making a wrong decision, with a job bank system. Here's how:

Create a job bank folder for each position on your team and then collect resumes and applications on a continuous basis, even when you have no positions available. You read that correctly: collect applications even when there are no openings available.

Encourage prospective employees to submit a resume or application. Initiate a pre-screening of the resume and if the candidate has potential, place it in the appropriate job bank folder. Watch for prospective employees and introduce them to your brand of chiropractic.

Next, simply as a courtesy, acknowledge receipt with a handwritten note about the status of the applicant's resume and let them know you will contact them when a position is available. If the applicant is not qualified, then write a short note letting them know that you do not have a position available at this time.

When You Must Move Fast

It can take time to build your job bank folder, and the need for a new employee can arise before you have qualified candidates. In that case, you must implement a recruitment process to find the best possible talent in your area. For most positions on your team, an ad on Craigslist will be sufficient. It works; be ready to receive hundreds of resumes! However, for associates, post your position with *all* of the chiropractic colleges. Most have a placement program for their graduates.

Your advertisements must be specific as to the skills you desire and key components of the responsibilities for the position. A longer ad with all the details is much more effective in qualifying candidates than a shorter ad.

Other options include local newspaper help-wanted ads and employment agencies. However, keep in mind that these options can be expensive and may not even attract the best candidates.

Effective Screening

Once you have acquired applications, the next step is screening. This is the most time-consuming step. Let's review the preferred method of identifying the person best suited for your practice.

Schedule a *group* employment opportunity meeting, to which all applicants are invited to attend. The purpose of the group meeting is to "scan" the applicants and narrow down the list to two to three candidates.

You do this by having everyone complete an application for employment (on site), in addition to their resume. The purpose of this step is to see the speed with which they complete the form, the quality of their penmanship and the content of the completed form. Conduct a one-minute "interview" to review the application and then, using a checklist, rate your first impressions of the applicant. Let each know they will be receiving a letter regarding their status.

After you have collected all applications and conducted your one-minute interviews noting your first impressions, sort the applicants in order of preference. Select the top six and invite them back for the next step. This interview is conducted one-on-one, but it's best if not done by the doctor, but instead by a preferred team leader. A pre-planned interview protocol works best to keep the focus and ensure that all applicants are treated fairly.

This is akin to the traditional interview process. Strive for open-ended questions, instead of yes-no answers. Build in a challenging question that the applicant may not anticipate to see how they respond when they are placed on the spot.

During this recruitment phase, you also want to monitor arrival for the appointment, appearance and other factors that may influence your decision process.

After this step in the screening process, narrow your list of candidates to the top three and invite them back for an interview by your entire team. This is a critical step in the hiring process. Everyone currently on your team should host and interview the top three candidates in an informal setting. Employees spend more time with each other than they do with the doctor; this is why it is important to get feedback from the entire *team* and their observations of each candidate.

Next, select the top two who are serious contenders. Then secure the following:

1. Behavioral Personality Report
2. Credit and Background Report

[pb]Do not cut corners on this step, as it is critical to your final decision. There are a number of options and firms that can provide you with the service and guide you with the appropriate legal requirements for this step of the process.

Once the top two candidates have been identified and the reports secured, either you or your team leader should schedule an appointment with the top pick.

The Employment Interview

The next step in the process is to schedule an appointment with your top pick and during this interview, review the detailed job description with the applicant and make certain they are confident they can perform the required responsibilities.

This step is best done by the doctor. You should have a very comprehensive and detailed job description for each position on your team. When you review the job description, be sure to provide the candidate with a copy in order to follow your review and clarify any tasks the candidate may have questions about.

Once you have agreement that the candidate is confident that they can perform the required duties, tasks and responsibilities, then you are ready to discuss compensation with them.

Be prepared to review the entire compensation package including all benefits (insurance, unemployment, social security, etc). In other words, review the total cost of this applicant to your office. In fact, you should do this on an annual basis with all employees.

Your compensation plan should include the incentive compensation you provide; be sure to review how they qualify. Also be sure to get agreement that they understand your benchmarks. Tally up the total cost for your compensation package and then divide by the number of office hours to arrive at their true hourly compensation rate.

Remember, the base hourly rate does not include all the other costs associated with the employee. Give them the complete picture so they are not comparing other offers based solely on base compensation.

If the applicant qualifies, at this stage, then offer them the position. Do not offer or allude that they have the position until this stage.

Train Immediately

On the first day of their employment, your training system begins. You should have a structured training plan: daily, weekly, monthly and continuous. Regardless of the talent someone may have, you *must* train them to your standards of excellence.

Test your new employee's knowledge each week. The only acceptable score is 100 percent. Start over if they need to review the training.

After the initial probationary employment period of 90 days, they should receive continuous training. This can be done at your weekly team meeting, a quarterly team retreat / workshop or continuing educational programs available from various sources.

After the employee has been classified as a regular employee and not probationary, you should have a structured performance review at six months, 12 months and then annually thereafter.

Termination

No one likes to terminate an employee, but as the leader or CEO of your business, this may be necessary at times. In fact, you may find that you made a bad decision and realize a new employee should be fired on the first day. Hold employees accountable to their job description and be prepared to terminate when you are unable to correct a problem in a reasonable amount of time.

The most common mistakes made in building a team is taking too long to make changes that you know need to be made. Only invest in those who strive to reach the top.

As the CEO of your practice, it is your responsibility to coach each player on your team. You must have specific procedures on how you will handle an employee who is not achieving the level of performance that you expect.

Aftermath

Once you have hired one of the applicants, send letters to the rest, thanking them for submitting their applications and informing them that the position has been filled. Let them know that your practice is growing and expanding, and that you will keep their applications on file for future opportunities.

Now go peak your practice by building a great TEAM.