

## Your Number-One Practice Problem

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*Who* is your number-one problem, not *what*. *What* refers to the services you provide, the products you sell, and the strategies you use to build and grow your practice. Chiropractors can spend an entire career chasing after solutions to all of the "what" problems that plague their practices. However, focusing on the *what* problems leads to more stress and less of the income and time you desire. Or you could decide to focus on the *who*. "Who" refers to the people you put in place to implement the what choices you make for your practice. *Who* is where most of your problems start - but it also can be where the magic begins.

### What a *Who* Problem Looks Like

Do you remember the "I Love Lucy" episode with Lucy and Ethel working at a candy factory? Their job was to wrap chocolates as they passed by on a conveyor belt, but they couldn't keep up the pace. Instead of letting a single piece of candy pass by, they began stuffing it into their mouths, down their shirts and into their hats. At this point their supervisor, seeing how well the new hires had done, gave the command, "Speed it up!" And with that, chaos ensued!

The supervisor could have spent endless hours trying to improve the efficiency of the line, but that wouldn't get to the bottom of the problem. The problem wasn't the conveyor belt; it was Lucy. The Lucy problem is a *who* problem.

### You Are Who You Hire

In your practice, [you are who you hire](#). If you hire C Players, you will always be behind your competition. Hire B Players and you'll do OK, but you'll never reach your full potential. Hire A Players and you will achieve truly breakthrough results.

But how do you create an A Team? The starting point of creating the team of your dreams occurs during the hiring process. You must be absolutely crystal clear about what you want the person you are hiring to accomplish for your practice. You probably have a vague idea about the person you want to hire, and the other members of your practice team most likely have an equally vague idea about the person they want and need. Unfortunately, there is a very good likelihood that your vague ideas don't match theirs.

Begin by clearly defining your criteria for the position before you begin the hiring process. I've found three criteria to be essential to define: the job's mission in the context of the overall mission of the practice; the set of skills required to perform the job competently; and the performance outcomes by which you will measure and monitor success.

### How to Generate a Flow of "A Players"

It takes a good measure of effort to develop a constant flow of great candidates. [Recruiting team](#)

**members** for your practice is not something that should happen occasionally. It is something you must do on a continual basis. Always be on the lookout for great talent. This puts you in the position of identifying the *who* before a new hire is needed.

Most practices implement a recruiting strategy that begins only after a vacancy opens up in a crucial position. Panic ensues as classified and online ads are placed in attempt to fill the void. Ads are a great way to create a tidal wave of resumes, but a terrible way to generate the necessary flow of the right candidates. Let's review some of the best ways to find potential *A Players*.

*Referrals from professional and personal networks:* Referrals are the number-one technique for generating new patients for your practice. Referrals should also be your number-one source for generating potential employees. The people you interact with on a daily basis are the most valuable sources of talent you will ever find. Contact the professionals you regularly do business with and enlist their help in your hunt for talent. Join professional and service organizations and ask the people you meet through events for their referrals.

*Referrals from employees:* In-house referrals from your current practice team members can be even more valuable than outside referrals. After all, who knows the needs and culture of your practice better than the people already on your team? While this is far from a blinding insight, it's amazing how few employers actually take the time to ask their employees for help in this area.

*Deputize friends of the practice:* Back in the days of the wild west, when the marshal needed help hunting down a pack of villains, he would form a posse by deputizing a group of leading citizens as temporary law officers. You can extend the reach of your search by "deputizing" some of the influential people in your referral network as unofficial recruiters. Create an incentive by offering a monetary recruiting bonus, gift certificate, iPod, or other valuable item depending upon the level of hire.

*Professional recruiters:* Professional recruiting firms can provide a key role in sourcing executive level talent such as associate doctors and practice managers. However, a recruiter can only do so much if you don't expose them to the inner workings and culture of your practice. Think of a professional recruiter the same way you do your financial advisor. The more information you share with them about who you are, what's wrong and what you need, the more effective they will be.

## Interviews for Spotting Talent

Once you have narrowed down the list of candidates that your referral sources and recruiters have identified, how do you spot the *A Players* in the group? The very best way to identify them is through a sequence of three interviews that build one upon the other.

*The phone-based interview:* The first interview is a short screening interview. This phone-based interview is designed to clear out the *B* and *C Players* who are not right for the position as quickly as possible. It's best to follow a set list of questions for each interview. This speeds the process and makes it easier for you to identify differences between the candidates. Ask about their career goals, what they are good at professionally, and what things they are not good at. Conclude the interview by asking the candidate how their last bosses will rate their past performance when you talk to them.

*The chronological interview:* Once you have narrowed your list of candidates through the phone-based interview process, you are ready to dig deeper. The second-level interview is a chronological walk-through of the person's career. Begin with the earliest experiences and work forward to the present

day. Ask about their previous positions and the accomplishments they are most proud of. Inquire about the people they worked with and what they would identify as the candidate's biggest strengths and areas for improvement. Conclude the interview by asking why they left their job.

Be sure to listen between the lines, and take time to probe for additional information and insight. The chronological interview seems more like a conversation than an interview. People enjoy this type of interview because they feel like they are just telling their life story. What you are really doing is gathering an immense amount of information to bolster your decision-making process.

*The cultural fit interview:* Now it's time to turn the level of magnification up another notch on the *who* you are about to hire. The cultural fit interview gives you a final opportunity to gauge how well the candidate will mesh with the culture of your practice. These interviews also provide a chance for your other team members to become involved directly in the hiring process. Perform this 45-minute interview in tandem with one or more of your practice team members. A cultural fit means that the candidate shares the core values you hold important for your practice. This interview moves beyond the competencies and outcomes specific to the job and embraces the larger values of your practice. For example, practice values could include **building strong patient relationships**, recognizing that people matter first, a solution orientation and continuous personal development. If a candidate doesn't live by those values, they'll never fit with your practice.

## Checking the References

You have concluded the series of three interviews and you think you have found the perfect match. This person was a hit with your practice team and in your mind, already works for you. Don't succumb to the temptation to skip reference checks and make an offer right away. Often times a reference check can uncover undiscovered information that you and your colleagues missed in your extensive interview process.

A positive reference brims with enthusiasm and admiration for the candidate. There will be no hesitation or hedging and the reference's belief in their former colleague will shine through. The sparkle in their voice when the reference talks about the person is one of the clearest indicators that you have identified an A Player.

With all of the data you've gathered in hand, it's time to take the final step and decide which candidate is the best fit for the position and for your team. Imagine how great you'll feel when you build a team of top talent all focused on accomplishing a unified purpose! As you use these strategies to improve the performance of your practice, remember it's *who*, not *what* -that is the path to your career, financial and practice success.

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