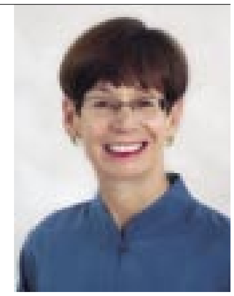

Human Resources

Developing and Implementing an Effective Recruitment Process

By Margie Satinksy, President, Satinsky Consulting, LLC

The people who work with you and for you are your practice's most important assets. Regardless of how well you are organized and financed, your success depends on your ability to recruit and retain good employees. This article suggests a multistep recruitment process that includes understanding federal and state laws, articulating your practice's mission, goals, priorities and values, setting employee goals, determining job requirements, developing a formal job description, publicizing the position, reviewing applications, conducting telephone and face-to-face interviews, checking references and making a job offer.

UNDERSTAND THE FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS THAT GOVERN THE EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

Make sure you understand the legal environment in which you manage your practice. Your attorney can provide guidance. Design your recruitment process so it shows your commitment to equal employment and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by producing an adequate pool of women, minorities, mature and disabled workers.

ARTICULATE YOUR PRACTICE'S MISSION, GOALS, PRIORITIES AND VALUES

Start with the unique characteristics of your practice. What is your current and future direction? What are your goals for the next three to five years? What's important to you? Do you hire individuals who charge forward with little regard to interpersonal relationships, or do you value people who are competent in what they do and mindful of relationships inside and outside your practice?

STATE THE POSITION GOALS

Make sure that the goals for your vacant or new position are consistent with your practice's goals. For example, if you plan to open a satellite office and introduce electronic health records (EHR) into your practice, recruit a practice manager who can handle both tasks while managing daily operations. If your goal is business as usual with no special projects, recruit a person who is skilled at keeping you on an even keel.

IDENTIFY THE JOB REQUIREMENTS

What knowledge, skills and education are required to successfully perform the job? Do you need someone with an advanced degree? Does the job require someone who takes the initiative and can help you move in new directions? Does the work scope require someone who can supervise many staff members?

DEVELOP A FORMAL JOB DESCRIPTION

Use the position goals and job requirements as a foundation for a formal job description. The standard format should include the job title, reporting relationship, span of control/supervisory responsibilities, required initiative/leadership, general summary of duties and responsibilities, priority and secondary functions, working conditions, physical and mental effort required, time commitment and performance requirements (knowledge/skills/abilities, education, experience, certification, licenses and alternatives to minimum qualifications).

PUBLICIZE THE POSITION

Publicize your new or vacant position, if you are an existing practice, and encourage current employees to apply for different positions; post the job internally. If you recruit outside your practice, start with free recruiting methods. Mention the job to your medical colleagues and employees. Professional associations like the Medical Group Management Association of America (MGMA) offer job search assistance to both members and to practices that are recruiting staff. If you have a practice website, post the position.

If the methods suggested above don't produce one or more qualified applicants, consider paid advertising. Small neighborhood newspapers sometimes achieve better results than large and more expensive daily papers. If you are doing a national search, use the MGMA recruiting service, or a similar service offered by your professional society's administrative organization.

REVIEW THE RÉSUMÉS THAT YOU RECEIVE

Ask one individual in your practice to review the résumés that you receive. As a courtesy and as a method of reducing phone calls to your practice, notify all applicants that you have received the applications. When you eliminate candidates, let them know and thank them for their interest. Tell the others your timetable for interviewing and making a decision.

CONDUCT TELEPHONE AND FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

Narrow your group of qualified applicants down to six to eight people. Schedule brief telephone interviews to obtain additional information and a sense of the applicants' telephone skills. Pare down your list and invite only the best four or five candidates to come in for personal interviews.

Prepare carefully for the personal interviews. Develop a standard list of interview questions that you ask every applicant, keeping in mind the questions that you can ask/not ask to comply with federal and state laws. For example, ask about each applicant's ability to perform the job, not about a disability or handicap. Don't ask about marital status; it's not relevant to the job. Start with one-on-one interviews. Later, when you bring applicants back for second interviews, involve other members of your team.

CONTACT REFERENCES

After you have completed several rounds of interviews, narrow your selection to two or three people. At this point, with applicant permission, contact references and check credentials. Ask each reference the same set of questions.

PERFORM CRIMINAL AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

As an employer in the medical field, be particularly diligent about performing criminal and background checks. The financial penalties and/or repercussions for billing fraud and clinical incompetence are severe. Two practical steps can help you accomplish this step easily. First, engage an outside service to do the criminal and background checks. Second, ask those employees who require professional certification or licensure to sign a statement indicating they will maintain these credentials.

MAKE THE JOB OFFER

When you are ready to make a job offer to your top candidate, call the person on the phone, make the offer and then follow up with a written offer letter. The offer letter is different from an employment contract, and for some employees you may want both. Include in the letter the job title, starting date, reporting relationship, job description, benefits and eligibility date, and description of your probationary period (if you have one). If your offer is contingent on the results of drug and alcohol screening, make that requirement clear. Attach a copy of your employee benefits so the individual to whom you are offering the job can take this information into consideration in making his or her decision.

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