

How to Recruit, Interview, and Retain Employees

Fran Parrish

A difficult aspect of being a dermatology manager is finding the right people for the job. How do you locate qualified candidates? What types of questions should you ask them? What questions should you avoid asking? How do you keep good employees? These are important questions managers face when they have vacancies to fill.

Recruiting

One of the most challenging tasks in any practice is hiring the perfect employee and then retaining that employee. Though challenging, this can be a fun experience once you apply some basic tools to the process.

The first step is to identify candidates for the position. Decide upon a venue in which to advertise your vacancy. There are several venues available:

- *Classified advertising* through newspapers or professional journals. These are relatively inexpensive and can give marginal results.
- *Job bank listings* that might be available to the profession.
- *Word of mouth* via employees or physicians. This strategy can target the right audience and has good potential.
- *Employment agencies*. This approach can be costly but can target good candidates.

No matter what avenue you choose, it is important to design your advertisement to entice qualified candidates for the position.

Interviewing

An interview is defined as a face-to-face verbal communication between two people. It is different from normal conversation as it has a specific purpose: to



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exchange information between two people by using an active listening approach that will result in securing necessary information. A successful interview starts with preparation. The first thing to do is review the job description for the vacancy, ensure that it is current, and make any necessary changes. Determine the qualifications the successful candidate must possess to complete the tasks associated with the position. Think about the pertinent information required to make your decision.

It is important to set the correct stage for the interview. Make sure to schedule uninterrupted time for the interview. Ensure that the candidate

feels at ease. Portray a positive and friendly attitude, as you are representing your practice. Make sure you look neat and professional. Remember that your attitude defines the tone of the interview and you as the interviewer set the stage. An effective, pleasant greeting can help facilitate the interview process.

Begin with a brief overview of the practice, what the job entails, required work hours, description of benefit package, and any other practice-specific information. Discuss how the open position fits into the realm of the practice. This enables the candidate to obtain a better understanding of the position.

Be aware of the different categories of questions and how they can be asked. Using open-ended questions will help you gather the information needed to make your final decision. These types of questions prompt the applicant to share a great deal of information in a short period of time. Close-ended questions tend to be very focused, finite, and direct but can be used to gain specific information from the candidate. To gain more insight of the candidate, use probing questions. Always be aware of legal and illegal questions. Questions that are asked innocently can turn the tables on an interview.

Open up the interview to the candidate so that she/he can gain the information about the position that she/he is seeking. Before ending the interview, ensure that you have obtained all the necessary information needed to make your final decision. Obtain references from candidates and follow up with these sources. All interviews should be brought to closure; do not leave the

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candidate hanging. Share with them your timeline in making your final decision and let them know that you will be contacting them once the decision has been made.

After completing the interview process, evaluate the candidates you interviewed; be objective in the process. First impressions, though important, should only reflect a portion of the evaluation. Base your decision on the candidate's basic abilities, character strengths, and personal characteristics. Contact the candidate's references. Once you have fully evaluated each candidate, it is time to make your final decision.

Once you have identified the person you want to hire, it is time to extend an offer. Sometimes negotiation will be necessary to hire the candidate of choice. If the candidate does not initially accept your offer, you might need to make a counter offer. When the negotiations are complete, agree on a start date.

It is important not to leave the unsuccessful candidates hanging. Mail rejection letters to these candidates, thanking them for their interest.

Retaining Employees

Once the successful candidate is hired, it is a major responsibility of the manager to help retain the employee. Turnover in your organization is very costly and can create frustration with other employees. The first step to retention is to ensure that the new employee is oriented to the practice and is provided the necessary training needed to complete her/his job.

Orientation should include:

- A brief overview of the practice.
- Review of the practice's policy and procedure manual.
- Work hours, breaks, and meal periods.
- Dress code.
- A tour of the facility.
- Introduction to all other employees.

Establish a training schedule and milestones to be reached. It is important to set standards so that staff are aware of what is expected of them. Set up a training plan that outlines the tasks, standards, available resources, and the date that the training is to be completed. A copy should be given to each employee after training and placed in the employee's file for documentation that training was completed.

Feedback on employee performance is important for employee development and retention. The initial performance appraisal should be given after the probationary period. Each practice should set a specific amount of time that the employee is expected to reach her/his level of productivity. An evaluation of the new employee's performance to date should be reviewed. Note strengths, areas that need improvement, assess performance level in relationship to standards, and set new goals and objectives.

It is imperative that everyone in your practice openly communicates with each other. Employees place a high value on being informed as to what is happening in

the office. They need to be informed about their job, their performance, and how well the practice is doing.

To help retain employees, it is important that they feel good about themselves and the job they are performing. Building employee confidence and satisfaction may directly affect the length of time they stay with your practice. Be aware of the strengths that each employee brings to your practice. Use these strengths to develop their skills. Ensure that each employee is challenged by her tasks and feels she is providing a valuable and worthwhile service to the dermatology practice.

Offering financial incentives and other perks encourages employees to stay. There are various ways to provide incentives/perks to employees. A bonus can be used to motivate an individual to reach a higher level of performance. Many practices use bonuses to reward their employees for achieving higher collections, decreasing accounts receivables, or increasing the number of patients that can be seen efficiently. Other perks include an extra day off, or gift certificates at holiday time.

Summary

Decide how you will recruit new employees and place your advertisements. Screen the résumés and select the applicants to interview. Prepare yourself for the interview by reviewing the job description and determining the qualities you are seeking and the questions required to gain the information you seek. Conduct the interview and followup. Select the final candidate, extend an offer, and establish a start date. Don't forget to notify unsuccessful candidates.

Once the employee starts, orient her to the practice and set up a training schedule. Monitor her progress and develop a system of ongoing evaluation of her performance. Make sure you take the necessary steps to retain employees. Remember, hiring and firing employees is an expensive endeavor. ❖

Literature Review

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Leonardi believes that patients receiving biologic agents can achieve long-term control with monotherapy. Occasionally the addition of a topical agent or systemic agent may be required for short-term control. However, if a given agent does not effectively control psoriasis over time, it is time to select another biologic.

Patient expectations are also a factor in biologic therapy. The patient should be advised what to expect, to keep the patient committed to therapy. In Dr. Leonardi's experience, patients treated with biologic agents are much more satisfied with the outcomes than with non-biologic therapy. By selecting the most appropriate biologic agent for each patient according to his/her medical history, we can ensure a successful clinical outcome and take full advantage of these breakthrough agents. ❖

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