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Best Practices for Hiring Medical Staff



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6 min read

Hiring medical staff can present physicians with unexpected challenges. Here's how to find the right people for your practice.

Finding and hiring medical staff has never been more important — or more difficult.

The difficulty of bringing on staff is partly because healthcare isn't like other industries. Working in a medical practice involves intense interactions with people who are often unwell or under stress. Mistakes can have life-or-death consequences. With the trend toward value-based reimbursement, patient satisfaction and outcomes can affect practice income. Because of this, in addition to skill and experience, today's medical practice staff need patience, customer service skills and a vision of the role they play in delivering quality care.

Meanwhile, healthcare has seen historically low unemployment and high turnover rates, as [Becker's Hospital Review](#) notes. According to a poll conducted by the [Medical Group Management Association](#) (MGMA), more than 60% of medical

In this landscape, what can help you bring on the people you need? Here are some tips for hiring medical staff.

Find Candidates by Connecting With the Wider Community

The search for candidates starts long before you have an open position in your practice.

- **Make your practice visible.** Look for ways to increase your practice's profile so that people in your community think of your office as a positive place to work where they can grow their careers. Participate in local health and wellness events, post on social media and publicize the achievements of staff members.
- **Network with other practices, departments and industries.** With the unemployment rate at historic lows, finding the right staff has meant reaching people who aren't actively looking for a job and may not even be employed in the healthcare field, as [CNN](#) reported. Some hospitals are finding that people trained in retail and other service industries can be a good fit for healthcare positions. The opportunity for a meaningful job, especially if it comes with good benefits and potential for advancement, may be enough to lure them away from their current fields.
- **Think long term.** Create a pipeline to your practice by partnering with professional associations, job boards and local schools and training programs. Offer job shadowing opportunities or [mentor students](#). Even a presentation at a high school or technical school can lead a qualified candidate to you down the road.
- **Encourage diversity.** Having a diverse staff is crucial. Dr. Wael Barsoum of the [Cleveland Clinic](#) wrote, "At Cleveland Clinic Florida, having a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-generational clinical and administrative team has boosted our efforts to provide our increasingly varied patient population with world-class care." According to a study by [McKinsey](#), staff diversity (in terms of gender, age, background, experience and so on) is also associated with a substantially better bottom line in all industries, including healthcare. Widen

your network by reaching out to job boards, schools, organizations and training programs that are serving diverse communities.

- **Create a rewarding work environment.** Creating a positive work environment

ask them.)

- **Keep lines of communication open.** If you meet a qualified candidate or receive a promising resume but you aren't hiring, keep their contact information on hand and encourage them to check back in case the right job opens up down the line. Similarly, stay in touch with employees who leave on good terms. If you remain top of mind for them, they may refer job-seeking colleagues to you or may even be open to returning if the right opportunity arises.

Dig Deeper in the Selection Process

A resume or job application tells only part of a candidate's story. Making the right selection requires digging deeper. Here are a few ways to get a better idea of who a candidate really is.

- **Go beyond credentials.** Candidates' experience, technical skills and education need to match the position you're hiring for, but another important consideration is how well a candidate will interact with clinicians, staff and patients. In fact, when [MGMA](#) asked healthcare leaders about the most important factor in hiring staff, 69% answered "cultural fit," which includes a person's character, motivation, work ethic and adaptability. Similarly, one hiring manager wrote in [Plastic Surgical Nursing](#) that anyone can be trained, but personality is fixed. Some practices use personality tests such as the Myers-Briggs to assess these qualities, while others rely on interviews and references.
- **Don't settle for a standard interview.** Look past standard interview questions to get a better idea of how the candidate will respond to situations that typically arise at your practice. You can set up a role-playing exercise to see their people skills in action or give them a scenario and ask them to explain what they would do, as one audiologist described in [The Hearing Journal](#). These types of interviews not only give you a better idea of the candidate's real-world skills, but they also give the candidate a glimpse of the situations they might encounter on the job. This can help the candidate decide if the job is right for them.
- **Discuss expectations.** Unrealistic expectations can set the stage for disappointment on the part of employer as well as the candidate. In addition to discussing your expectations of the candidate if they take the job, ask

they think they can contribute to the practice. Of course, you'll be better positioned to have these discussions if you've first established what exactly the position needs to do to support the success of the wider team — a key step not to overlook, according to a paper in [The Journal of Public Health Management and Practice](#).

While hiring medical staff comes with no guarantees, maintaining open lines of communication and [creating a rewarding work environment](#) can improve both patient satisfaction and job satisfaction for employees.

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Emily Paulsen writes about health and healthcare topics for consumers as well as healthcare professionals and administrators. Her special interests include patient education, health information technology, health disparities, workforce development, and improving the healthcare experience for patients and professionals alike. She has experience developing articles, fact sheets, toolkits, case studies, reports, research summaries, and continuing medical education materials. Her clients include trade publications, health organizations, non-profits, and government agencies.

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