

HOW TO RETOOL RECRUITING EFFORTS TO COMBAT PHYSICIAN SHORTAGES

The American Medical Association estimates a shortage of 200,000 physicians by 2020 based on a report by the Council on Graduate Medical Education.

Widely discussed, the shortage has been attributed to an aging physician workforce, abbreviated growth in medical education and a rising demand for health care with 70 million baby boomers entering retirement age.

As growing shortages become extremely costly for the medical industry nationwide, health care executives are looking to retool their recruiting efforts to stay competitive in their specific markets.

Today's average hospital recruiter has experience handling the recruitment process but often has too many additional duties and responsibilities to effectively manage all recruitment needs. In fact, less than 20 percent of in-house recruiters manage recruiting full time. While recruiters are multi-tasking and not solely focusing on staffing needs, the resulting unfilled positions can be extremely costly.

On average, it takes 40 hours per week to successfully recruit one candidate a month. Based on this estimation, to fill 10 to 12 physician positions

this year a full-time recruiter should have no other focuses or duties besides recruiting.

We hear routinely from health care executives who are concerned about the continuous decrease in physicians. More health systems are finding it impossible to interview enough candidates each year to fill all their needs, and executives want to know how to become more efficient and effective. Like many variables in health care, the longer you wait to take corrective action the more painful and expensive a solution becomes. As you are looking for more creative solutions to your physician shortage issue, here are few ways to retool your recruiting efforts:

Set a budget based on the number of physician hires you need. Do not recycle last year's recruiting budget. Your goals should reflect the needs of your organization at present.

View your recruiting department as a profit center not a cost center. Shortages in provided care are costly, while implementing efficient solutions for growth helps to increase profits.

Hire high-quality individuals to manage your recruiting department, giving them the authority and

accountability to produce results. A successful agency recruiter placing 12 physicians a year is a six figure earner. How do your results compare?

Invest in database resources and be prepared to track potential candidates over long periods of time. We are the only recruiting firm in the nation that combines a database company with expert recruiting services. Because of this, we can track a practicing physician that has recently joined a hospital elsewhere in your state. Statistically there's a 35 percent chance that same physician will be looking to relocate to a new hospital in less than five years, preferring to stay in state. By tracking this type of solid, qualified information you are able to place candidates with the greatest retention rate.

Invest in training to teach your front line personnel how to engage with candidates from the very first phone call. Think about who is making the initial contact to a prospective candidate and make sure you are comfortable with them making the first impression on behalf of your organization.

Develop a contract offer and negotiation protocol with deadlines and timelines. This should be handled with the same business expectations you have for every other operational function.

Develop a protocol for recruiting. Designate specific responsibilities for each team member and develop a timeline for each step in the process. There are often more than 30 steps in the recruiting process, from activating a search to signing the agreement. At PracticeMatch for example, we measure the results of each step to accurately identify where any breakdowns are occurring. Adhering to a recruiting process dramatically improves your success as candidates are impressed with you organization's professionalism which builds their sense of security.

Develop your message internally so everyone knows how to articulate organizational goals, mission and vision. Your organization's message must be consistent when being expressed externally. Conflicting messaging will often be a red flag for prospective candidates.

Most importantly, when implementing a more effective recruiting process, develop a communication system involving everyone.

Involving everyone in your team allows for essential insight you can use to develop an accurate, revitalized recruiting program.

Physician shortages can be overwhelming, and many organizations are becoming desperate for results. Recently reported by *the Associated Press*, Mercy Medical Center-North Iowa is offering \$10,000 to anyone—including aunts, neighbors and friends—who can help refer quality physicians. While this case is very unusual, it demonstrates the immense need for quality physicians as shortages continue.

Consider the tips above to help you improve your recruiting program. Additionally, you may also want to consider enlisting an outside consulting perspective that's not always subject to the political wind resistance that change can bring.

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