

---

# Hiring the Best Candidate

**By Elizabeth Woodcock, MBA, FACMPE, CPC**

A single bad hire can cost you more than \$50,000 according to a [CareerBuilder survey](#). If you have a position open, take the opportunity to hire right – the first time. Consider these proven techniques to get the best candidate for your practice.

**Listen.** While it's difficult to schedule multiple rounds of interviews with candidates for most positions, wisely use the 30 minutes that you have allotted for the interview. Introduce yourself and the practice, but limit yourself to three minutes. Use the remainder of the time for the interview. Don't lead with "tell me about yourself;" instead, "from what you know about our practice, tell me how you'd be a good contributor." Listen, but also observe body language. Persons who are eager for the position will be making eye contact, leaning in, and periodically nodding.

**Appeal.** When you post a position, focus on the annual salary, not the hourly wage. Consider that \$31,250 sounds much better than \$15, just be careful not to represent it as a salaried position if it is, in fact, an hourly role. Most importantly, salary is only one component of compensation. Document all aspects of the package – insurance(s), leave, retirement, parking, and the other great benefits you offer. Finally, recognize the power of a title. Don't advertise a front office or billing clerk; hire a patient service coordinator or revenue specialist.

**Don't Limit Yourself.** It's common for physicians to avoid interviews with anyone outside of the industry; it's time to think outside of the box for administrative positions. "Fit" trumps function in any service-oriented business, including medical practices. Don't automatically reject candidates with retail or hospitality experience; they often make the best patient-facing administrative team members. If you have a great candidate who only wants part-time, go for it. It's less expensive – because of benefits – to hire two part-timers for the position.

**Examine.** Give candidates basic skills tests – typing and message-taking, for example. Don't limit these to schedulers; in today's EHR-world, everyone needs to be able to type and take a message.

---

**Engage.** Don't leave the candidate's supervisor or manager out of the hiring process. Even if you want to interview all candidates, make sure the supervisor or manager is active in the hiring process before the offer is made. Retention is enhanced when managers are committed to their choice. Consider engaging coworkers as well, perhaps via a "working" interview. Unless state or local HR regulations disallow, this is a great tactic to really understand whether the candidate is a good fit.

**Use Effective Interview Techniques.** Avoid situation-based questions like: "What would you do if a patient was upset about his or her wait?" Instead, ask, "Tell me of a time when a customer was upset at you — what did you do?" Prepare questions in advance; give everyone (including yourself) the same evaluation form to ensure consistency.

**Set Expectations.** Before you hire, make them aware of the expectations of the position. If they may have to work a Saturday or two, tell them. Be upfront about the need to handle difficult patients at times. Don't sugarcoat the job; working at a practice is not an easy task. If you're not honest about the position, the results can be disastrous. The employee may leave if you haven't set accurate expectations. Further, you'll earn their trust for being upfront about what the job entails.

**Encourage Referrals.** Pay a bonus to an employee who recommends a candidate who is hired (and stays 30 days). Great employees attract other great employees!

The hiring process is the cornerstone of a successful practice, as people are your best assets. Using your mission and core values to find the right fit between candidates and your practice is essential in this process. An investment in an effective recruitment program pays off.

---

*The contents of The Sentinel are intended for educational/informational purposes only and do not constitute legal advice. Policyholders are urged to consult with their personal attorney for legal advice, as specific legal requirements may vary from state to state and/or change over time.*