



Employee Recruitment: Hiring the Right Person for Your Practice

You definitely want your pediatric dental practice to prosper and grow, but your skills and dedication are only part of the equation. Developing a team of talented, committed people is the difference between struggling for success and actually achieving it. Conversely, having the wrong people on your team, perhaps due to inadequate interviewing or rushed hiring, can cost your practice countless hours, or worse, countless patients. This issue of *PMM News* offers valuable tips on how to find and hire the right person for your practice.

Recruitment Choices: Cast a Wide Net

In a competitive marketplace, finding top people can be tough. Make sure you have not overlooked any of the following resources for employee recruitment.

The Internet

Increasingly, pediatric dental practices are turning to the Internet as a top hiring tool. A job posting on an employment Web site allows you to include much more information than a newspaper ad. You can promote the position, as well as screen out unqualified candidates. Plus, the posting is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Newspaper Advertisements

A job ad in the local newspaper is another excellent choice for recruitment. It allows you to reach a wide range of potential candidates in your immediate geographic area, especially if you run the ad on Sundays, the day of highest readership. On the downside, it is tough to be both brief and specific in job ads, so you might get calls from candidates who lack the required skills.

Local Schools

The placement offices of nearby schools not only offer the opportunity to hire new graduates, but some dental hygiene and assisting departments also offer listings of past graduates who are available for employment.

Professional Associations

Some local dental associations include an employment section in their journal or newsletters where you could place an ad. Also, associations for dental assisting or dental hygiene may keep listings of members who seek employment opportunities.

Professional Contacts

You can certainly let your colleagues know you are seeking a qualified candidate for a particular position. For example, your dental supply company or dental lab may know of a great employee who would enjoy working with children.

Employment Agencies

Although employment agencies tend to work best for specialized positions and small markets, you may decide it is worth the fee to have an outside source take over the burden of recruiting and screening potential candidates. Should you decide to go this route, select an agency with strong experience in health care recruitment.

The OOPS Factor: Five Common Interview Mistakes

An Outdated Job Description

If you do not know who you are looking for, you don't have much chance of finding them. The clearer you are about what you need, the easier the hiring process. Review the job description closely and make the necessary changes so it describes the exact duties and requirements, standards for performance and desired qualifications of the candidate.



Lack of Preparation

Using the job description, prepare an interview outline and draft your questions ahead of time. (If the job description serves as your guide during the interview, not only are you more likely to get the type of employee you need, but you will be able to document why you did not hire a particular candidate if necessary.) Then review the candidate's application or resume, particularly the record of employment.

Few Applicant Questions

Sometimes the most telling part of the interview is what the candidate asks about the position. For example, you would be more impressed with someone who asked, "How do you manage anxious children?" than "How soon do I get vacation?" Save time in the interview to answer the applicant's questions, and also ask, "Is there any additional information you think is important that I should know?"

No Team Involvement

Since teamwork is crucial to a pediatric dental practice, the top applicants should meet your staff. By asking for your team's input on candidates, you will not only gain a new perspective, but you will be setting the stage for a warmer welcome to the practice for the newly hired team member.

An Overly Impressive Interview

Do not rely solely on the interview no matter how impressive the candidate. You still need to check references. (As you have no doubt discovered, not everyone tells the absolute truth about his or her educational background or work experience.) Although getting information from schools and previous employers is much harder than it used to be, it does not hurt to try. When called for reference checks, employers are generally expected to provide only the employee's date of hire, date of termination and job title. If your application form includes a waiver and hold harmless agreement, then former employers or schools may be more likely to release additional information about the applicant.

Keep it Legal: An Update on Hiring Laws

With changing employment laws and an increasingly diverse pool of job candidates, it is essential to know the legal aspects of employment interviews. Since regulations vary from state to state – and city to city – check with your attorney about the employment laws for your area. When in doubt, go with the bottom line of hiring: All questions must be directly related to the person's ability to perform the position responsibilities.

NO: Since this is a pediatric practice, do you mind telling me if you have children?

YES: What experience do you have working with children?

You cannot ask questions about marital status, pregnancy or future plans for having a family. In addition, many state and local regulations provide protection against bias based on sexual orientation. Even such questions as "What does your husband do?" or "How old are your children?" should be avoided. Most of the time, your interest in family status is to discover if your scheduling and overtime needs will be met. Therefore, you can ask, "The hours of this position are Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Would working longer than your scheduled hours on occasion present a problem for you?"

NO: I noticed the lovely scarf on your head. Are you Muslim?

YES: Do you speak a language other than English that would be helpful in working with our patients?

National and state laws prohibit discrimination based on age, race, color, religion, sex and national origin. Therefore, you cannot ask questions about these topics, including the observance of religious holidays. Regarding national origin, you can ask if the candidate is a U.S. citizen and has a legal right to work in the United States.

NO: Do you have a mental or physical disability?

YES: This job requires the use of heavy medical equipment. Can you lift weights of up to 40 pounds?

According to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) you cannot ask whether, or to what extent, an applicant is disabled. You can ask if the candidate can perform particular job functions. The ADA, along with many state laws, prohibits discrimination against applicants with a wide range of physical or mental impairments, including persons with vision problems, HIV, learning disabilities and mental illness. Essentially, any question asked about physical or mental disability is off-limits unless the condition is related to an applicant's ability to do the job.

NO: How many sick days did you take at your last job?

YES: How many days were you absent during your last job?



Questions about sick leave relate too closely to the ADA. However, you can ask questions about whether an applicant can meet attendance requirements or was frequently absent from a previous job.

NO: Would you be willing to take a medical exam before we offer you this position?

YES: If offered the position, would you be willing to take a medical exam?

It is illegal under the ADA to ask an applicant to take a medical exam *before* making a job offer, or ask a candidate about current or previous medical conditions during the interview. After you make a job offer, you can make the offer conditional on a job-related medical exam, as long as you require *all* your employees to take the same exam.

NO: Have you ever been addicted to drugs or had a drinking problem?

YES: When is the last time you used illegal drugs?

Although past addiction to illegal drugs or alcohol is a covered disability under the ADA, current illegal drug use is not covered. Laws on drug and alcohol testing vary widely from state to state. Some states allow such testing only for jobs involving public safety; others for any occupation; and some states do not allow them at all. Before requiring a drug test, consult with your state department of labor to learn the rules in your state.

NO: Would you be willing to take a battery of psychological tests?

YES: This position requires the use of word processing software. Would you be willing to take a skills test?

You may wish to use pre-employment tests to screen out applicants unsuitable for a position. Although you are allowed to test candidates, federal

and state laws impose restrictions on what tests you can require. For the most part, skills tests are legal if they genuinely test a skill necessary for the performance of a job and are given to all qualified applicants. On the other hand, aptitude, psychological and personality tests may place you at risk for a lawsuit regarding such issues as discrimination and invasion of privacy. Before you require a test, check with your attorney regarding its legality in your state.

Great Interview Questions

How has your education prepared you for this position?

What did you like best or find most interesting about your last job?

How is this position similar to or different from the ones you have had previously?

What do you think is important about working with children? With parents?

We offer continuing education to our team. What type of training would you benefit from?

What challenges did you face in your previous job? How did you handle them?

What are three ways you think you could make a valuable contribution to our dental team?

Who has been your favorite employer (or teacher) and why?

A child starts crying immediately upon entering the treatment bay. What would you do?

A team member sees something in your work that could be improved. How should that situation be handled?

What other information about yourself would help me make a decision?

What questions do you have for me?

Federal Regulation Review

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin and applies to all private employers with 15 or more employees.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 prohibits age discrimination against individuals who are 40 years of age or older and applies to employers with 20 or more employees.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963, applying to most employers with one or more employees, prohibits wage discrimination between men and women in substantially equal jobs within the same establishment.

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, an amendment to Title VII and applicable to employers with 15 or more employees, makes it unlawful to discriminate against applicants or employees on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities and applies to employers with 15 or more employees.





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