



Talent Acquisition
Finding and Retaining the Right Person for Your Practice®

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It has been said many times that employees are our most valuable assets. Without a well-trained, highly motivated staff, it will be difficult for any Practice to achieve its strategic vision and performance goals. Since every Practice will need to hire additional staff at some point, the decision to hire a new employee should not be taken lightly or without careful Talent Acquisition planning. The key to any Talent Acquisition effort is to devise and implement a strategy that will yield the greatest opportunity to attract talent and retain them.

Defining the Job

Every recruitment effort should incorporate strategies to address sourcing, screening, interviewing and selection. Before deciding where, when and how to advertise for a job opening, it is critical to confirm the need for the job still exists. Every Practice needs to accomplish certain basic functions, including reception, patient examination, inventory management, client billing, etc. When a Practice is just starting out, many of these responsibilities are combined into one or more positions. Team members often are responsible for doing anything and everything needed to help run the Practice and job descriptions should reflect this broad array of duties. As a Practice grows and evolves, management needs to analyze and improve the Practice's organizational structure. Job descriptions will help reveal whether all Practice responsibilities are adequately covered and where responsibilities should be reallocated to achieve a better balance.

As a result, a job description should be reviewed annually to ensure it includes and clarifies information regarding the general and strategic nature of the work to be performed, specific responsibilities and duties and the employee characteristics or competencies needed by the person who will be required to fulfill the job requirements. Knowing these needed attributes will help ensure a Practice has the best possible chance of finding the right individual. In addition, an accurate job description will ensure interested candidates are provided a clear and concise picture of what the job entails and enables the potential employee to assess the relative importance of everything he/she is accountable for, providing a sense of where the job fits in to the Practice as a whole and how the position supports the Practice's overall goals. If a job description does not exist for the position you are looking to fill, this is the ideal time to create it.

Determining Where to Look

Once your job description is completed, you are ready to craft a job posting that dazzles an ideal candidate by highlighting your Practice's strengths and the position's attractiveness. Describe your Practice's culture, reputation, growth, benefits package, advancement opportunities and

even location. Think of your job descriptions and job postings as advertising copy that you have created as an opportunity to highlight what is great about your Practice and to pull in your next high achiever.

Once you have clearly identified what position you are looking to fill, the next step is determining the best places to look. There are various resources that can help you “cast a wider net” about your job opening. The decision of where and how to recruit should be based on an assessment of how difficult you think it will be to find a sufficient number of qualified candidates and how much time, effort and money you are willing to commit to the recruiting process. While some sources are free or relatively inexpensive, others are very costly and may require signing an agreement with outside consultants to pay a percentage of the first year annual salary of the individual you ultimately hire. Be creative in your sourcing because you never know where your next ideal candidate will be present.

Conducting the Interview

The interview provides the hiring manager a perfect opportunity to identify the applicant(s) best qualified and best suited for the Practice. If conducted properly, it offers a valuable opportunity to assess how an applicant will perform the essential functions of the job and whether s/he will fit into the culture of the Practice. However, if handled incorrectly or unprofessionally, you risk alienating a candidate to whom you may want to issue a job offer. To ensure the interview process runs smoothly and without misstep, it is advisable to assign responsibility to one person to act as “gatekeeper” of the recruitment process.

In preparing for the interview, an applicant checklist should be developed to ensure all necessary information and documents have been obtained and distributed to persons involved in the interview and selection process (e.g. job description, application, resume, etc...). Prior to the interview, train the employees involved in the process regarding what questions are and are not permissible (all questions should be job related), interviewing techniques (ask broad, open-ended questions that require an applicant to process what is being asked and develop an appropriate response), behavioral interviewing (questions eliciting responses regarding goals, motivation, and responses to specific situations are valuable in determining if your Practice’s culture and organization structure offer opportunities that match those of the applicant) and ensure all team members know what skills, knowledge and competencies they will be looking for in the applicants. Asking the wrong questions, or asking the right questions in the wrong manner, can result in serious legal problems for a Practice. Only ask questions that will provide information about the person’s ability to do the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation.

Effective interviewers listen more than they talk. Remember, your goal in the interview is to learn as much as you can about the applicant. Be sure to control the pace and flow of the conversation. Once the interview is completed, be sure to thank the applicant for coming to the interview, explain that you are still in the interviewing phase, and inform the applicant that you hope to be making a decision within the next few days/weeks.

Making the Offer

Now that you have completed the interview process and determined whom you want to select, it is time to decide how to extend the job offer. Here, too, there are guidelines you should follow

to ensure the entire recruitment process does not fail because you did not act swiftly or decisively enough in the eyes of your chosen candidate. To avoid losing the “right person”, make the offer as soon as possible after the final job interview.

Admittedly, you don’t want to rush the interview process and risk hiring the wrong person. However, the individual you ultimately select may also be actively interviewing with other practices and might receive another offer while you deliberate. By making the offer as soon as possible, you increase your chances of hiring the person you want. Considering you may only have one opportunity to offer the job to that individual, be sure to reemphasize all the benefits of working for your Practice. This is the ideal time to review salary and benefits, paid time off, paid (or unpaid) CE, personal pet care benefits, and any other terms and conditions of employment.

If your Practice includes pre-employment drug screening and background screening as a routine part of the employment process, this testing will need to be done AFTER a contingent job offer of employment has been made. Depending on the level of the job being offered, you may wish to have a formal employment agreement developed by an employment attorney who is knowledgeable about the veterinary industry.

The final step in the interview process entails notifying rejected applicants that they were not selected. This notification is normally accomplished by email or written letter. While there is no requirement for this notification, taking this action sends the message that your Practice respects all applicants and is committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect. Furthermore, you may wish to reconsider a previously rejected applicant at some future date.

On-Boarding the New Hire

On-Boarding is the process by which a Practice acclimatizes its new employees. It is one of the keys for improving productivity, building loyalty and engagement, fostering a stronger team, and helping employees become successful early in their careers with the new Practice. Employee on-boarding includes the processes that allow new employees to learn about the structure, vision, mission, and values of the Practice as well as to complete new-employee paperwork relative to benefits and legal documents such as non-competes, at-will statements and employee handbooks. For some Practices, the employee on-boarding process consists of one or two days of activities; for others, this process may involve a series of activities spanning one or many months.

Veterinary Practices have learned that employee on-boarding is not merely a process for getting new employees to sign off on their new-hire paperwork, but a process that is essential to transitioning a new employee into your Practice. Studies have proven that employee engagement is partially determined by the new employee’s treatment and orientation during the first 30–90 days of employment. A solid employee on-boarding strategy will help build on that loyalty and help with retention and engagement issues throughout an employee’s tenure. The new employee will be anointed into the Practice’s team culture by understanding the Practice’s mission, vision, values and knowing how his/her job responsibilities and performance support the Practice’s overall goals. It is important to engage with recent new hires and ask open-ended questions to determine their level of satisfaction with the Practice to ensure success, improve productivity and ultimately, enhance retention.

In conclusion, Talent Acquisition is a process that requires planning and detailed execution, but when done correctly, the outcome will yield the greatest opportunity to attract and retain the high achiever, 'A' player talent for any job position within your Practice.