



How to hire great staff

By Julie Parker

A lot of time and money can be spent in putting together a great team of employees. So when one decides to leave, it can be a troubling time to search for the replacement. Your practice will either be the beneficiary of a newcomer's qualities, or the victim of his or her shortcomings. Becoming an effective "hirer" is a powerful skill to master, so putting thought and energy into the process makes good business sense.

Firstly, set up a structure that allows you to take the time needed to find the best candidates. Many times we have just two weeks to fill the role, so I suggest that you employ a temp to fill the role in the short-term. The benefits of this are:

- Productivity doesn't suffer, as it is business as usual;
- Team members are not over-burdened with added responsibilities;
- You can relax and roll out your hiring process without being time-pressured;
- You have more time to attract more and better applicants; and
- If the temp is a great performer, your search may be over! (Ensure when organising your temps that you inform the agency that you are on a search. They often organise permanent staff placements as a result of successful match-ups).

Finding applicants

The obvious avenues to search for staff are SEEK.com and recruitment agencies. SEEK can, however, be a bit hit-and-miss. The quality of many applications can be low and you find yourself discarding the majority of them. Despite this, SEEK is a great place to start.

I encourage you to put a great deal of thought in to the wording of your ad. If we compare it to a dating site bio, it is not enough to simply state your gender, the state you live in and that you are seeking someone with a good personality. Your bio would not stand out from the other bios and it would fail to attract the type of person who could fill the fundamental needs that are required to develop a happy relationship.

"We each know 250 people, of whom each know 250 people, meaning that on average you have over 60,000 second level connections. Tap in to your network and the networks of your network, directly via conversation and also through social media..."

Therefore, if the first draft of your ad only includes the job available, the suburb you are located in and that "only experienced people need apply", you have the opportunity now to do a re-write.

You are looking for someone who will engage with your practice values, your team culture and get excited by what you are offering. One of our strongest motivators is the need to feel we are part of something bigger than ourselves, so tell applicants what your practice vision and goals are. Give people a reason to get excited at the thought of joining your practice. You want to stand out to individuals who are naturally enthusiastic and

want to excel in their work. So use the ad to tell that group what they need to read, in order to "buy in" to you. If you want a few examples of such ads, send me an email and I will happily send them to you.

I am a supporter of using recruitment companies. Why? They are good at what they do. Just as you have superior skills in dentistry because of your training, experience and continuation of education, so are people in recruitment. The drawback for many in small-medium businesses is the cost. It is definitely higher than using other methods. However consider the costs involved in:

- Going through a number of employees before finding the right one;
- Enduring a bad-fit newcomer;
- Lowered surgery productivity; and
- Upsetting your normally happy team.

The recruitment agency fee is a once-off and high, where the cost of hiring a bad employee is initially lower but over a long period of time and a lot of damage can be done.

Looking further afield

Take advantage of your network when seeking out new recruits. You have a staff and customer base you can take advantage of and social media tools at your disposal to broaden your reach. 70% of jobs in all industries throughout Australia are filled via word-of-mouth, not by placing an ad. I know of a number of employees hired through existing patients of a practice. It reminds me of the Rule of 250, as told to me by JPPS co-founder Charles Kovess. We each know 250 people, of whom each know 250 people, meaning that on average you have over 60,000 second level connections. Tap in

Probation period

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The interview process

Set aside a full hour for each interview. Take your time to really listen to what the candidates have to say. Often, more time is put into talking about specific skill requirements over actually getting to know the person and having them get to know you. This is the chance for you to access and trust your intuitive side. How effectively does each candidate build rapport with you? This will be an indicator of how quickly they will develop relationships with your patients and staff. What are they passionate about? What makes them excited to come to work every day? Are their values aligned with that of your practice and team? Remember that you are best to hire on attitudes and characteristics over skill. You can teach skills, but a person's attitude and personality is here to stay.

Hire with a probation period in place. Always have an induction process: leaving "first impressions" to chance is very costly. During probation, support the new employee by having regular discussions around your specific expectations. People will work to your "prescription"

so provide them what they need to do in order to satisfy your needs. This goes both ways. Ask them what they need from you in order to provide the best performance they can. Communication and clarity is key to establishing a fruitful working relationship.

About the author

Julie Parker's whole career has been devoted to the dental industry, starting in 1987 as a dental nurse. In 2003, Julie became the first non-dentist to buy a dental practice in Australia. She owned and managed her practice in Brighton, Victoria for 10 years. During this time, she more than trebled the turnover and her staff base grew from 3 to 12 members. Julie successfully cultivated a winning team and a winning business. Her business programs on how to accomplish a dream dental business are gleaned from her wealth of experience, intensive education and an inquisitive business mind. Julie is a Certified Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Time Line Therapy and Hypnotherapy.

Julie Parker Practice Success offers a subscription based program that educates all dental staff in the building and managing of their practices. Members receive monthly audio CD's and workbooks that lead them along the path to personal and team success. All team members, including the dentists, receive Certificates of Completion each month for submission for non-clinical CPD points and inclusion on resumes. Memberships are available for \$395 per month. For more info, see www.julieparkerpracticesuccess.com.au.