

Physician Recruiting 101

Recruiting physicians is one of the most important things that can be done to serve a community. Many organizations wonder what they can do to improve their physician recruiting results.

The following nine points are traits of successful Physician Recruiters:

1. The number one reason physician recruiting programs fall short is because the person making the call has call reluctance. People are shy about picking up the phone to connect with candidates; you must overcome this and call and speak to them!
2. Next is the inability to engage the physician candidate in a quality discussion. Successful physician recruiters should be able to talk with the physician candidate for at least 45 minutes on the first phone call about the opportunity. If your phone call lasts ten minutes you probably need some coaching on how to engage physicians when conducting recruiting calls. Topics need to include the type of community they want to live in, the type of practice they want, and their hobbies. Ask open-ended questions.
3. The number three reason physician recruiting can be unsuccessful is because the person making phone calls does not close on a site visit date. Over 50 percent of the recruiting mistakes are made at this point. Too many hospitals and physician groups, when making the first call, close with the next step of having a physician call the physician candidate. Management needs to close with an on-site visit date.
4. The next issue is that existing physicians in the same specialty are excluded from the recruiting process. Eventually your own physician community may have a sniper who emerges when you have a visiting physician on campus or afterwards in a phone call. Manage this process via your leadership skills. You may have to sit down and talk face to face with the current physicians in the same specialty you are recruiting to discuss all the aspects of bringing in another physician. If you are recruiting a specialty which requires a strong referral base, you also need to emphasize the need for the recruit to your primary care base of physicians. You may agree to disagree, but you have to lead this process.
5. You cannot recruit successfully if you allow yourself to think physician recruiting is a minor part of your job. You can hire recruiting firms and consultants to help you screen and find candidates, but you have to think physician recruiting is a major part of your job. Humana, now an insurance company based out of Louisville, Kentucky, at one time owned and managed hospitals. Twenty-five years ago Humana trained their administrators by stating that at least fifty percent of their time must be devoted to physician recruiting. Yes, you read it correctly, fifty percent of the time. Jack Welch, who had record profits while running the holding company of GE, considered recruiting one of the most important tasks he and other managers performed.
6. Site visits sometimes are too predictable, being the same as the last one. Successful physician recruiters customize the site visits around the personalities and interests of the physician candidate and his/her family. We find too many physician recruiters plan the site visit based upon their own preferences instead of the preferences of the physician candidate. Successful physician recruiters will get on the phone and ENGAGE the physician in discussing the site visit. Less successful recruiters will just let it happen on its own, doing the same thing every time. Some physician candidates will want to spend two days, others only one. Plan the site visit with the physician candidate and with the physician

candidate's spouse. Take the opportunity to call and talk directly with the spouse. Successful physician recruiters plan customized unique site visits based on the candidate's needs.

7. We find too often the physician candidate is allowed to be on their own during the site visit to discuss the community with snipers. Yes, we all have snipers in the communities, in management, and in our medical staff. Snipers seem to take it upon themselves to define the negative to the physician candidate. If you turn your physician candidates loose by themselves during the on-site visit, based upon our experience, 30 to 40 percent of the time someone outlines the negative. Successful recruiters never leave their physician candidates unassigned during the on-site visit.
8. Get an offer letter to the physician candidate within three days of the site visit.
9. We all like to think we make objective decisions based on sound quantitative data. Many unsuccessful recruiters think physician candidates make decisions via carefully weighing all the gathered information. We believe this to be an incorrect assumption. Physicians are trained to make diagnostic decisions in the first seven minutes of seeing a patient. Many make a diagnostic decision sooner. Physicians are trained for many years to think episodically. In contrast, with management you are trained that everything is a process and through implementation of processes you make progress. Physicians usually do not make decisions like management.

Successful recruiters realize the number one reason a physician chooses a community, outside of a location close to family, is because they feel needed. They need to feel needed. Physician candidates determine if they are needed through heightened sensory awareness. Will I have a full practice? Are there enough patients in the area? Do the other physicians really want me there? Did the hospital make me feel wanted? Did the nursing staff make me feel wanted? Successful recruiters do extrathings to make the physician candidates feel wanted.

Some successful recruiters have the organization's staff sign welcome cards from 80 percent of the staff indicating how much the physician candidate is needed. One successful recruiting organization had a high school marching band welcome the physician candidate when the physician arrived. Another organization had a parade for the physician candidate.

When we ask physicians why they chose a particular opportunity over another, the most frequent answer is: "the people there; I like them; I trust them; we're going to get along."

Successful recruiters make physician candidates feel wanted. They sell their opportunity.

Successful physician recruiting is all about the following:

1. Call within a few hours, not days of obtaining a CV.
2. ENGAGE your physician candidate in a quality conversation via asking multiple questions. Have a forty-five minute phone call asking questions that make a good impression. Be genuinely interested which will make you appear interested.
3. Close the first phone call with a site visit date, not with another planned phone call.
4. Provide leadership in getting your physicians to understand why you are recruiting.
5. Develop a positive attitude about recruiting. Put the needed time into physician recruiting, realizing it is a very important part of your responsibilities. Think positively about physician recruiting.
6. Successful physician recruiters plan custom site visits around the unique personalities and interests of the physician candidate and his/her family.

7. Successful recruiters never leave their physician candidates unassigned during the site visit. Snipers will have the opportunity to strike.
8. Get an offer letter to the physician within three days of the site visit.
9. Physicians often make location decisions on the emotion of feeling wanted. Encourage your clients to make the physician candidate feel wanted. Do something fun and unique!