



Tips to Recruit Physicians in a Competitive Market

By Aubrey Westgate | November 22, 2011

Many of you are attempting to recruit physicians, but as the physician shortage increases and competition from other practices and hospitals intensifies, recruiting is more difficult than ever.

Vivian M. Luce, regional director of physician recruitment firm Cejka Search, recently spoke with *Physicians Practice* to outline the key ways to speed up the recruitment process and find the right fit for your practice.

Plan Ahead

The time it takes to successfully recruit a physician has nearly doubled since 2002, Luce says. And it's clear that trend will continue for some time.

According to the *2010 Physician Retention Survey*, a national survey of the American Medical Group Association (AMGA) members in partnership with Cejka Search, the already competitive physician search market is becoming *more* competitive.

Eighty-three percent of medical groups said they planned to hire "more" or "significantly more" primary-care physicians in 2011; and nearly the same percentage said they planned to hire specialist and advanced practitioners.

That intense competition means that starting the physician search without an adequate lead time could result in a long and detrimental physician vacancy gap. For example, a pediatric cardiologist could require 12 to 18 months to hire, conservatively speaking. As a result, it's "imperative" that practices anticipate future growth and understand the supply/demand within their specialty, Luce says.

She suggests practices implement a staff development plan to help them anticipate when physician job openings will occur and to help them schedule recruitment efforts accordingly. "They should really take into account the difficulty and the market for recruiting physicians well before they actually need to recruit," says Luce.

Roll out the ‘Red Carpet’

When supply is low and demand is high, it’s essential to make your opportunity stand out, says Luce. A great way to do that is by showing your candidates you value them as individuals — as well as physicians.

When a candidate visits your practice for the first time, explain and illustrate how your community can meet his and his family’s needs, she says.

For example, a previous practice client of Luce’s knew their potential recruit enjoyed outdoor activities and his spouse enjoyed weaving. When the physician visited the practice, the CEO took him fly fishing; and the practice arranged for his spouse to visit an alpaca owner (alpacas produce wool for weaving).

“That to me is rolling out the red carpet,” says Luce.

Be Accommodating

A flexible schedule is a major selling point among potential candidates, says Luce. That’s because more and more physicians are placing greater value in a work-life balance.

In fact, between 2005 and 2010, the total number of physicians who chose to work **part time** increased from 13 percent to 21 percent according to the *2010 Physician Retention Survey*.

If your practice is unwilling accommodate more flexible schedules, you’re going to attract a smaller pool of applicants. As a result, Luce suggests offering part-time work options, four-day work weeks, job sharing, or a floating schedule and extended days to candidates.

Rethink Traditional Strategies

Those practices that are still cold-calling potential candidates are wasting valuable time, says Luce. “Just getting access to a physician’s home number or even work number is labor intensive,” she says. “From a labor point of view ... that’s just not even practical.”

A better alternative is interactive HTML Flash e-mail marketing, says Luce; it’s faster and it reaches a broader audience. In fact, physicians say e-mails are one of the main ways they find jobs, she says.

In addition, e-mail marketing can help practices identify the most receptive candidates (their target audience) by tracking e-mail open-rates and click-throughs.

But Luce cautions, make sure e-mails are brief *and* mobile friendly.

Next week we’ll share Luce’s “Five Essential Tech Tools” to successful physician recruitment.