



Nine Physician Recruiting Success Factors

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Recruiting physicians to communities and organizations is one of the most important responsibilities of the organization's management team.

We often are asked the same question from multiple organizations: "Please tell us how we can improve our physician recruiting results." We get direct questions such as, "Who is the best physician recruiting company?" We put this document together to help answer what we see as some of the more common issues in physician recruiting. **The nine items addressed here are some things you, as a physician recruiter, have some control over.**

Some organizations have great success in recruiting physicians when they are located in a less desirable location. Others struggle with physician recruiting. What is the difference? Based on our experience the following nine areas are part of the difference.

1. 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!

Often it appears we try to find something wrong with a physician candidate before we call them. Some organizations pass the CV around to management and physicians, spending days debating what may be wrong with the physician candidate.

It is best to call a physician candidate within a few hours of receiving a CV. Wait a week after receiving the CV and you send the first impression the physician candidate is not important. You don't get a second chance to make first impressions. **Successful physician recruiters call the physician candidate the same day they get their CV.**

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.

You may need to use some techniques from the Dale Carnegie book "How to Win Friends and Influence People." **Basically, you ask questions.** You ask questions as to where they want to live and what is important to them. You ask what is important to their spouse. **You need to be interested in them being a good fit from their point of view.** Then you can help describe from your experience what they need to look for in seeking an opportunity. Your job is to **ENGAGE** them in the conversation and be interested from their point of view. Four weeks from now they need to remember you.

If all you did is describe the opportunity and then end the call, you did not differentiate yourself from anyone else.

You need to find out how they are looking for a job. Are they using the internet or multiple recruiting firms in finding an opportunity?

You need to ask this question: Why do you want to leave where you are now (if they're in practice now) and listen very closely to their answer.

Ask information about whether they have ever had their privileges revoked and about their malpractice record. Ask them if they prefer

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research or patient care and ask about their reimbursement and volumes.

Another important fact is how much money they take home and how many site visits they have made. Talk to them about what they liked and disliked about the last site visit. Physician candidates remember **ENGAGED** phone calls, which seem to help them in their efforts to find quality opportunities. On the first phone call it is important to establish some common ground and trust. **Successful physician recruiters ENGAGE in the conversation with physician candidates**

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.**

We are big advocates of having physicians participate in decisions. However, execution should be conducted by management. Management does not perform patient care and most physicians don't make good recruiters over the phone. Get your physicians involved after you close with a site visit date. You can always cancel or reschedule a site visit. Some places use their trained medical directors to recruit and this works well if they close on a site visit. If one of your existing physicians desires to be involved, prior to the site visit, then schedule a phone conference in your office at a set time. This will help you influence the situation in a positive direction.

Successful hospital or physician group recruiters close with a site visit date on the first phone call.

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.

If you wait until you bring a physician candidate on-site and the process happens without your leadership, then it often goes poorly. The physician candidate will sense the political unrest and choose another opportunity. Some organizations allow the sniping to happen multiple times. **Successful physician recruiters use strong leadership in the area of resistance and then manage the recruiting process around the issues.**

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.

Think positive thoughts about recruiting. Tell yourself physician recruiting is important and you enjoy the function. **Successful physician recruiters have a positive attitude about physician recruiting functions.**

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

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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 extra things 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. Minimize physician snipers.

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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. Make the physician candidate feel wanted. Do something fun and unique!

We believe physician recruiting should be a top priority for organizations. Recruiting physicians to communities and organizations is one of the most important responsibilities of the organization's management team.

Some organizations have much greater success than others in recruiting when we think they may be in a less desirable location. It is our intention to help organizations understand how to improve their recruiting programs. Please feel free to call or e-mail us with your thoughts of what makes recruiting successful.

E-mail us at wclayton@cshco.com

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The Clemans Group has recently merged with Clark, Schaefer, Hackett.

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