

## Spark for Dental Team Success Series

### Hiring Quality Staff Members

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**Series Objective:** To introduce key ideas that will spark your dental practice to reach its full potential.

Hiring a new staff member can seem like an overwhelming process, but it doesn't have to be.

So, how do you make the process bearable and—dare I say—enjoyable?

A dental practice is so much more than a degree on the wall and a schedule of appointments. It's an inviting, yet professional, atmosphere for your patients and it's a family for your staff members.

When it's time to add a new staff member, you need to take the time to hire the right person who will contribute to the warm and professional environment you've nurtured, but who will also fit in with the family of staff that you've gathered.

Follow these eight steps the next time your practice is hiring:

**1. Ask your current staff members, family, and friends to refer someone.**

These are the people who know you, know your office, and know your needs. Asking them for referrals is essentially pre-screening applicants, so make it worth their time by offering them a referral fee if the person they bring to you ends up being the right person for the job.

Also keep in mind that you should hire based on personality and values and not just based on their dental skill set. We've all learned dentistry, but you can't learn a personality! Take a careful look at applicants' personality, value system, maturity, responsibility, and dependability during the hiring process to ensure they're a match for your office and team.

**2. Look outside the dental community for qualified applicants.**

As I mentioned, dentistry can be taught, so that shouldn't be your deciding factor when it comes down to two or three applicants.

Pulling applicants from other customer service-focused industries is a great way to find a team member who will put your patients first. They can always learn your systems.

Great feeder industries include:

- Banking
- Retail
- Health care
- Restaurants

### **3. Use [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) to narrow your applicant field**

Craig's List can be a great local resource for finding qualified applicants, but you must be extremely specific in your job description and requirements. Narrow down your search by including:

- The exact location of your office,
- The salary range (and whether it's negotiable), and
- The specific hours required.

This allows you to proactively screen applicants. You will still receive random applicants, but you will get far fewer if you make your requirements as specific as possible.

Continue to narrow down the applicant field by deleting resumes that contain grammatical errors, geographic location that isn't within commuting distance, and lack of experience.

Be brutal when deleting resumes—it will save time and get you closer to finding the right applicant faster.

### **4. Hold group interviews**

The quickest way to accurately assess applicants' personality and critical thinking skills is to hold a group interview with 5-15 people. Within an hour, you'll have narrowed that group down to 1 or 2 strong candidates (provided you narrowed your applicant field in step 3).

It's helpful to have an additional person in the group interview to observe and offer feedback. It's not always possible to notice all the interactions and personalities on your own, so having a second set of eyes and ears in the room is always advantageous. I recommend having the doctor, an office member or a staff member sit in on the group interview.

One of the first items on the group interview agenda is giving the applicants a math and spelling test. This is again meant to quickly weed out those that don't have the basic skills necessary to work in your office.

Other items to take into consideration during the interview process include applicants' promptness, their attire (is it appropriate for an interview and appropriate for your office?), their inter-personal skills, their general demeanor, and their critical thinking skills.

## **5. Personal Interview**

For those applicants who excel at the group interview, it's time to set up a personal interview with the doctor and one other staff member. It's always good to have two people from the office conduct the personal interview since different people will pick up on different things that could be crucial to finding the right fit. Ideally, you will vary the personality styles of those who do the interviewing.

## **6. Check References**

Checking references is a vital step in the hiring process that sometimes gets swept under the carpet because it can be a tedious task. It's imperative that you not skip this step. You must talk with previous managers and employers to get a solid reference. If you do unearth any issues during this process, remember that there are two sides to every story so talk to the applicant about the matter.

## **7. Half-Day Working Interview**

Once you've checked the applicant's references, it's time to ask them in for a half-day working interview. The key word here is *working*. This is not meant for *them* to observe *you* but rather for *you to observe them doing actual tasks that are part of the job*. Give them a few challenges (answering new patient phone calls for example) to see how they handle different situations under stress.

Finish the half-day interview by having key staff members take the interviewee out to lunch. I'm always amazed at what you can find out about a person in a more social environment. Have the staff members focus on deciding if this is someone they:

- Like?
- Are willing to work with?
- Could train?

These are all vital components to selecting the right applicant.

## **8. Conduct a background check**

Seems like overkill, right? It's not. You've put a lot of time and energy into this search so it's crucial that you complete the process by conducting a background check. It protects your practice and your employees.