Hiring and firing new and old staff

Believe it or not, firing a member of staff can be the easy part. It’s finding that perfect new addition to the team that can lead to problems. Jeremy Reuben explains how using a recruitment agency can ease the stress.

Many of us can’t wait for Sir Alan Sugar to utter those famous and deadly words on The Apprentice. Never has ‘you’re fired!’ sounded so good. However, it might be something of a pantomime when we see it on TV, but in reality, losing an employee can cause serious problems, particularly in dentistry where specialised expertise is a prerequisite.

With the level of unemployment on the rise, recruitment is once more becoming an issue. A recent article in the Guardian, based on official data from the Office for National Statistics, reported that the number of benefit claimants increased to 808,500, a rise of 7,200 in April 2008 – the biggest since April 2006. With so many people unemployed, you might think that replacing a team member will be easy. But you could get a nasty shock.

Any other choice?

In an ideal world, you would never be given a reason to sack any of your employees. Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world. Sometimes there is simply no other option. In dentistry, you need to be absolutely certain that you can rely on your team. Their competence and attitude is crucial, not just to meet the high expectations of patients to let you compete in the modern industry, but also to ensure that procedures and treatments are carried out safely and competently.

In many jobs, errors can cause minor setbacks. In dentistry, they can potentially have lifelong consequences for patients. Consider what might happen if one of your team fails to abide by infection-control protocols; now think about the problems that can occur if a team member takes a lackadaisical approach to diagnosis, and consequently fails to achieve satisfactory results or worse, the treatment has a detrimental effect on the patient’s health that takes a great deal of time on the clinician’s part and discomfort on the patient’s part to put right.

Finding a replacement

If one of your staff gives you no other choice but to dismiss them, you’ll need to replace them as soon as possible. The grim truth is that you simply cannot continue to offer a first-class service to all of your patients without a full complement of staff. Let’s say for instance you have to dismiss one of your dental nurses. How much longer will a procedure take with one less pair of hands, and how will patient comfort suffer as a result?

Recruitment is a demanding process, and requires a great deal of time. First of all, you need to advertise the position, to reach out to any skilled professionals who might be looking for a new challenge. Now, your first instinct might be to send the ad to every major dentistry publication, and to the local press as well.

This might well lead to the crème de la crème responding to your advertisement. However, it might just as easily lead to hundreds upon hundreds of CVs arriving for candidates simply not suited to the role. As often happens with job advertisements, people put themselves forward even if they do not meet all the criteria, on the off-chance that you might decide to take them on.

Time-consuming business

The trouble with this approach to recruitment is that you simply cannot predict how successful a yield of candidates it will produce. You get no guarantee of success. Another drawback is that you will have to sort through all those CVs yourself, or delegate the task to one of your team. They have enough to do; your receptionists will not be very happy if they have to check references and respond to applications on top of their usual duties. Patient care may well suffer, and you can’t afford for that to happen.

You could always take the applications home with you after a busy day at the practice, and spend all of your free time reading them, couldn’t you? No, thought not! How on earth are you going to be fresh in the morning, ready to meet the challenges of a new day and treat a new wave of patients if you haven’t had a moment’s rest or recreation? So what can you do to make recruitment as stress-free, as streamlined and expedient – and as reliable – as possible?

Stress-free solution

By contacting a recruitment agency, you can sidestep the whole process, and let dedicated experts find you the new blood you need. Obviously it is best to opt for an agency that specialises in dental recruitment so they understand the unique requirements of the industry. Their candidates will have undergone comprehensive interviews to ascertain their skills, education and experience, and also their ambitions and attitude. This means that you will be presented with only those candidates who fit perfectly into the role for which they are required, dramatically reducing the necessary probationary period.

When selecting a dental recruitment agency, you need to be sure that you will get a top quality service. A leading agency like Browns Locumlink not only carries out extensive vetting of candidates, is also operates on a ‘no placement, no fee’ basis – so its clients have nothing to lose! Compare this to the cost of advertising in publications, and the lack of a guarantee of success.

Another benefit of recruiting through an agency is that you can develop strong links with your specialist. Browns Locumlink supplies emergency locum staff for its clients, so that in the case of short term, unforeseen absences, the business does not suffer; with access to dentists, dental nurses, hygienists and receptionists, all just a phone call away, you will always feel secure, particularly when there are nasty bugs going around!

Building a rapport

The best advice is to start developing a relationship with a leading agency now, and should you ever need to play the role of Sir Alan (although hopefully you’ll be a little more tactful and sensitive) you will just need to pick up the phone to replace the dismissed team member. You won’t need to fear sickness, either long term or short term, or expert staff resigning in search of new challenges. With a hotline to a leading dental recruitment agency, you will be able to consistently offer a high standard of treatment to your patients and be confident that, come hell or high water, this standard will never slip. For more information, contact Browns Locumlink on 020 8927 0972, or email info@brownslocumlink.com.

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