

Public Health Nurse Recruitment Best Practices December 2009

This summary of the literature on the best practices for recruiting nurses was developed as a tool to identify possible ways to improve recruiting into open positions. We have summarized these practices as action items. Many, if not all, of these practices are useful for recruiting health professionals from disciplines other than nursing. The number shown in the parentheses at the end of each statement refers to the article number in the reference list. Please, feel free to distribute as seems appropriate.

Advertising Best Practices: Outlets

- Use social network outlets – 25% of directors of nursing viewed informal contacts as most successful recruitment strategy (6).
- Strengthen ties to local nursing schools and participate in career fairs when possible (1).

Advertising Best Practices: Emphasis and Wording

- Emphasize high value of helping others – This is important as a motivation (3).
- Emphasize the unique attributes of the organization, so applicants know what makes nursing there special (1).
- Emphasize good working environment – Poor job-related characteristics are a significant barrier to filling RN FTE vacancies (6).
- Emphasize close to home – Convenience of location ranks high as a factor in considering a job (3).
- Emphasize education and advancement opportunities, compensation, and fringe benefits to attract nurses with five or fewer years of nursing experience (5).
- Emphasize work flexibility to attract nurses who have twenty or more years of nursing experience or who may have been out of the workforce for some period of time (5, 7).
- Don't downplay the complexity of the job too much, as this may affect applicants' expectations of their role (7).
- Attract applicants with different levels of work experience by emphasizing different job attributes – Nurses with different levels of work experience place differing weight on job attributes (5).

Inquiry Handling Best Practices

- Be responsive to inquiries about positions – Having calls immediately routed to RN is important (3).
- Make a good first impression – Applicants decide where to interview based on limited information received early in the job choice process (2).
- Be a “positive valence” recruiter – Recruiter behaviors like being friendly, personable, attentive, informed, prepared, honest, and positive were more important to applicants than job features or work conditions (2).
- Respond personally to each applicant – While technology can streamline and ease the application process, a personal and professional response sets the tone for the organization (1).
- Use interviews as an opportunity to portray the organization well – Applicants who experienced problems during the interview process (e.g. resume was lost, wait time was long, only able to speak with a recruiter not a nurse manager, interviewed standing in a hallway or some other semi-public environment, etc) were unlikely to select employment with that organization (2).
- Follow up appropriately with candidates to answer their questions or encourage them to take the job – In one study, 91% of organizations shockingly did not follow up at all with individuals offered jobs, and of the 9% of organizations that did, 3% were perceived to be too pushy (2).

Organizational Best Practices for Recruitment

- Have nursing administration take ownership of recruitment process –Nurse administrators are most effective and human resource staff should primarily be used in a consultative and collaborative manner (1).
- Ensure all members of the recruitment team put their best face forward – Staff nurses’ opinions are most valued by applicants, followed by nurse managers, but human resources staff are often the first contacts and thus can make a strong impression (2).
- Competitive salaries are important – When work environment and interview quality are similar, applicants select the higher paying job consistently. However, if the recruitment process or work attributes were perceived to be poor, applicants did not select organization even if pay was highest (2).
- Offer educational opportunities and benefits, as this is a significant predictor of RN FTE vacancy rates (6).
- Target orientations to the needs of new staff – Appropriate training and preceptorship is important to those new to an area of nursing (7).

Methodology

Research for this piece was done by searching the peer reviewed journal databases “PubMed” and “CINAHL” for studies about best practices in RN recruitment, such as articles that had evidence of the effectiveness of particular approaches and strategies. We included scholarly studies demonstrating effective recruitment strategies, as well as how-to pieces on recruitment.

References

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