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Reflecting on Your Future

How to Use Physician Recruitment to Find the Position You Want the Most

The goal of all young ophthalmologists is to work in a practice best suited for them. Unfortunately, most young ophthalmologists don't know how to locate appropriate practices or how to present themselves in their best light, so that they receive offers from the practices they desire.

For nearly four decades, we have helped thousands of medical practices hire new associates while also helping thousands of new associates be hired by the right practices. Let us share with you our insights into how to make physician recruitment work for you.

Know What You Are Looking For

Before you begin interviewing with practices, you should spend some time thinking about those practice qualities that are most appealing to you. You need to consider the patient and surgical volumes, the practice style (single specialty, multi-specialty, consultant, primary care), geographic setting, and the like. You should also consider the special needs of your family, including social, religious, educational, cultural and medical issues.

By performing this self-analysis, you will be able to spend most of your time identifying practices that are most appealing to you and avoid wasting effort on inappropriate practices. You will not only save time, but also produce much more effective interviews.

Identifying Opportunities

To make the best possible practice selection, you need options. The only way to generate options is to speak with *multiple* practices. How do you find these practices?

You never know which particular resource will lead you to the practice that is right for you. Thus, you should make your search for practices as broad as possible.

If you have Internet access capability, the "EyeNet" website of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (<http://www.eyenet.org>) offers a number of services designed to match new ophthalmologists with eye care practices.

On the "Professional Choices" page, you will find instructions on how to search employment listings by state and subspecialty, as well as other information and search options. You can even post an electronic version of your CV on the site.

If this process reveals few opportunities that are appealing to you, you should research practices in your targeted areas and directly contact those you suspect will fulfill your criteria and expectations. The Internet, the *Yellow Pages* (or similar business telephone directories), and *Dorland's Directory* are readily available resources you can use for your research. Your efforts are very likely to be rewarded with interviews, and those practices you contact will be impressed with your initiative.

Also check all the periodicals and journals you receive. Many of them have classified employment advertisements. Keep the direct mail physician recruiters send you and contact them to make them aware of your availability.

Standing Out

There is a lot of competition for the good practice opportunities. Attractive practices have many interested candidates. Your goal is to get the practices in which you are interested to call *you* and not the other candidates. This means that your cover letter and CV need to convey the following message:

1. **You are a very good ophthalmologist.** In either your cover letter or CV, include the number of procedures you have performed, the different techniques you have learned and mastered, and the prominent people who have trained you.

Naturally, include all the honors and awards you have received throughout your career. Consider the following hypothetical example: "During my residency at Wills Eye Hospital, I had the privilege to train with Dr. Spaeth and Dr. Lichtenstein, and I performed more than 150 cataract surgeries -- including 130 phacos -- as well as 100 glaucoma procedures."

2. **You are a hard-working team player.** Most practices are looking for new associates who work hard and get along well with patients and physicians. Include in your cover letter some event that illustrates your warmth, compassion, diligence and ability to get along with others. Also include collaborative factors, such as your election by your peers to leadership role or your participation in team sports.

Personal references also can impress prospective employers. For, example, with her CV and cover letter, one particularly well-trained ophthalmologist included a letter of recommendation from her department head. Among his other remarks, he wrote that, once patients had been treated by the candidate, they were reluctant to return to the candidate's mentor. He explained that, in effect, patients were so impressed with the candidate that they wanted to continue to have *her* as their physician, rather than return to her much esteemed mentor. In a tight market, that young physician had practices absolutely falling over themselves to interview her.

Effective Interviewing

Practices hire new associates based on subjective reasons. Offers are generally made based upon impressions and feelings, rather than facts and figures. It is very important that you develop a collegial relationship with the practice's physicians, advisors and staff.

Realize that most physicians do not enjoy recruiting associates. The reason the hiring doctors have invited you for an interview is their hope that you will be "the one," the candidate who ends their recruiting misery. They want you to do well, and if you follow our suggestions, they will be eager to make you an offer.

1. **Create the Right Impression.** Before the interview, get dressed up; spend some time grooming yourself and be pleased with your appearance.

At the interview, introduce yourself, extend your hand, and be genuinely glad to make the acquaintance of every member of the practice you meet. Be polite, open, and honest. Remember the names of each person you meet and address those people by name. Demonstrate that you realize the non-physician staff members are people too. Remember to thank your hosts for the privilege of speaking with them.

2. **Discuss Medical Issues First.** The most obvious characteristic you and your interviewer will have in common is that you are both ophthalmologists. Discuss why you enjoy ophthalmology. Talk about the gratification you receive from ophthalmic practice. Ask about the types of patients the practice has, their indications for surgery, and any protocols and/or guidelines established for the practice's physicians.

3. **Provide Feedback.** During the interview, nod your head, smile and respond positively to the information you are receiving. Compliment the practice and express your continued interest. Don't be afraid to show interest in the practice. Enthusiasm counts and is often reciprocated.

4. **Sell Yourself.** Throughout the interview it will become apparent to you the type of individual the practice is looking for. Using your own life experiences whenever applicable, demonstrate to the interviewer how well you meet the criteria they have established.

For example, if the interviewer says the practice needs a hard worker, talk about the long hours you cheerfully spent in training, as well as the moonlighting and side jobs you've had. Let it be known that you *like* being busy and wouldn't want it any other way.

5. Tell Them What You Will Do for Them. Most interviews are fairly one-sided, addressing primarily what the practice will do for the candidate. Subjects typically include, for example, how you will be introduced to patients and referral sources, and what compensation you will receive.

Be sure to say what you will do to help the practice grow and meets its objectives. By displaying initiative and expressing your willingness to contribute to the practice's success, you will make a very positive impression and delight the interviewer.

6. Let the Practice Initiate Financial Discussions. Don't bring up salary. If you follow the suggestions we have made, you will have *no need to ask* the practice about the financial arrangements. The object is to impress the practice so thoroughly with your candidacy that the practice's representative will initiate the discussion as a prelude to an offer.

If the practice *does* initiate financial discussions, do not be first to say what salary and bonus arrangements you have in mind. Many candidates have cost themselves thousands of dollars by revealing the minimally satisfactory "bottom-line" offer they would accept.

Consider a situation in which you really like the practice and would be willing to accept \$100,000. At the same time, the practice is equally impressed with you and wonders if you would accept \$120,000. If you tell them you would work for them for \$100,000, they will have no reason in the world would to offer you \$100,001, let alone \$120,000.

Summary

Knowing how to locate appropriate practices that are seeking new associates and understanding a few things about the recruiting process should help you:

- find more potential employment situations;
- find recruiting practices that are appropriate for you;
- receive more quality interview opportunities;
- make the best possible impression during the hiring process; and
- receive attractive offers from practices you would like to join.

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