

# Qualified vs. Quality

If you can't find the employee you seek, maybe it's time to reconsider your search requirements.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

**To Our Readers:** *There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to lynn@soshms.com which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.*

tors, dentists, health providers, in your area?"

Doctor: "Yes, of course."

Consultant: "Do they have people working for them they regard as qualified?"

Doctor: "Yes, I suppose so."

Consultant: "How is it that

That's not to say that having certain benchmarks and criteria for new staff is not uncommon or an unworthy endeavor. After all, everyone deserves and should strive for the best of the best.

In fact, it would surprise me to learn that any doctor or manag-

**Find someone with experience PLUS character and you've likely hit the jackpot!**

**Topic: "Qualified" vs. "Quality"**

Dear Lynn:

*Tell me please—how am I supposed to find good staff when the applicants in our area don't meet our qualifications? I would pay extra to get a more qualified individual; sadly, they are just not available to me.*

A complaint all too familiar.

Doctor: "Our area just doesn't have the kind of people we are looking for. It's so hard for me to find decent staff!"

Consultant: "Are there other doc-

other local professionals can find worthy employees, yet you cannot? Do you believe they managed to get the last remaining capable people in your area? Do you believe they hired on qualification alone? Or could it be they hired based on 'good qualities' and took the time to familiarize and properly train them?"

It wouldn't be surprising if your run of bad luck searching for a new employee was due to setting the bar too high—so high that candidates who could actually end up being your perfect staff member are pre-emptively eliminated.

er would refuse an applicant with experience and skills. It should be noted, however, that experienced hires frequently need to first be "untaught" previous protocols before teaching them your preferred way. That can often be more difficult and time-consuming than training a 'rookie', new to the profession and eager to learn.

I'm not sure what your target qualifications are, but maybe it's time to reconsider your search requirements. You've often heard it said, "Choose Character over Experience". There is more truth in that directive

*Continued on page 62*



qualified

Quality (from page 61)

than most any piece of hiring advice.

Find someone with experience PLUS character and you've likely hit the jackpot! However, if you are turning away applicants who have no medical background or podiatric medical assistant skills—given the small available population who do—it might be an exercise in futility.

Circulating on social media is the following list of “Ten Things that Require ZERO TALENT” (source unknown). Spending time with your applicant and en-



serve—and one you'll want to keep with you until the day you retire. Now, THAT is a hiring standard worth setting.

ests are; giving employers deeper insight into who they are (not just as workers, but as individuals). This puts them in touch with meaningful information that can be productivity-motivators. Why guess what incentivizes them? Ask them! (To request a complimentary copy of this questionnaire, email [lynn@soshms.com](mailto:lynn@soshms.com))

The late Bob Levoy discloses 5 myths about motivation in his book, *222 Secrets of Hiring, Managing, and Retaining Great Employees in Healthcare Practices*.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, he offers a reality check for each, all of which are useful to this topic:

1) There is NO secret button to push to get people to do what you'd like them to do.

“Motivating others is a process with some things you can control and others that you cannot. According to theories of behavior psychology, motivation involves the biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that activate behavior. It is frequently used to describe why a person does something—the driving force behind human actions.”

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## Understand that what motivates one staff person, likely won't motivate another.

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### Topic: Motivation 101

Dear Lynn,

*Can you shed some light on how I can best motivate my staff? Enthusiasm is at an all-time low—and not surprisingly, so is employee productivity.*

couraging them to discuss real-life situations associated with each of these topics is sure to reveal valuable insight into their personalities. This information should be key in all your hiring interviews. Someone with these merits would be an asset to ANY work team.

- 1) Being on time
- 2) Making an effort
- 3) Being high energy
- 4) Having a positive attitude and a genuine smile
- 5) Being passionate and kind
- 6) Using good body language
- 7) Being coachable; eager to learn
- 8) Doing a little extra
- 9) Being prepared
- 10) Having a strong work ethic; being accountable for their actions

Many of these qualities reflect their customer service competencies and values while others focus on standards that characterize a conscientious employee. All are traits important in business—and none necessarily requiring experience.

These individuals are out there waiting to be found. With the right training, guidance and management, they are likely to blossom into the kind of employee you de-

It's an age-old problem based on a number of whys and wherefores and does not come with a one-answer solution. Nevertheless, here is the secret—a simple and effective starting place. Do not assume that every employee is cut from the same cloth. Rather, understand that what motivates one staff person may well not motivate another. Almost fact—everybody loves pizza; not everyone loves anchovy pizza!

In an effort to help doctors get to know their employees better, I often refer to a questionnaire called “As we learn, we grow”. It allows your staff to share what their inter-

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**“Money may seem like an incentive, initially; however, it has no real staying power and is not necessary linked to an employee's productivity.”—Levoy**

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2) Praise, recognition, and money (for example) can be very motivating, but the effect doesn't last long. Money is not a universal motivator.

“Money may seem like an incentive, initially; however, it has no real staying power and is not necessary linked to an employee's productivity.” To make his point, the author puts forth this hypothetical challenge to employers: “If starting tomorrow, you gave everyone on your staff a \$1,000 raise, how much harder would they work—and for how long?”

*Continued on page 63*

# THE CONSULTANT IS IN

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*Quality (from page 62)*

3) Employees' motivational needs are NOT the same as yours.

As described above (and driven home by Mr. Levoy), "no two people have the same job-related needs, in the same order of importance, with

self-motivation. It must come from a place within one's self. While it's not an employer's job to make people happy at work, it is their responsibility to create a work environment that allows people to be happy. Or, as Lou Holtz, legendary football coach at Notre Dame said, "It's my job not to

job-related needs. With the right leadership, support and encouragement, these self-starters, highly motivational individuals will rise above expectations. **PM**

## Reference

<sup>1</sup> Levoy, B., 222 Secrets of Hiring, Managing, and Retaining Great Employees in Healthcare Practices, Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2007

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## You cannot make your staff choose to be motivated.

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the same standards of satisfaction. This is due to their varying degrees of experience, energy levels, and interest in the jobs they are performing."

4) You cannot make your staff choose to be motivated.

"All motivation is self-motivation." You are familiar with the saying "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." Such is

demotivate them!" Happy, self-motivated people are productive people.

5) Hire the right people to begin with.

By hiring the right people, Levoy again refers to "self-starters, highly motivated individuals". After you select who you feel is the right person to work for you (and WITH you)—it's important to repeatedly address their



**Ms. Lynn Homisak**, President of SOS Healthcare Management Solutions, carries a Certificate in Human Resource Studies from Cornell University School of Industry and Labor Relations. She is the 2010 recipient of Podiatry Management's Lifetime Achievement Award and was inducted into the PM Hall of Fame. She is also an Editorial Advisor for Podiatry Management Magazine and is recognized nationwide as a speaker, writer, and expert in staff and human resource management.