

→ 10 Ways to Optimize Healthcare Recruiting and Onboarding Processes



Introduction

Healthcare organizations often face challenges when recruiting and onboarding new employees because of the amount of effort and paperwork involved. The 2014 B. E. Smith survey of more than 300 healthcare executives shows that administrative efficiency and agility are at absolute premiums. There are ways to make it easier, though, starting by laying the groundwork for a successful process even before you write the recruitment ad.

Successful recruiting and onboarding can help set the tone for a new employee's tenure at your organization. A difficult, confusing or unengaging process tells new employees a lot about your organization and may make them less interested in working for you. Conversely, an engaging, efficient and responsive process keeps candidates and new employees involved and excited about becoming a part of your organization.

This white paper will explain the essential elements of a solid recruiting and onboarding process for healthcare workers and what healthcare HR leaders can do to streamline that process to make it more effective and efficient.



1. Recruit the Right People

An up-to-date recruiting strategy will help ensure you attract candidates who, when hired, can hit the ground running. Whether you're looking for C-level leaders, doctors, nurses or entry-level administrators, your healthcare HR team should always start with a clear, detailed description of the ideal candidate so you can find the talent your organization needs.

There's a lot of turmoil in the healthcare industry as providers deal with changes such as receiving value-based payments instead of fees for service, and employing physicians instead of granting privileges, says Kent Bottles, a Consulting Principal and Chief Medical Officer of PYA Analytics. Recruiters who may tend to be more methodical in how they do things need to be more creative in this rapidly changing talent market. For example, in the past, if you were looking to hire a CEO for a hospital system or large medical group, recruiters would provide candidates who had been CEOs or COOs at smaller healthcare organizations. Now, it's important to look at creative, innovative leaders whether or not they have a healthcare background, he says.

Ask employees for leads on candidates, too, recommends Lisa Sinnott, a member of the National Association for Health Care Recruitment and Director of Human Resources at Lourdes Specialty Hospital. "Our best source of candidates is employee referrals."



2. Make a Competitive Offer and Get a “Yes”

In many parts of the country, it's an employees' market, so ensuring your offer has what top candidates are looking for will help you sign the employees you need.

It seems like there's always a shortage of talented candidates for healthcare jobs, more so even than in other industries, says Shawnee Major, an Account Executive at Fortus Healthcare Resources who recruited for a wide variety of industries before getting into healthcare.

Making your offer competitive means going beyond salary, Major says. **“It's important to learn your candidates' motivation for changing jobs and structure an offer based on what's important to them.”** For example, candidates who are relocating because of a shortage of openings in their area would appreciate relocation assistance, such as money for moving expenses or temporary housing.

Culture is a big draw, too, Sinnott says. “Because we are a top workplace, it is an employer's market” for Lourdes Specialty Hospital. “We compensate fairly, but money is not the main talking point when making an offer. We highlight our awards and culture.”

Passive candidates especially can be lured away from competitors by appealing to them with opportunities that may not fit in a simple job description, Major says. “Talk about big projects and upcoming initiatives. It can help you identify candidates that can bring additional value to the company and can also help attract them.”

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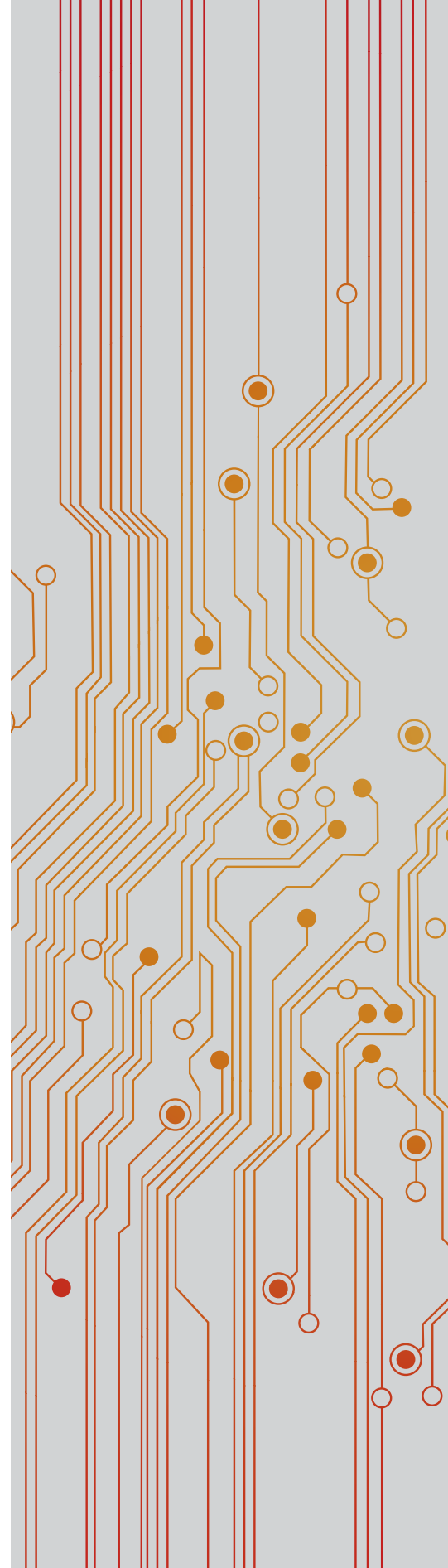
3. Save Time and Stress With an ATS

Automating your applicant database can help save you time and effort when managing multiple applicants for an assortment of positions. Working with an applicant tracking system is a great way to make your recruiting and efforts more efficient and reduce paperwork in the process.

When a healthcare organization uses an ATS, it's easier for the entire hiring team to be involved and stay abreast of the process, Major says. The resume comes into the ATS through a portal on the employer's website and then can be directed to anyone who needs to see it, such as hiring managers, department heads and HR leaders, for example.

An ATS can ensure an organization effectively manages candidates, sifting through them more quickly and with less risk, says Niels Kronborg Andersen, President and CEO of Kontakt Intelligence. "The technology allows you to expand your reach by 10- or 20-fold more than what you could do the old-fashioned way."

By keeping interactions with candidates consistent throughout the interviewing process, a strong ATS can keep candidates engaged and feeling good about their interactions with the organization, increasing the chances of a hire.



4. Expedite the Vetting Process

Checking new hires' credentials is an essential part of the onboarding process and can easily take more time than expected. Putting strong vetting policies in place and getting help from a qualified partner can protect your organization from unnecessary risk and help save time, effort and money.

"Healthcare employers should establish a thorough and consistent employment screening program that's reviewed by counsel," says Vu Do, Vice President of Compliance at PreCheck. "A detailed policy that defines screening components, describes required actions, identifies task owners and establishes timelines will best ensure a successful pre-employment credentialing experience."

Establish which items will be investigated and verified, such as criminal history, education, employment, licensure and so on, as well as the scope of the searches, such as a seven-year criminal history, a search of the last five years of residences, highest education obtained, last three employers and so on, Do says. In addition, employers should have plans for alternate methods of verification when the primary means aren't available. "For example, what will the employer accept when a student's high school records have been purged, or destroyed in a fire or natural disaster?"

Having a strong process in place will keep things moving quickly and efficiently, Do says. "Collecting and providing complete applicant information at the earliest stages has a direct correlation to increased completion rates and reduced turnaround time of reports. This is not to say uncontrollable factors won't contribute to a delay, factors such as temporary school closures, court response times or an employer's delay in or unwillingness to verify employment of a former employee. However, having an applicant provide as much information as possible and making that available to a screening partner early on will create the best chances to complete a report quickly and thoroughly."

Checklist for a Successful Pre-Employment Credentialing Policy

- ☐ Define screening components and scope of search
- ☐ Identify required actions and assign task owners
- ☐ Establish clear timelines for each component
- ☐ Define alternate methods of verification
- ☐ Create checklist to ensure compliance with policy and legal requirements



5. Do a Thorough Background Check

Working with a strong partner can help ensure you're performing thorough background checks that protect your organization and help mitigate risk. "It's obvious that finding a healthcare-specific screening provider offers a host of benefits, most notably familiarity with screening requirements of healthcare employers," Do says. Some of the requirements your partner should be familiar with include OIG sanction screening, state exclusion lists and state statutes outlining source-specific screening requirements.

"In addition to understanding the key components of a healthcare employment background check, the provider's expertise must include federal Fair Credit Reporting Act compliance and that of state consumer reporting laws and restrictions, ban the box legislation and EEOC guidance on employers' use of conviction records," Do says. "Knowledge of these regulations is fundamental to the business of background checks, and as employers continue to face ongoing litigation and regulatory scrutiny with respect to FCRA compliance, the help of a compliance-savvy screening partner is a must."

There are numerous things that could go wrong if a background check provider doesn't get it right, says Ryan Trevino, Product Manager at PreCheck. Hiring someone with a criminal background could mean serious consequences for vulnerable patients, while mistakenly eliminating a qualified candidate can result in lawsuits that have a huge financial impact on the healthcare employer and its background screening partner.

"Not getting background checks right, or not doing them at all, can shine a negative light on the company itself should anything happen in the workplace," Trevino says.

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6. Assess Personalities

When they're done before you make an offer, personality assessments can help ensure you're hiring people who will be a great fit for your organization. After the hire, they can help you better integrate new employees into the workplace and help them get along with their new colleagues. Personality assessments are a powerful tool in healthcare HR that can help ensure employees fit into your organization's culture.

Olivia Salas, Director, Talent Solutions, for Assess Systems, says personality assessments can give additional insight into the "service DNA" of every employee at a healthcare organization. Patients remember their interactions with staff members, and ensuring each one has a service-oriented mindset can help keep HCAHPS scores where you want them.

Personality assessments can give different insights into employees at different levels of the organization, Salas says. "Especially for hourly positions, they're intended to give some insight into overall fit." For higher-level positions, the assessment is meant to give a deeper look into a candidate's personality and motivations than you can get through interview questions.

Personality assessments are particularly helpful when putting a team together, Bottles says. For example, it's not always obvious whether a team member is an introvert or an extrovert. When you're putting a team together, assessments can be used to find employees who can balance each other's strengths and weaknesses.



7. Organize and Eliminate Paperwork

Organizing and eliminating paperwork is a huge part of keeping the onboarding process moving. After filling out payroll and insurance forms, a new physician, for example, isn't going to want to sign contracts for 20 to 30 health plans, Andersen says. While most healthcare organizations are trying to be sensitive and have staff fill most of those forms out, doing it electronically can make the process easier on everyone.

The amount of forms new healthcare hires have to fill out can be overwhelming, Andersen says, measured in pounds instead of pages. Completing credentialing forms, payer contracts, startup forms (such as the employee's lab coat size and personalization preferences), malpractice insurance forms, marketing forms and other paperwork can quickly rob hires of their enthusiasm for the organization and their new work.

Throughout the hiring process, everyone is on their "best behavior," Andersen says. But after signing the employment contract, "it comes to a screeching halt when the onboarding process starts. You've got 15 different people asking for 12 versions of the same information, and many times not communicating, and everything has to be squared away before the physician can start the practice." Onboarding software can streamline the process, ensure information doesn't fall through the cracks and reduce the vast amounts of paperwork onboarding can generate.

"Time is money with onboarding," he says. "To get it done faster, and with less headaches on both sides, that's pretty important."

Trisha Coady, Director of the CECenter at HealthStream, recommends using an online portfolio or repository of information. These onboarding software platforms can capture and store information electronically, and sometimes even integrate with an organization's ATS, to eliminate paper.



8. Make the Most of the First Days and Weeks

According to research done by Bersin by Deloitte, almost 80 percent of business leaders say onboarding is an “urgent” and “important” priority. The study references earlier research that found four percent of new employees leave a job after a first day that goes poorly, and more than a fifth of turnover occurs in the first 45 days on the job.

The research found employing customized tactics for different roles and generations made the onboarding process more effective, and keeping the messaging consistent throughout the organization is vital. The study also found automating this process through online portals or other web-based applications made it easier for organizations to both customize the process and provide a consistent experience across the board. Finally, it found onboarding must begin upon job acceptance to be fully effective.

9. Provide Necessary Training

Healthcare employees come in with the professional training necessary to do their jobs, but as newcomers to your organization, they’ll need to know how your teams do things. Training a new employee involves a wide variety of orientations, Coady says. These orientations may include training for the facility, department and shifts the employee may be involved in, as well as training from other departments. Entry-level employees may need longer, residency-like trainings, while experienced employees may be fine with something less involved.

“For example, a new nurse may need a lot of structure and be involved with training that’s 60 days or even a year,” Coady says. “A seasoned nurse would be onboarded a little differently. In many cases, you initially have the formal training, then competency-based assessments (novice to expert) and then specialty-based training.”

Provide your standard trainings, such as those on electronic medical records systems and organizational policies, Major says, but also find ways to customize the training to reinforce to new employees that they have a place and a role in the organization.

Best Practice Tip

Throughout the training, it’s important to include information about the organization’s culture, Coady says. This may be formal, such as training pieces about mission, values and vision. More informal cultural training may come from departmental presentations or a mentor or training buddy.



10. Match New Employees With Mentors

Match up your new hires with veteran employees who can show them the ropes and answer questions. Establishing goals for your mentorship program can ensure its effectiveness and increase participant engagement.

“The most successful organizations I’ve seen take mentoring seriously,” Bottles says. Considering the ongoing major technological and policy changes in healthcare, mentoring can help organizations retain top employees when the going gets tough.

“A lot of times, the mentor is there to help you move through the cultural and political issues, such as when to do something, when not to do something, who you should be talking to and not talking to,” Coady says. People who embody that organizational culture and have expressed an interest in mentoring are ideal candidates for helping out new employees.

“When you join an organization during turbulent change, especially right now, it can be hard unless you have someone to talk to,” Bottles says. When employees don’t work out at an organization, it’s expensive and disruptive. Pairing new employees with cultural leaders in the organization, people who can show them the ropes and be an outlet for questions that aren’t big enough to take to HR or a manager, can help new employees “stick” and thrive in their new positions.



Conclusion

Preparation is essential when you're building an effective, efficient recruiting and onboarding process. The stakes are high; if you mishandle a step along the way, you may give a candidate a bad impression of your organization, dampen a new employee's enthusiasm or get your organization in serious legal trouble.

Getting key stakeholders involved, using technology to streamline the process and reduce paperwork, relying on trusted partners for help, and staying engaged with prospective employees as you recruit, hire and onboard them can help ensure each employee's success at your organization. Put together a comprehensive plan in advance, so everyone involved will know how to approach each step in your recruiting and onboarding processes. Doing so will ensure you bring on top talent that will fit into your organization and will be happy to work there.

“You might not have a job for them immediately, but keep in contact with them, and when the time is right, bring them on board.”



Source Biographies

Kent Bottles

Kent Bottles, M.D., teaches health policy and payment reform at the Thomas Jefferson University School of Population Health in Philadelphia, is Chief Medical Officer of PYA Analytics, and is a Consulting Principal at Pershing Yoakley and Associates. He has been a Professor and Chair of academic medical school pathology departments, a Chief Medical Officer of a statewide integrated delivery system, a President, CEO and DIO of an educational and research collaborative in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a President and CEO of an evidence-based medicine healthcare consortium in Minneapolis, and a President and Chief Knowledge Officer of a genomics biotech startup company in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Lisa Sinnott

Lisa Sinnott joined Lourdes Specialty Hospital in 2011 as the Director of Human Resources and with over 20 years' experience in the human resources field. She previously worked as a Human Resources Generalist for Patient Care Services at a general regional hospital. Lisa holds a bachelor of science degree from Mansfield University and a master's degree in administrative science from Fairleigh Dickinson University. She is a longtime member of both the New Jersey Association of Healthcare Recruiters and the National Association for Health Care Recruitment, and became a Certified Healthcare Recruiter in 2008.



Shawnee Major

With 17 years of recruiting experience, Shawnee Major provides account management, recruiting and client services to premier healthcare providers nationwide. Her focus is seeking out passive candidates in healthcare specialties such as dialysis. Prior to relocating to the East Coast, Shawnee served seven years with an S&P 500 professional staffing and consulting services firm based in the San Francisco Bay area. In her role as an Account Executive at Fortus Healthcare Resources, she manages a team of recruiters and administered a multi-million-dollar portfolio of national accounts in the healthcare and banking sectors.



Niels Kronborg Andersen

With over 25 years in the business of healthcare as well as clinical experience early in his career, Kontakt Intelligence President and CEO Niels Kronborg Andersen has a strong history of helping organizations solve complex challenges in medical staff development planning, medical group development, physician relationship management/retention, practice valuation and acquisitions, physician productivity benchmarking and metrics, financial management and healthcare software design.



Vu Do

As PreCheck's Vice President of Compliance, Vu Do focuses on operational implementation of compliance programs as well as client and staff compliance training and education. With over 10 years' experience in the employment screening industry, Vu is responsible for ensuring procedural compliance across products, overseeing all matters involving the development, implementation and enforcement of internal compliance programs. Vu is a Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional (CCEP) and received her Advanced Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) certification from the National Association of Professional Background Screeners.



Ryan Trevino

Ryan Trevino is a seasoned PreCheck veteran with seven years of experience at the company. Covering all aspects of Client Services was his main responsibility prior to transitioning into his current Product Manager role. He is primarily focused on background screening and keeping up with the demand for a quality product that complies with ever-changing industry standards.



Olivia Salas

Assess Systems Director, Talent Solutions, Olivia Salas' areas of specialization include construction of competency-based hiring and development programs, psychological assessment, test validation and employee development. She has extensive experience managing large-scale implementation of assessments for Fortune 500 companies with thousands of locations. She is currently part of the Assess Systems team that is adapting assessment tools for use in the international marketplace for Latin America.



Trisha Coady

Trisha Coady has been a registered nurse for over 17 years and was the Founder and CEO of e-learning company MedSenses Inc., which focused on continuing education and social learning in healthcare. She has spent the past 10 years of her career uniquely focused on learning strategies and engagement. Trisha has written about, been published and presented numerous times on a healthcare-specific learning model. She is currently HealthStream's CECenter Director. Having built and delivered both formal and informal learning at the postsecondary and hospital education levels, Trisha brings a qualified approach to how clinicians learn and grow professionally.



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About PreCheck



PreCheck, Inc. was founded in 1983 as a background investigation services firm. Responding to the healthcare industry's need for background investigation services, the company started focusing on the specialized requirements of hospitals, clinics and other healthcare providers in 1993. Our client-focused business approach has allowed the company to develop products to meet the growing and evolving needs of the healthcare industry.

PreCheck is now the largest provider of background and credentialing services to the healthcare industry and has expanded its services to assist hospital executives, healthcare human resources and compliance professionals, medical staffing managers, and clinical program directors with other essential functions. Our suite of products includes outsourcing solutions for license management, health and drug screening, exclusion and sanction screening, immunization tracking, and online I-9 and E-Verify processing.

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