**JumpStart: A Successful Addition to the Team – Hiring an Associate**

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Whether it is the first associate hired at your practice or an additional associate, getting the right person to fill the role on the team is essential. Panic hires or hiring out of desperation can feel inevitable at times, but this can mean sacrificing clients, a cohesive environment and overall employee morale. By taking the time to think about what is important for the entire hospital, it is possible to hire an associate who is a great fit to the team.

1. **Establish goals**: While this may seem trivial, it is important as you can bet the associate will have some goals of his or her own. Look at what makes sense for the practice: a part time associate versus full-time, someone who overlaps during busy times with another associate or practice owner, or a new graduate hire because time can be invested in mentoring and the practice owner enjoys doing this. More importantly, practice owners *(who may not have other associates working at the hospital)* need to consider their succession plan and whether or not this plan includes transitioning the practice to an associate. Keep in mind the timeline in which they might like to sell the practice and then this goal may need to match the goal of the associate.
2. **Write a wish list**: Figure out what are top personality traits, work habits and core values are important to the practice and the team. Does it need to be someone who will be proactive in building up his or her clients? Do they need to be accustomed to a busy practice where they only have 20 minutes for an exam? Are they someone who has a lot of integrity? Think about what is essential then build it into the interview questions you need to ask.
3. **Create an employment ad to reflect your practice and highlight the details**: It can be competitive when trying to attract the top-notch associate you might be looking for. The question can is – what makes your practice different so that they would want to be part of your team? Be sure to look at why staff stay at your hospital, what “perks” they enjoy as well as the kind of culture is shared amongst the staff and the mission of the practice *(extreme focus on preventative, equipment allowing for in depth diagnostics etc.)* According to OVMA’s 2017 Associate Compensation and Benefits Survey, when looking at OVMA’s classified ads, associates look for location, compensation and work/life balance. While there is nothing you can do about where you are located, consider including the compensation as well as number of hours and whether the role includes weekends and/or evenings.
4. **Decide on pay and pay structure***:* Realistically, what can the practice afford? In terms of a smaller hospital where the practice owner desperately needs some help so he or she can have some time off, the owner has to think of it as taking the money directly from their pocket to pay for the associate – which may be worth it for their own peace of mind. When considering pay structure, what will be more motivating to an associate? Perhaps, you can offer two different scenarios for the associate to choose from: 1. An annual salary (e.g. $83,000) 2. A guaranteed base salary (e.g. $75,000) which can be topped up with a percentage of revenue they generate. Basically, the associate gets paid whatever is greater: their salary or the percentage of revenue. This allows the more eager, production driven associate to feel like the more effort they put in, the greater the reward. Additionally, use the OVMA’s Associate Report on Compensation and Benefits to help figure out what is a competitive salary.
5. **Conduct a working interview**: The traditional interview process is a definite asset in helping to learn more about the candidate, but it does not always tell the whole story especially when the role involves interacting with others. Once you have decided on the candidate(s) you like, invite them back in for a couple of hours for a working interview to see how they are with the rest of the staff including associates, as well as how they interact with clients. Allow them to participate behind the front desk or in the treatment areas with the other associate(s) and invite them into the exam room for a couple of appointments. Get some feedback from rest of the team as this can be valuable and it allows them to be part of the process.
6. **Hire, welcome and follow-up with the new associate:** Make clients aware that there is a new addition to the team via hospital newsletter and/or a posting in the reception area and encourage the associate to introduce him or herself to clients. Establish some periodic (e.g. every other month) meeting dates with the associate to ensure open communication and to prevent any long-term issues while ensuring they have all the tools they need to be a successful part of your team.