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HIRING TIPS FOR YOUR DENTAL OFFICE

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Sometimes we hire folks because they're breathing.

We get desperate, stressed, in a hurry – and frankly, hiring in those situations will seldom work. Oh, you can get lucky occasionally...but it's not very common.

Because dental offices are in a most critical 'client service' situation...hiring becomes more important than the normal corporate office. And sadly, it's not high on the list in so many dental offices. Whether the dentist him/herself does the interviewing or it's put in the hands of an office manager, or anyone else; there are a few things that need to be done and said that I'm betting aren't.

So here is a list of some of the OUT OF THE BOX (if you will) hiring tips that will help every dental office... from the very complex dental implant surgery to the simple one and done cavity.

I was going to leave the most important to the last, but changed my mind, because it's so very important – and if left out in an interview can cause untold problems and of course, loss of customers—You call them "patients". Well, you can use whatever word you want. But they are customers...Just like you are when you go to get something. That's one thing we never want to forget.

Whether you're hiring for someone who will be handling phone calls or a face-to-face situation, this is one tip I believe is missing from all the questions an applicant is asked in the hiring process.

True story:

Years ago, I had the pleasure of bringing our Telephone Doctor customer service training programs onsite to one of the largest communication companies in the world. From Texas to Minneapolis; from New York to L.A. I delivered over 20 programs to the call centers across the country. I'm still in contact with many of those folks.

One of the concerns managers had, and why I was helping and consulting, was the way **the calls were being handled**. The company was getting customer complaining of "no sympathy, empathy", "sounding bored" "Bad tone of voice", "not answering questions sufficiently", and several other comments/complaints. The calls were then escalated to other higher up, who would eventually handle the calls; when it didn't need to happen at all.

In each call center, they had me listen to many of the calls. It wasn't all great. Half way through the tour, I asked the management, "Tell me how you hire these folks. What process do you have?" The answers

were normal. They gave them typing tests. (Yes, before computers. We call it keyboarding today. Does not make me old, makes me 'seasoned.')

They had math testing (arithmetic would make me old – lol); grammar, and spelling tests. And a few tests I couldn't even figure out the reason for doing. When they were done sharing the "how" they hired...I asked one simple question. "Where is the voice test?"

The WHAT? They asked. The voice test, I said. How do you know they can carry on an intelligent phone conversation? (After all that was their job). I got deer in the headlights. They had been hiring employees all over the country and never had tested their voices. The one basic skill that was mandatory. While I assured them the testing they were doing was well and good, and certainly should continue to be given, they might be missing the biggest test of all.

How do they sound to the customers? It was clear as I listened behind the scenes to the calls that some of the voices were not well spoken or could even be understood that well. And while they had passed the written grammar and other tests, they did not pass the spoken word. I personally would not have hired several of them.

I wouldn't HIRE anyone who applied at Telephone Doctor without a voice test. It's an easy and unthreatening process. Even if they weren't directly involved with the customer. Someday they may be.

THE TIP: Somewhere during the interview, as you decide you like the individual, ask the applicant to call your office (or cell), ask for you and talk with them. You, of course, need to excuse yourself from the room. It can also be done by having the applicant call you from their home to your office. **But it absolutely needs to be done.** And it needs to be done on the spur of the moment; just as a phone call from a customer is (can be done after hours as well).

Have a ten to fifteen-minute conversation with them on routine things. Ask them to tell you about themselves. (FLASH: If they aren't able to do that, how can they talk about your product or services?) If they ask, "Well, what do you want to know?" You don't have a very proactive individual. You don't have someone who can think on their feet...which is critical in your dental (or every) office. You will learn so much about the applicant with this tip, that you would never have found out with all the other 'testing.'

Do the VOICE CHECK before you hire. You will avoid a lot of frustration.

A few things to check for:

- Tone of voice (Bored, happy?)
- Grammar
- Speed – Can they/do they match the speed of the caller
- And, of course, did you "HEAR" the smile? If you don't hear the smile; don't hire the applicant. It's that simple.

Without this hiring tip, the Voice test... you could easily make a costly mistake. For your bottom line and your customers. A casual conversation will save you time, money and get you a better, more effective employee. And happier customers. Ask questions they should know the answer to. You can train on the 'office' and the 'dental' stuff. You cannot train on common sense (well you can try, but it's not always successful). However, some folks simply do not have Common Sense in their DNA.

A few other important tips on the call:

You can ask how would you handle this or that? Then ask the question. Or you can pretend to be the

patient calling in. Try being two patients on two separate calls. One patient could be a NEW one and one could be a current one. How do they 'handle' a NEW patient?

Don't overlook this critical step in hiring. So many do...it's what causes patients to go elsewhere. And 'bad mouth' you and the office.

- Did they stumble thru the call? Or were the answers clean, clear, concise.
- Was there enough (not over done) sympathy if the patient is in pain?
- Did they explain thoroughly and nicely if the 'time' of the appointment the patient needs was not available Did they offer an alternative? Did they offer to be put on a wait list if someone cancels? Did they even offer a 'friendly competitor' if in enough pain?

Remember the person answering the phone – represents YOU. Take the time to do the VOICE test. You will not be sorry. And the DDS who refers you will not be sorry they did.



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