

Next Level Recruiting
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We live in a tight labor market. Demand far outweighs supply. In these types of environments, we cannot be picky, we cannot be outsmarted and we cannot be passive. We have to take recruiting to the next level in search of talent.

Next level recruiting is not foreign to the world. Tech companies, searching for the best engineers, have been doing this for many decades. Veterinary medicine has always been somewhat labor constrained, but explosive growth over the last several years has further placed pressure on a practice's ability to recruit staff. Veterinarians and veterinary technicians are slated to grow 19% year over year, as compared to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics average of 5%.

In addition, with the tight labor market, salaries have been inflating. DVM median pay in 2021 was \$104,000 according to BLS, with the AVMA placing it closer to \$120,000 and the 75% percentile at \$132,000. Where does this tight labor market come from? There are many factors at a macroeconomic level including retirement of folks, employees on the sidelines (not working) and pet care demands driving need for more veterinarians and technicians.

When thinking about recruiting, putting up a job ad and waiting for applicants is only one part of full life cycle recruiting. Full life cycle recruiting is a process by which you start at a job archetype (who and what do you need), and travel through the processes of sourcing, screening, selecting, hiring and onboarding employees. I would add retaining as well, since I think these are intertwined.

The start of the process is mapping out what job you need, and who you want to fill it. Do you have incredibly high entry standards and are willing to wait for that unicorn? Or would you be OK with an average performer you could develop into greatness? Once you have that archetype planned out, then you start to move into the tactics of finding candidates. From there, you get candidates to respond to ads, come to interviews, visit your hospital, and entertain the idea of a position. From there, you work through process to bring folks aboard, and give them an amazing new candidate experience.

You have to understand your "customer" (the candidate). So what do employees want in their workplace today? Studies show that employees desire good work/life balance, growth opportunities, appropriate and high salaries, positive workplace culture, deriving a sense of meaning from work and flexible working models. You have to take a hard look at your practice and decide how you can meet the needs of the current workforce.

Advertising for your job is not a set it and forget it task. You have to craft a strategy of how you will get your word out. What channels will you use? Paid ads, search, social? How will they get in front of candidates? How much will you pay? What will they say? All of these questions are important as you build your recruiting strategy. What is next level job ad copy? Ads that address hospital core values, meaning to work, schedules, pay, job duties, opportunities for advancement, length over brevity, speak to DEI (through EEO statements), address the why, use gender and diversity inclusive language and have a call to action are NEXT level.

So someone applied to your ad. What is next? What is a next level response? Energetic, timely. Respond ASAP. If they applied to your ad, they applied to 50 others. Consider a text to set up a quick chat. This is non-confrontational and convenient for the candidate. Think about the candidate. Who are they? Will they work for your needs? What are their initial strengths and weaknesses?

Once you have screened the candidate, you move on to the visit. First impressions matter! That dirty hospital or toxic team member is going to create an impression. You have to create a red carpet experience because you are competing with many other hospitals out there. The best impression will win! Plan your visits. Think of the little things. WOW them.

Once you have completed the visit phase and are settled on the candidate you enter the offer phase. How will you present your offer? What will it contain? What will you agree to? You will need to create some time for them to process. Be prepared for counter offers. What is your line in the sand? What would you agree to? Think creatively when it comes to benefits. What do you offer no one else does? What do you offer that is better than anyone else? If they accept your offer, congratulations!

Taking your recruiting to the next level takes time and effort. You have to really accept the fact that you are now competing with other folks, so how can you stand out? Think of it like a game, and how can you Win! After you find a candidate and they accept the offer, it does not stop there. Onboarding must be an experience and be organized and valuable for the candidate or you risk losing them. Once they start, you must work hard to retain them. This comes from additional processes in motivating and engaging them, ensuring wages are market rates, meeting their needs and ensuring they continue to find value in working at your facility.