



# THE RIGHT FIT: BEST PRACTICES FOR HIRING GOOD EMPLOYEES

The director of team recruiting at Heartland Dental shares best practices for hiring new employees and building a strong practice.

Hiring employees is an important business function, and having a documented hiring process can save time and resources by ensuring everyone involved is working toward the same goal. Every dental practice has a different approach to recruiting and hiring, and Curtis Frost, director of team recruiting for Heartland Dental, shared some best practices that can enhance the hiring process, no matter the size of the business.

## DEFINE WHAT YOU NEED

Before posting a job or even writing a job description, discuss what the team needs from the open position. "Having an open dialogue about what needs this position fills for the team is an important first step," Frost said.

"With a new position, you have a blank canvas, so getting input from those who will work closely with the new hire is important," Frost said. "With a backfill, discuss the areas of success and how the role can be improved or better defined."

Document the personality, practice culture and clinical or technical needs that are most important. Doing this will make it easy for you to outline job expectations.

## SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

One of the first opportunities to document expectations and success measures is in the job description. A good job description should leave a candidate with an understanding of the practice's culture and the duties of the position.



**CURTIS FROST**  
Director of Team Recruiting  
Heartland Dental

Sometimes, to attract more applicants, it can be tempting to write vague descriptions or inflate the level of responsibility; however, this can lead to challenges later.

“There is a fine line between being exciting and factual about an open position, and selling a position that doesn’t really exist,” Frost said. “Doing the latter can result in hiring someone in hopes they can achieve expectations that don’t match what you really need them to do.”

Instead of attracting a high quantity of candidates, strive to attract the most qualified candidates. “By strongly communicating the position in the description, candidates have a chance to self-select themselves out,” Frost said. “When they see technical, personality or practice culture traits listed and feel they can’t contribute, many won’t apply. Those who do apply are likely the most qualified.”

### SCREEN FOR SOFT SKILLS

A good practice is to decide the minimum requirements and what skills or areas have flexibility. For example, fewer years of hygiene experience may be acceptable for candidates who demonstrate strong patient relationship building skills.

“Resumes and applications give a good sense for technical and clinical skills, but won’t tell you much about soft skills,” Frost said.

Soft skills (e.g., communication, collaboration and problem solving) are important to every practice, and difficult to communicate in a resume or application. Conducting a short phone screen with top candidates is a great way to refine the applicant pool before extending invitations for in-person interviews.

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### INTERVIEW FOR SUCCESS

Interviewing candidates can help team members feel ownership in the hiring process. There’s no right or wrong number of interviewers, but involving those who will work most closely with the new hire is a common practice.

“Interviewers should be encouraged to compare each candidate to the job description and documented expectations, not to other candidates,” Frost said. “Comparing candidates can lead to inconsistent interviewing practices.”

### ACTIVELY SEEK GOOD CANDIDATES

As the job market and industry change, practices must adjust to attract the best talent. “A trend we’re seeing in the industry is a move from static recruiting to active recruiting. Organizations aren’t posting a job and waiting for applicants. They’re actively seeking out candidates and building relationships with individuals in the community,” Frost said.

Even if your practice isn’t currently hiring, start preparing your team now for the day that you will. That preparation will go a long way in helping build a successful team, and a great practice.

## INTERVIEW TIPS: KEYWORD QUESTIONING

Traditional interviews follow a standard process: Ask a question, get a response, move on to the next question. With keyword questioning, team members ask clarifying questions when they hear certain keywords used in responses to gather more in-depth information.

“We find that we tend to learn a lot more about candidates by using keyword questioning than by asking a panel of questions,” said Frost.

Introduce this technique by having interviewers clarify ambiguous terms or statements. For example, if a candidate expresses having

an interest in dentistry for several years, ask what an interest in dentistry looks like to the candidate. It may mean they have had a great experience as a patient, heard that dentistry can provide a good career or perhaps they want to be part of a team that positively impacts patients’ lives.