

Hot 5 Trends for Healthcare Recruiting Today

By Rayanne Thorn

Healthcare continues to be the fastest-growing industry in the U.S., providing jobs for about 15 million people -- a number that is projected to grow by 3.2 million new jobs by 2018, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Half of the 20 fastest-growing occupations are healthcare-related; they include such diverse positions as physicians, dentists, registered nurses, physical therapists, medical records and health information technicians, radiologic technologists, dental hygienists and nursing aides.

These pressures eased for some positions during the recession, but they did not disappear. "Even when the economy slowed down, people kept hiring physicians," Tommy Bohannon, a vice president at Merritt Hawkins, a Dallas-based physician recruiting firm, said in [an interview with U.S. News & World Report](#). "I do not see it changing."

The challenges remain for recruiters, most significantly: filling open jobs with individuals who have the right balance of education, technical savvy, and customer service skills to appropriately meet the needs of millions of patients while also minding the budget constraints of their employing organizations. With all the interest in government-subsidized healthcare, you can bet the focus on healthcare organization and hospital staffing shortages will only sharpen.

A confluence of factors -- including a changing regulatory environment, shifting demographics and emerging technologies -- are shaping the landscape for healthcare recruiting professionals. This article will explore the five biggest trends in healthcare recruiting today and highlight how HR Professionals and Recruiters can respond to them.

Trend #1 Refining Quality of Hire

While the recession may have made it easier to find candidates for open positions, many HR professionals are facing new challenges in evaluating the Quality-of-Hire, or how well a new employee meets the performance needs of the open job. Measuring Quality-of-Hire can be difficult, but it's critical if an employer wants to determine if its sourcing, recruiting, assessment, and hiring programs are effective. Are the right people in the right positions?

Many challenges face healthcare recruiters, staffing agencies, and executive search firms.

- Fully understanding the needs of the organization and its individual departments.
- Filling job openings with alacrity and efficiency.
- Finding candidates without endless cold calling and time-consuming direct recruitment processes.
- Accessing previously-sourced candidates without incurring additional costs.
- Using industry language in job postings consistent with company culture – [a job description is not a job posting](#).
- Sourcing and exciting passive candidates about opportunities.

One of the biggest challenges: Accounting for “**soft skills**” such as **customer service** and **cultural fit**. Healthcare employers may have to figure that out even sooner than other employers, under new mandates to deliver “service excellence” to patients.

If you don't deliver high marks on patient surveys, it **will** affect your bottom line, noted Lydia Ostermeier, president of the National Association for Health Care Recruitment. "If we don't score well, then we're going to be looking at limited reimbursement."

Her organization relies on behavioral-based questionnaires to evaluate candidates for cultural fit. Candidates apply via the web, where they're directed to an online skills inventory. They also invite candidates in for a seminar, where they can learn about the organization's mission, culture and values, and meet hiring managers in person. "We're looking for people who are upbeat and perky, who are able to sell themselves," she said. "At the end, we ask them if that's a culture they can commit to."

Recruiting is about filtering. The finer the filtering process, the more time recruiters and hiring managers can spend assessing those necessary soft skills. Quality-of-Hire leads to retention: the retention of not only employees, but YOU, as a recruiter and your organization as a leading service provider.

Trend #2 Increasingly Sophisticated Retention Efforts

Fifteen years ago, a severe nursing shortage was identified. Third-party recruiters became busier and busier as the shortage increased and the number of available physicians, pharmacists, and nurse managers decreased. Hospitals and Healthcare Organizations failed to recognize what this meant: loss of loyalty and the ability for recruiters and hiring managers to easily lure away quality employees. But that has all changed now.

Healthcare recruiters are going to find themselves working even harder to pry top talent from their current positions as employers increase their focus on retention. And recruiters are extending their mission into keeping their new hires satisfied and sticking around. Gone are the days of recruiting and booting. Recruiters will recruit with a retention mindset built into the process.

"With respect to physician recruitment, the hottest trend is actually what happens after you recruit them, said Jennifer Metivier, executive director of the Association of Staff Physician Recruiters. "With the physician shortage already upon us and healthcare organizations having difficulty in recruiting providers, many positions go unfilled each year."

The [2011 ASPR In-House Physician Recruitment Benchmarking Survey](#) found that 36% of active searches conducted in 2010 remained unfilled at year's end, Metivier said.

That makes it imperative for organizations to minimize turnover. "Physician turnover is something all health care organizations want to avoid because an empty position means patients go unseen and lost revenue," she said. "Successful retention programs utilize a variety of tools including mentor programs and others to help the new provider acclimate to the new organization and community."

Increased salaries and benefits are no longer enough to keep quality employees happily loyal. Organizations and Hospitals are finding out what tech companies found out long ago. Flex-time and employee-based scheduling allow employees to have real input in scheduling shifts and balancing their lives.

Healthcare Recruiting Professionals and Hospital HR Department have *finally* discovered what healthcare providers have known all along: nurses and doctors have lives outside of their work.

Trend #3 The Job Mix is Shifting

The Job Mix for Healthcare Professionals is changing because the patient population is changing and how healthcare is dispensed has been radically altered by the economy. Let's take a look at this change and its effects on healthcare recruiting.

A combination of demographic, economic, and regulatory changes is driving a reshuffling of the positions that need to be filled most urgently. In some cases, it is creating specialties that didn't even exist 10 years ago. While this is good for patients in need, it changes up available positions and how to recruit.

As the population ages, healthcare organizations are finding that they need more specialists in caring for the elderly -- particularly at home. Home Health organizations are sprouting up everywhere and as their recruiting needs increase, the nursing shortage becomes even more strained. "Right now the hottest trend in health care recruiting is the need for clinical professionals to assess the frail elderly in home settings as managed long-term care comes to the forefront of the health care industry," says Erica Schafran, senior recruiter at Healthfirst. "What's driving this trend? Clearly an aging population; but most importantly, government mandates and empirical data stating that the frail elderly live longer and enjoy a much better quality of life if able to live out their years in their own surroundings vs. the four walls of a nursing home or rehab center."

Executives at Home Healthcare Agencies echo this assessment. "As healthcare shifts from hospital to home, and as reimbursement moves from episodic fee-for-service to capitated reimbursement, we'll see increasing need for at-home professionals," Eric Rackow, M.D., CEO of SeniorBridge, a national home-care provider based in New York, said in [an interview with Monster.com](#). "We're contracting with health plans and physician provider groups to keep patients at home."

Changing government mandates have also created a strong need for people to serve in management positions at hospitals and other institutions. Healthcare-specific search firms have felt this crunch for years as their push to help hospitals and healthcare organizations recruit hard-to-fill manager- and director-level positions have seen highs and lows in this up and down economy over the last ten years.

The need for healthcare management positions is exploding, John Zappe wrote in [a blog post on The Fordyce Letter](#), citing data from a mix of sources. Just as more managers will be needed to care for the growing number of elderly patients, many of the most experienced professionals will be retiring. Schools haven't kept pace with the need for degrees in these programs, creating a tough challenge for employers looking to fill those roles.

This trend extends all the way from entry-level positions to hospital CEOs, who already have one of the best-paying, toughest-to-fill roles. "Where these jobs were traditionally sourced from print or online job postings, it's not unusual now for contingent recruiters to get the req," Zappe writes. "Most are still being filled via referral or job posting, but the trend toward professional recruiters is almost certainly going to accelerate."

Nurse Management positions and Executives roles can remain unfilled up to 12 months while organizations fight for the right fit. The need for change is evident. The Job Mix is Shifting. Recruiters must take this into account as they look at their current and upcoming requisitions.

Trend #4 The Rise of Social Media and Mobile

There are currently 500 million registered users on Twitter and over 950 million users on Facebook. These numbers are not insignificant; they represent the whole world embrace of social media and internet. Consider that over half of the active users in social media access their social networks via their mobile device or smartphone.

**Social media is not going away.
Stop waiting for it to fade into the sunset.**

The rise of social media and mobile technology is a hot topic among recruiters in a broad range of industries. Some experts say that mobile is proving more significant in the healthcare staffing space, with clients and talent being slow to adopt social media. Those jobseekers who adapt and adopt will have the upper hand in gaining employment, as will the hospitals and healthcare organizations fill their openings, quality hires quickly.

A [recent CareerBuilder survey](#) of healthcare staffing agencies and their clients found that 37% of jobseekers in healthcare use their mobile device to look for job opportunities. That same survey also found that 70 percent of healthcare staffing clients have data-enabled smartphones.

Recruiters say they are using social media as a way to stay on top of Trends in the industry, as well as to source and connect with candidates. Lydia Ostermeier, president of the National Association for Health Care Recruitment, states that she recognizes that a social media presence is essential to connecting with Gen Y, in particular. "A lot of the organizations are using mobile apps, where people can apply online using their mobile device," she noted.

Given the intense nursing shortage and difficult nature of physician and pharmacist recruitments, it make sense that healthcare-specific recruiters recognize the advantage social media and mobile internet access brings to their game. How we communicate has changed, so should the recruiting process.

And Trend #5 Capitalizing on Technology

"There is a definite need for speed and reduced costs in healthcare recruiting, and one sure-fire way to achieve both is by streamlining the process," said Kelly Robinson, CEO and founder of Broadbean Technology. "Software tools, like Applicant Tracking Systems, are constantly improving and now innovative tech companies are stepping in to integrate seamlessly with ATSS and CRMs in order to combine outside processes and simplify the complicated practices that have been the norm for too long."

This push toward automation also makes it easier for recruiters to maximize the value of the data they are collecting about their efforts. "Online recruitment efforts can be measured; we have the tools now. This lends itself to understanding the true ROI of online recruitment spend," Kelly said.

Among the key metrics that technology can help improve? Time to fill. “So often, we just expect and assume that health care recruiting takes longer,” said Rayanne Thorn, Marketing Director for Broadbean Technology. “Yes, there is a nursing shortage -- it isn’t going away anytime soon. Yes, pharma and physician recruitments are different and difficult. But staying away from technology and automation won’t help health care recruiters reach their goals.”

Armed with the knowledge that automation may ease the process, healthcare-specific recruiters have an opportunity to break out of the idea that healthcare recruiting has to be painful and protracted. Industry-specific and niche job boards, easy posting distribution, automated candidate sourcing, employee referral and social media programs smash old and staid notions.

Healthcare Recruiting is no longer the Wild West - Welcome to the New Frontier!

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This article is based on the White Paper - **The 5 Hot Trends in Healthcare Recruiting Today produced by [Reputation Capital](#) & released by [Broadbean](#). Please visit Broadbean.com to request this free white paper.*