

Making a Good Hire

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ABSTRACT

Hiring the right employee is paramount to the success of any business. In 2019, with unemployment rates low and job openings high, hiring anyone might sound good. However, taking the time to find the right employee far outweighs the cost of replacing a bad or desperate hire. This article discusses the interviewing and onboarding process to shift the odds positively in the direction of making a lasting, good hire.

KEYWORDS: hiring, onboarding, interviewing

We hear it said over and over: your employee is your greatest asset. Yet, whether you are a manager or a business owner, you may find that your attention is drawn to patient care, marketing strategies, new competitive forces, tracking numbers, and paying bills. Ignoring employee care may be putting your business, and your patients, at risk. All these concerns are mitigated by happy and engaged employees. An engaged employee takes better care of your patients, which is the best marketing you can have. This in turn positions you to confront those competitive forces and have better numbers to track, thus making it easier to pay those bills. Whether you are in a private practice, a school setting, or a hospital environment, it benefits you to pay attention to this important asset.

HIRING FOR THE LONG RUN

Making a great hire for the long run might be more important than you think. A new report

from the Work Institute estimates that one in four employees will quit in 2018 and one in three by 2020.¹ According to Gallup, 60% of millennials are open to different job opportunities and only one of two plans to be with their company 1 year from now.² Replacing employees can be difficult and costly: unemployment rates are low (below 4.1%³) and the cost of replacing an employee can be up to \$200% of the salary depending on the position.⁴ These costs include productivity loss, costs of hiring and training new employees, slower ramp up, and the effect on the morale of the remaining employees. In addition, there is a low inventory of audiologists in our field. Obviously, the cost of disengaged workers and replacing employees can be staggering to a healthcare practice. It behooves us to look at the reasons behind employees leaving to get the right perspective on why hiring slowly is so important. According to Gallup,⁵ unengaged workers (those who show up and collect their paycheck) and actively disengaged workers (those who are toxic

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and stir the pot) make up 66% of the workforce in 2018. The good news is that the percentage of those who are actively disengaged has decreased from 16.5 to 13% (the lowest level recorded). However, it is the middle sector of 53% unengaged that should be disconcerting to the employer. It is these employees who may be generally satisfied but not cognitively or emotionally connected to their work or workplace. It is these employees who may leave quickly for an even slightly better job offering.

KEYS TO RETENTION AND TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, SATISFACTION, AND HAPPINESS

Looking at why people voluntarily leave their employment is the place to start to create a strategy for making sure your employees want to stick around. According to the Work Institute, 77% of those who voluntarily quit have reasons that could have been prevented.¹ The Work Institute conducted 34,000 exit interviews and gleaned that the top-five reasons employees quit were as follows: lack of career development, work/life balance, manager behavior, well-being, and compensation and benefits (see Fig. 1).

Career development, manager behaviors, and well-being are significant contributors linked to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and happiness.⁶⁻⁹ Employees who feel they are growing in their jobs, working in a great envi-

ronment with a supportive team, feeling their job is important, and being valued by their employer are more engaged, satisfied, and happy.

Work/life balance, placing second in the retention arena, is also important to the 2019 employee. This is particularly important in a female-dominated field. According to Gallup,¹⁰ this is the second most important desire of women in the workplace. Exit surveys completed by Work Institute indicated that for 67.6% of respondents, flexibility was the largest indicator behind the work/life balance reason. For private practices and hospital/clinic settings, this is a more difficult area to address since patients need to be seen on a schedule and working from home is not an option. However, some creative changes can be made. Some practices have moved to a more staggered start time to fit employee’s personal lives; this might include starting at 7 AM or 10 AM instead of the traditional 8 or 9 AM. Many practices allow for time off for doctor appointments (for themselves or their children) with time made up instead of docking pay or taking vacation time. Some practices have moved to hiring part-time employees to support the desire of working women. Although this may seem daunting at first, the reality is that the workforce is changing and to retain employees, the workplace needs to change too.

The number five reason is compensation and benefits. Compensation and benefits need

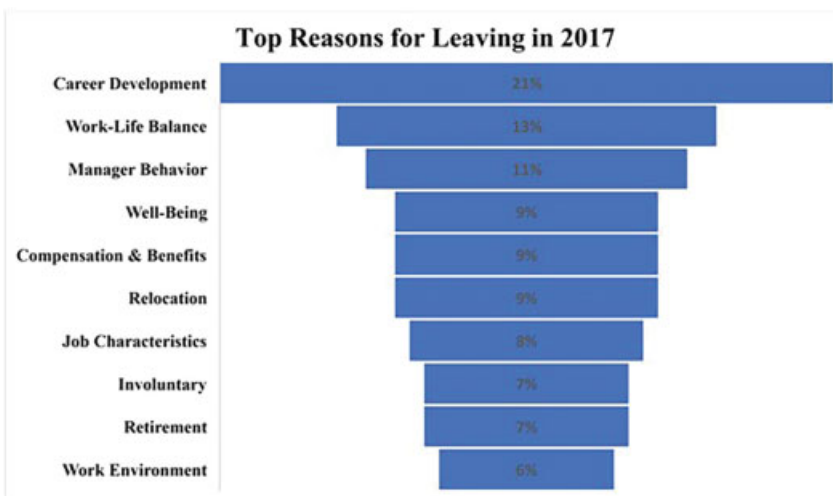


Figure 1 Top 10 reasons employees left their job in 2017.

to be fair and competitive; unfortunately, benefits are often overlooked by employers and may be the key to retaining a good hire. Benefits to consider include the following:

- A 401K plan with matching.
- A 529 plan to help employees put aside money for their children's college tuition.
- College loan repayment plan.
- Housing reimbursement.
- Paid maternity leave.

The employee journey begins with hiring the right person for your team, on-boarding, and continues throughout the life of their employment with you. Let's start that journey.

HIRING

Making the right hire, and not the desperate hire, is the first step. The old adage "hire slow, fire fast" is as true as it ever has been, but with the shortage of people looking for employment (both audiologists and supporting personnel), the temptation is to hire to fill the spots. Let's slow down and consider the best practices in making a good hire. There are three stages in the hiring process: preparation, interview, and wrap-up. That's it! However, skipping any portion will result in a misstep and a potentially bad hire.

Although somewhat flexible, there are three basic stages. The flow will look something like this:

1. Preparation:
 - A. Know your why and your core values.
 - B. Job description.
 - C. Salary range and benefit package.
2. Interview:
 - A. Resume.
 - B. Evaluation process.
 - C. Phone interview.
 - D. In-person interview—the date.
 - E. Second in-person interview.
 - F. Skills/aptitude interview.
3. Wrap-up: crossing the "t" and dotting the "i."
 - A. Background check and references.
 - B. Making the offer.

PREPARATION

Know Your Why and Your Core Values

How do you create a perfect team? Diversity is paramount. When you have people with different perspectives, a diverse group will offer multiple interpretations and approaches to problem-solving. You also will get a wide range of ideas for growing the practice. Be careful, however, that every member of your diverse team embraces your culture and core values. Do they understand the why and the core values of your practice?

Your why refers to why you do what you do. Your core values are your guiding principles and your fundamental beliefs. A great place to start is with Simon Sinek's *Start With Why*¹¹ or watch Sinek's Tedx Puget Sound.¹² The why creates a sense of purpose for you and your staff. It should resonate in your heart. Your core values express what is *really* important to you. The team benefits when there is agreement and buy-in on these two areas.

Job Description

Many people make the mistake of looking for a new hire without a job description. A job description creates clarity for you about the work that needs to be done and who should do it. It also creates clarity for the new hire about what is expected. Without this, you are at risk of hiring the wrong person, creating false expectations for both of you, and risking disruption to the team. The job description should include the salary range and the benefit package. A fair, livable wage is essential for employee happiness. According to a Glassdoor survey, competitive salary and benefits are still the most critical factors in the applicant's decision making.¹³ Know what a fair wage is for your position and use that to guide discussions. There are plenty of resources including www.salary.com, www.indeed.com, or www.glassdoor.com. Benefits are also important in this competitive market. Considerations should include two of the top drivers for employee retention: employee development and work/life balance.¹ Building these into the job benefits provides a clear demonstration of your employee value proposition.

How to Find Applicants

There are several options for getting the word out that you are looking for an employee. Online job sites such as Indeed.com, Monster.com, and Ziprecruiter.com will be helpful in finding applicants for positions such as patient care coordinator or bookkeeper. Other social networking sites such as Nextdoor.com or classified advertisement sites such as Craigslist may be helpful in finding office staff. For audiology or other professional staff, consider contacting universities or asking your manufacturer representatives to keep an eye out for you. Audiology Online is a resource for audiologists and hearing professionals. If you are looking for someone to train as an audiology assistant, a graduate of a medical career college will come with basic knowledge of working in health clinics and also may have training in coding and billing.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process includes knowledge gathering and interviewing. Once you have culled through the resumes and made a decision about who you want to interview, become familiar with each interviewee's resume. Before you first speak with them, know about their training and work experience. Prepare questions that show the interviewee you know something about them. Remember, the interview goes both ways and they also are making a decision about where **they** want to work.

Now is a good time to check in with yourself about unconscious bias. The first step is to recognize that we all have unconscious, implicit associations or stereotypes that create a problematic, non-level playing field for job seekers. We must all take steps to ensure that these do not influence our hiring decisions. Use of a rubric or scorecard during the interview process is helpful in tracking your interviews and can reduce the risk of unconscious bias during the hiring process.^{14,15} It also provides a way to share information among interviewers more objectively. An example of a rubric can be found in Fig. 3.

Patrick Lencioni, founder of The Table Group, advises that there are three virtues that make up a great team player.¹⁶ These virtues are *hungry*, *humble*, and *smart*. And it makes sense! *Hungry* team members are those

willing and wanting to go the extra mile. They are passionate about what they do and are self-motivated. *Humble* employees are those who treat everyone equally. They are confident and share credit with the team. CS Lewis wrote, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." *Smart* relates to emotional intelligence, or what some call people smarts. Lencioni states, "*smart* simply refers to a person's common sense about people. It has everything to do with the ability to be interpersonally appropriate and aware. They ask good questions, listen to what others are saying and stay engaged in conversations intently."¹⁷ If our team is made up of hungry, humble, and smart team members, we can grow our business with engaged, well-rounded team players. Look for these virtues in your applicants while keeping in mind your core values. All of these elements are crucial to finding a great fit for your practice.

In a typical interview process, there are at least three actual interviews. Yes, that's right, at least three: the phone interview, the dating interview, and then, finally, a skills interview.

The Phone Interview

The phone interview is designed to be quick. It allows you to weed out those who are obviously not suitable for the position. The resume gives you a snapshot of their abilities, but it tells you almost nothing about whether they are hungry, humble, and smart. The initial phone conversation will give you a first glimpse into these virtues. Do they sound bored? Have they done *their* homework on *you*? Do they sound cheerful? Do they talk too much? Are they able to give meaningful and coherent answers to your questions? If you like what you hear, it is time to schedule the second interview.

The Character or Dating Interview

This is aptly called the dating interview because, like a first date, you are getting to know the applicant's character. Now you can dig deeper by asking questions that will help you know if they are hungry, humble, and smart. You will also start to get a feel for whether they will be able to embrace your core values. Think of questions that will get to the heart of it. For

example, if two of your core values are **kindness** and **humor**, the questions might look like this:

Kindness (Caring, Positive, Selfless, Friendly)

- Tell me about a time when you helped a coworker do their work, even when it felt uncomfortable.
- Have you ever helped someone you did not know, just because they needed help?

Humor (Making Light of a Bad Situation, Looking at the Positive Side, Laughter)

- Tell me about a time you experienced a frustrating event at your job and ended up laughing about it later.
- Tell me about a time when you had to turn a negative situation around.

Patrick Lencioni has outlined some great questions to assess hungry, humble, and smart. For examples, see Table 1. For a full list of questions, the reader is referred to *The Table Group*, a Patrick Lencioni company.¹⁸

For all of these areas regarding core values and virtues, include these in your rubric with a rating scale (1–5) of how the applicant answered the questions.

During the *Dating Interview*, consider doing something outside the normal routine. This might include an impromptu errand run (either inside the office or out) or ask them to join you in a meeting. Perhaps they could help you on some project or live issue. Going to lunch with the candidate, although may be in the normal routine, offers another chance to see how they interact outside the work environment. As you build a relationship, people get more comfortable and provide you with an opportunity to glean more of their personality and character. This is a great time to look for your core values or the three virtues in action. I remember one lunch interview during which the applicant had a hard time meeting my eyes! In another interview, the applicant treated the wait-staff with patience and kindness when the order was incorrect. These can be telling events to help evaluate the candidate's emotional intelligence.

Don't forget to treat the interviewees with kindness and compassion. If they are there for several hours interviewing several people, be sure to offer them breaks or a cup of coffee. Take them out for a meal if they are there during the lunch or dinner hour. They will remember how they were treated during the interview.

If the applicant has met your character assessment during the *Dating Interview*, it's time to get ready for the third interview. We recommend using a hiring assessment tool to

Table 1 Sample Interview Questions to Assess the Virtues of Hungry, Humble, and Smart

Sample interview questions:

To assess the hungry virtue:

Question: What is the hardest you've ever worked on something in your life?

Insight: Look for specific examples of real but joyful sacrifice. In other words, the candidate isn't complaining, but is grateful for the experience.

To assess the humble virtue:

Question: What was the most embarrassing moment in your career? Or the biggest failure?

Insight: Look for whether the candidate celebrates that embarrassment or is mortified by it. Humble people generally aren't afraid to tell their unflattering stories because they're comfortable with being imperfect. Also, look for specifics and real references to the candidate's own culpability.

To assess the smart virtue:

Question: What do you do that others in your personal life might find annoying?

Insight: Everyone annoys someone, sometimes. Especially at home. Smart people are not immune to this. But neither are they in the dark about it. And they tend to moderate these behaviors at work.

Source: Reprinted with permission from Lencioni P. *The Ideal Team Player: How to Recognize and Cultivate the Three Essential Virtues*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons; 2016.

collect data from the applicant before scheduling the *skills/assessment interview*. This step is not widely used, yet it offers some valuable insight into your candidate. There are various hiring assessments available to help collect this information such as the PXT Select¹⁹ or the Berke Assessment.²⁰ Each of these tools is designed to take the guess-work out of evaluating your candidates and matching them to your position. For example, these assessments measure the candidate’s verbal ability and reasoning, numeric ability and reasoning, problem-solving, personality traits, and interests. The results are then matched to a predefined set of qualities for the particular job opening (see Fig. 2). These data should account for one-third of the hiring decision and will help you avoid hiring someone who does not have the ability or temperament to perform the job. How many times have you hired someone because you liked them, or they seem to be a good fit and then found out they were not the right person for the job? Not only do these tools give you insights regarding your applicant, they also provide guidance and interview questions to help you probe deeper into areas assessed.

Skills/Aptitude Interview

During this interview, you take another look at the resume. Formulate questions or concerns that have bubbled up during the first two

interviews or from the assessment tool. You may want the candidate to demonstrate skills. For example, if you are interviewing for a front office position, have the candidate answer the phone for a short while. If you used an assessment tool, you can follow up with questions recommended from those tools. Finally, ask where they see their growth and development in the position. You might ask them to write a future resume as an exercise to really assess their hunger attributes.

WRAPPING UP

Now is the time to make those reference calls and complete the background check. The reference check may tell you a lot or a little. It may help you to feel more confident about your decision. On the other hand, a lack of information speaks volumes. If you have a reference who is hard to reach, be persistent. The diligence may pay off.

What about checking social media? You can hire companies to do background checks that include social media searches. SHRM (the Society for Human Resource Management) reports that many of these companies will offer online and social media searches in their protocols in 2019. However, SHRM cautions there are risks involved regarding privacy and standards set forth by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).²¹ “Social media screening presents opportunities for recruiters to find

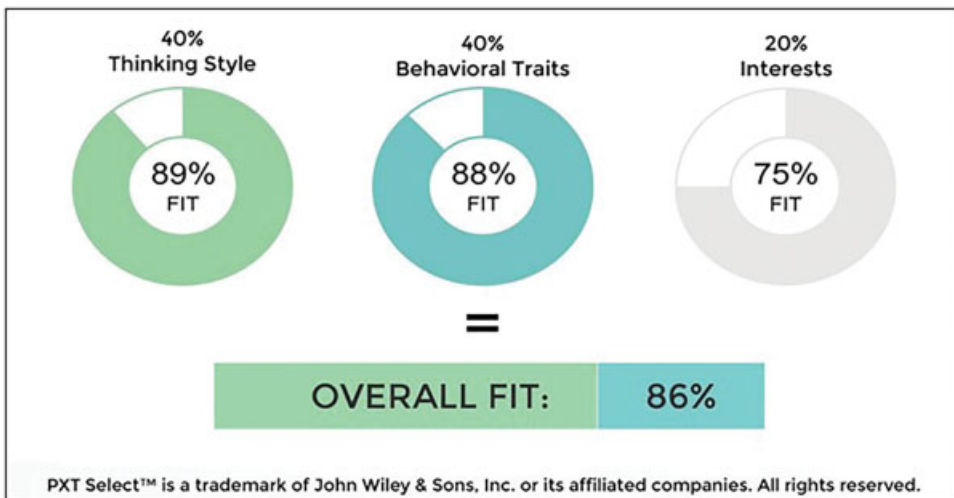


Figure 2 Example of partial results of a hiring assessment tool. (Reprinted with permission from Wiley & Sons, Inc.)

Interview

Candidate: _____

Date: _____

Position: _____

Culture Fit	Score (1=poor, 5=excellent)	Examples:
Humble		
Hungry		
Smart		
Community-minded		
Positive Objectivity		
Servant Leadership		
Total:		

PXT Select	% fit
Thinking Style (40%)	
Behavioral Traits (40%)	
Interests (20%)	
Overall Fit	

Strengths:

Concerns:

Skills needed	Score (1=poor, 5=excellent)
Total:	

Skills "nice to have"	Score (1=poor, 5=excellent)

Follow-up questions:

Figure 3 Interview rubric.

candidates and to reduce risk, but at the same time, these searches can create a legal minefield of potential liability,” said Les Rosen, founder and CEO of Employment Screening Resources, a background-screening firm in Novato, CA.²¹ SHRM cautions that the risk of a discrimination claim far outweighs the benefits of social media searches.

Closing Interview

You might be saying, wait! You said three interviews and this is number four! This final interview is generally combined with the *skills interview* if you feel confident about offering a position. Be ready to talk about salary but be informed. There are specific state rules about what you can and cannot ask. Generally, you

should not ask about salary history. Having a fair salary range in mind, along with benefits, should guide your conversation, *not* their salary history.

Remember, during each interview, listen closely to the applicant's responses and also listen with your eyes. Communication is largely nonverbal and you can learn a lot by being visually alert during the interview process. This is your last opportunity to check in on the hungry, humble, and smart virtues. For example, does the candidate interact with everyone in the office with respect? Does the applicant ask questions only about the work, or do they also ask about the practice, culture, or clientele? During the *closing interview*, try one of these questions:

- What can you tell me about our core values and what they mean to you?
- What kind of candidate would be the best fit for the job?
- What did you learn from people who interviewed you?
- Did you learn anything about the people who interviewed you?

When making your final decisions, a rule of thumb for evaluating your candidate is as follows:

- One-third dating interview.
- One-third assessment tool.
- One-third skills/resume (as seen in the Interview Rubric in Fig. 3).

Some final thoughts. Given the low unemployment rate of today, lack of audiologists, and the high rate of job openings, you will want to do everything in your power to secure dream applicants. Be sure to ask throughout the interview process what other opportunities they have considered and how your company compares. In today's competitive market, it is important to realize there may be other jobs the applicant is seeking. Once the applicant accepts your offer, the next step is a well-developed onboarding process. If the start date is not within a week, be sure to keep the candidate engaged so they do not start to search for other options while waiting to begin in your office.

ONBOARDING

Once your candidate accepts the offer, onboarding begins. Onboarding includes all the necessary new-hire paperwork, introductions, and training. This time will shape the employee's first impressions and experiences. It can have an impact on their productivity, their life cycle within the company, and ultimately the bottom line of your practice. It is also one part of the employee journey that tends to be overlooked and undervalued. Ignoring the onboarding process weakens your culture, disrupts the teamwork you have nurtured, and can result in a discontented employee or poor team fit. Think of onboarding as focusing on job requirements, relationship building, and culture enriching. It also provides an opportunity to harness the power of *authenticity*. Harvard Business Review²² states, "One of the chief features of being human is our longing for opportunities to be valued as our authentic selves. Being valued for who we truly are makes us feel alive. We have found that when people gain insight into their unique perspectives and strengths and can use them at work, their work engagement increases—their work is no longer just a means to the end. Most organizations do not tap this power source and, as a result, do not get the best out of their employees."

During this time of welcoming, create peak moments that inspire and exemplify your core values and unique culture.²³ The first day should be engaging and memorable. When your new employee goes home that first night, are they excited about what occurred during their first day? Are they reinforced that they made the right decision in joining your organization? The idea is to create cultural buy-in that extends beyond their workday and into the home and family.

Workplace Etiquette

Workplace etiquette also should become part of your onboarding process. What used to be thought of as common knowledge is strikingly different now for employees entering the workforce compared with previous generations. For example, have you ever had an employee send numerous personal texts during work? Or just did not show up for work (ghosting)? Or took 45 minutes for their 30-minute lunch break? I am sure you can think of your own examples of

“I can’t believe they thought that was OK!” Discussions around employee professional etiquette should be open and frank so that expectations of work habits and behavior are clear.

SHRM offers the following **mistaken** assumptions that new employees might have.²⁴

1. If I mess up, I’ll get written notice before I’m let go. (Wrong. An employee can be immediately dismissed for breaches in ethics or dishonesty. In these situations, a paper trail and notification are not required for most at-will employment situations.)
2. Treatment of performance problems and conduct problems are handled the same. (Wrong. They are not.)
3. No one is watching. (Wrong. We all are watching. It’s human nature.)
4. It is okay to send an email or text my resignation, but I expect you to talk with me when you are terminating me. (Wrong. Out of courtesy one does this in person.)
5. Asking for forgiveness is okay, rather than asking for permission first. (Wrong. When does this ever really work when trying to build trust?)

Other expectations that might be topics of this conversation:

1. Dress code.
2. Working hours and breaks.
3. Courtesy of a 2-week or 4-week notice of resignation (depending on position), given in person.
4. Honesty. It really is always the best policy. This includes understanding when one needs to disclose a problem or acknowledge when a mistake has been made.

Building a Positive Relationship

Building a positive relationship with your new employee is paramount for your business. This starts with meeting them where they are and guiding them in.

Share your business goals and your stories.

- Why are you an audiologist? Why did you choose private practice? What do you want to accomplish in your career? *Owners do not tell these stories often enough.*

- What do you value in your life? Share some of your goals for the business in the next 1 to 3 years.
- What does hiring your new employee mean to you? What do you expect you’ll be able to do more of? What are your expectations in terms of what they will own or touch as they develop? Help them understand your unique motivations for bringing them on now.
- How can you help them develop professionally and personally? What are their goals?

Having a Predefined Plan for Training

Having a predefined plan of training will help your new hire transition into your practice (see Table 2 for an example checklist). Be proactive and set check-in appointments on your calendar for your new employee. If you have a large staff, assign a mentor or office buddy for your new employee to help them navigate questions and relationships.

Opportunity to Rejuvenate

A new employee is a chance to change things in your office and to reinforce your values and culture:

- Start developing team culture videos. (Check out Zappos videos, for example.)
- Is it time to revisit the Policy Manual or Employee Handbook?
- Is it time to reconsider your meeting routine and frequency?
- Do you have the systems that you need to communicate and share information?
- Who else on the team needs to understand the reporting structure or team dynamics?
- Does the rest of the team know the core values and mission statement?
- What is the team unclear of in terms of roles, goals, and expectations?

If you can take the time to properly onboard your new employee, they will reach their performance potential sooner. The foundation will be laid for building a long, lasting employee relationship. This is a great opportunity to align your team and reinforce your culture and values. Developing a strong onboarding process can help you achieve these goals.

Table 2 Onboarding Checklist**Welcoming onboarding process**

1. Before the first day (welcoming invitation): Remember to send a welcoming email (or phone call) to tell the new employee the agenda for their first day.
 - a. Work times for day (time to arrive, expected ending)
 - b. Where to park
 - c. Bring lunch or lunch provided
 - d. Names of team members
 - e. What to expect the first day
 - f. Typical dress attire
2. First day (relationship/culture kickoff): Make it a PEAK moment to remember
 - a. Start the first day with an introduction to your culture, your vision, your mission, and your core values
 - b. Plan ½ day retreat or a 2-hour employee meeting to introduce team members and establish relationships
 - c. Minimally, plan a luncheon built around relationship building
 - d. Discuss with staff prior to first day, how to make it a peak moment for new employee
3. First week (discover/relationship building). Training on their role and time with team members
 - a. Provide policy manual (employee handbook)
 - i. Expectations regarding pay (and payroll documents)
 - ii. Documenting work time (and setting expectations)
 - iii. Benefits (health, vacation, holidays, retirement)
 - iv. Email and computer systems passwords
 - v. Business card ordering
 - b. Beware of information overload and focus on main aspects of new role
 - c. Provide opportunities to observe others in their new role
 - d. Set clear expectations of job role, provide job description and expectation of change (roles rarely stay static, set expectation up front)
 - e. Introduce job roles of others on the team
 - f. Set aside time to specifically spend with new hire for relationship building
 - g. Match new hire with a mentor
 - h. Utilize any onboarding videos of humanitarian trips or give-back local events
 - i. Webinar on Everything DiSC training (when available)
4. First month (reinforcement): Training on their role and understanding roles of others
 - a. Provide opportunities to observe others in their roles
 - b. Identify and highlight what makes others successful in their roles, and how they developed these skills or habits

SUMMARY

You have now made a good hire, one that matches the job with respect to skill set, cognitive and personality style, and the qualities of hungry, humble, and smart. You have done your onboarding and given your new employee clarity about his or her position, yourself, and your business. You have outlined goals for their development and you understand their needs to be successful in your practice. In the words of Simon Sinek, “The goal is not just to hire people who need a job, it’s to hire people who

believe what you believe.... If you hire people just because they can do a job, they’ll work for your money, but if you hire people who believe what you believe in, they’ll work for you with blood, sweat, and tears.”¹² Congratulations, you have now done your best to hire a long-lasting employee in your practice.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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