

Recruitment of Staff

Recruiting the very best people available to join your practice team is a process fundamental to the success and future growth of your business; your people and your practice are one and the same – here are Caroline Johnson's top tips for recruitment.

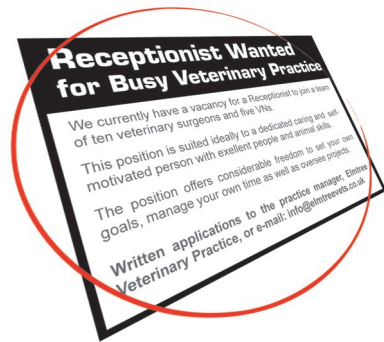
In quantifiable terms it is a costly business to recruit, consuming both time and money, therefore you need to ensure that you capitalise on your investment, not repeating the process more often than is necessary. The best team members are nuggets of gold; you must dig deep, look hard and hang on to them when you've found them!

1 Before initiating the recruitment process, think long and hard about the vacant position: precisely what is entailed in the role and what type of personal characteristics would best suit the position? If you have a job description, update it; if you haven't, then write one. Produce a candidate specification, listing the desired attributes, which would best match the position. Do this, before you do anything else.

2 Placing an advertisement is the most common but probably the least effective way of attracting the person you are after. Before considering this option, ask staff, family

and friends if they know of someone who might be suited to the position and then approach these individuals direct. If you don't already do so, then start to collect the details of people, whom you have met through your networks and who have impressed you; be proactive in your approach so that next time a vacancy arises, you already have a pool of possible candidates to tap into.

3 Think beyond the standard interview and consider how best to evaluate the skills and attributes you are seeking. In addition to a formal meeting you may also wish to consider a request for a short presentation, a spell on the reception desk (not just for would-be receptionists!), an invitation to sit in on a practice meeting and offer feedback afterwards, or (for a vet) their professional opinion of an ongoing case – dependant on the skills and attributes you seek. These kinds of methods may reveal more about the real person, beyond the nervous interviewee, showing



you how they deal with people and everyday workplace situations.

4 Whatever the position, you will be looking for someone to contribute to and form a useful addition to the practice team. On that basis, they must be able to get along with other members of staff, so do use the rest of the practice in part of the evaluation and decision-making process by introducing them to the candidate prior to an appointment being made, then canvassing their opinions. Get receptionists, nurses and vets to conduct guided tours and give the candidate information about the practice workings and culture. Where an appointment is subsequently made, the team building has begun even before work commences!

5 Finally, getting the right person is just so important to your business and to the rest of the practice team that you must minimise all risks and leave little to chance. If you struggle to find the right person at first, a square peg in a round hole or 'second best' will not do. Manage any additional workload the vacancy has created with locum, agency or interim support; look harder for a bit longer – until you manage to find that golden nugget. In the long-term this is one decision you will never ever regret! ■



About the Author – Caroline Johnson BSc (Hons)

Caroline has worked in the veterinary sector for many years. She has wide experience in sales, people management and training, mentoring, marketing and veterinary practice development. With her husband, she is Director of Prescription Marketing Ltd. Together they offer a wide range of people and practice development services for veterinary practices and project work for associated companies.