

Don't Give Up, Don't Ever Give Up: A Story of Recruitment and Retention at the Johns Hopkins Hospital

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The Johns Hopkins Hospital (JHH) is an 850-bed teaching institution in Baltimore, Maryland. In fiscal year (FY) 2001, it had 68 full-time pharmacists; for FY 2003, that number has risen to 81. The mean tenure for a JHH pharmacist is 8.4 years, and the mean pharmacist age is 38.6 years. Nearly two thirds (62.8%) of JHH pharmacists are women, and 38.3 percent are members of minority groups. Ten pharmacists have left and 19 new hires have been made in the past year. The reasons for the departures and the sources of new hires during that period are as follows:

Reasons for Departure (n = 10)

Relocation	5
Alternative practice	3
Residency	1
Move to another hospital	1

Sources of New Hires (n = 19)

Career days	6
Web announcement	4
Referral	3
Journal ad	2
Bounce back	1
Clerkship	1
Recruiter	1
Newspaper ad	1

In FY 2001, JHH had a 15 percent vacancy rate. The current rate is just percent. Despite a nationwide shortage, JHH is increasing the size of its staff and lowering vacancy rates. The success can be attributed to a well-organized recruitment and retention program.

JHH Recruitment Process

Recruitment at JHH includes the following steps:

Candidate Identification. JHH uses a variety of strategies to recruit candidates. The most successful is participation in career days at schools and colleges of pharmacy. There are several schools of pharmacy in the northeastern United States. Residents and staff enjoy attending these events, especially those that take place at their alma mater. The hospital's Web page is a good source; in this respect, the department benefits from the John Hopkins strong name recognition. Newspaper ads are used only for specialized posts and journal ads are helpful for clinical positions. Neither referral bonuses nor direct mailing campaigns have produced promising results. JHH uses professional recruiters only when it

has several positions to fill or when a position is difficult to fill. One advantage of professional recruiters is that they draw from a wide geographic base. ASHP's Personnel Placement Service is especially helpful in filling clinical specialist posts.

Initial Contact. If a candidate's curriculum vitae is promising, a telephone screening takes place. E-mails, and for qualified candidates a preinterview packet follow. JHH reimburses travel expenses of candidates invited for interviews.

Interview. Each candidate undergoes a six-hour interview that is conducted by a team that includes supervisory staff as well as staff pharmacists and representatives of the hospital's Career Services Department. The interview uses behavioral-based techniques.

Key features of employment with JHH, including salary, work schedules, and distinctive features of the pharmacy and JHH environment, are described during the interview. The JHH policy of offering bonus pay for extra hours, as well as its decentralized pharmacy services and other special benefits, receive emphasis.

Follow-up. At times, a job offer is made at the end of the interview. Otherwise, the interview ends with a wrap-up session and discussions of a timetable for future contact. Administrative follow-up activities include completing reference checks, obtaining a criminal background check, and checking professional licensure.

Offer. All employee benefits are described again at the time the offer is made. Features that make employment with JHH particularly appealing include a sign-on bonus, assistance with obtaining licensure or reciprocity, and, for immigrants, work visa sponsorship.

Retention Strategies

JHH incorporates results of periodic employee satisfaction surveys into its employment policies. The department surveys salaries at other similar institutions and seeks equity increases from the JHH human resource department when appropriate. It offers special benefits, including tuition assistance for employees' dependents. It equips its staff with tools they need to do their jobs more efficiently, such as handheld computers. It offers small incentives, such as birthday cards and meal tickets. It also sponsors a variety of employee recognition programs.

A key feature of this organization's retention strategy is an emphasis on communication. Department meetings are held monthly and division meetings each week. Reports are made at shift change. The residents prepare a departmental newsletter that features profiles of employees. E-mail is used for departmentwide communication.

Future Plans

To further enhance recruitment, JHH plans to improve the department's Web page, become more involved with schools of

pharmacy, and offer more opportunities for clerkships and pharmacy students.

To improve retention, JHH wants to continue to improve its orientation program, offer more nontraditional work schedules, improve manager training, and gather more useful information from its exit interviews. A hospitalwide work redesign program will also make JHH a more appealing employment environment. JHH is creating a career ladder for techs as well as an inhouse technician training program. It will also initiate validated testing of candidates for technician positions.

Summary

The coordinated use of a variety of recruitment and retention strategies has helped JHH meet the demands of a challenging time. By exploring new recruitment techniques and identifying which ones are most effective, this hospital has been able to add pharmacists to its staff. By offering top-notch benefits as well as less tangible professional rewards, JHH is retaining a loyal staff.