

## Hiring and Retaining Quality Employees

By William P. Prescott

To ensure a quality workplace, everyone needs to understand what is expected of them, and employers need to understand the rules that relate to employer responsibilities. Here are ten tips to help you hire and retain the staff you want.

**Consider practicing in an entity that provides liability protection, as opposed to practicing as a sole proprietor.**

This way the staff works for the practice entity and not you, personally. While not foolproof, this provides at least a roadblock to limit personal liability for employee claims or actions.

**Limit employment applications and candidate interviews to job related criteria.**

**Utilize applicant testing procedures for all positions.** This allows you to select the best applicant from multiple applicants who appear equally qualified for a particular position. For applicant testing to be a useful tool, it must be job related and applied to all candidates for each job.

**Obtain a written release from the applicant to contact former employers, educational institutions and references.**  
**Prepare thorough job descriptions for every position in your practice.** While preparing job descriptions is not easy, is time-consuming and may require practice management help, they allow you to evaluate candidate skills and hire quality applicants without orthodontic practice experience. Written job descriptions also provide an objective aid to discuss work performance.

**Formalize practice policies and procedures through an employee manual.** Written policies are useful to clarify your expectations of employee behavior in an efficient, consistent manner and to orient new employees. Remember that written policies are living documents, which need to be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

**Conduct written performance appraisals at least annually.** This creates a paper trail of the employee's performance, good or bad. Review and discuss the written form with the employee for future evaluation and follow-up. You and the employee should sign the form as an indication that it's been read. The form should be placed in the employee's personnel file.

**Immediately respond to and document unacceptable performance or behavior.** Outstanding performance should also be recognized.

**Employment laws are very state specific.** You should develop a working relationship with an employment lawyer in your particular state. Ask for a referral from your practice or personal attorney.

**Conduct a termination interview with any employee who leaves the practice for any reason.** It is good practice to conduct such an interview in the presence of a witness from management, e.g., another owner or the office manager, not a co-worker of the employee. This documents and preserves what was said during the termination interview.

To the extent that you hire and retain quality employees, your practice and life will be more rewarding than otherwise.

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