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Define your organization's culture to attract and retain top talent

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It's no secret that as the economy recovers and more executive and healthcare positions are created or vacated, professionals will be on the move. In fact, a recent labor data study revealed that healthcare jobs turned over at 28%, and experts say the cost for replacing these healthcare professionals can be more than 20% of that employee's annual salary. In addition, a recent report released by the Association of Staff Physician Recruiters disclosed that 45% of searches are to replace a departing provider. Healthcare professionals can afford to be mobile; jobs are plentiful and organizations are competing for top talent.

In addition to the increasing numbers of positions and decreasing numbers of qualified candidates, there is another reason for this market segment volatility: cultural fit. More than three-quarters (77%) of physicians said that organizational culture influences job satisfaction, according to a landmark survey conducted by Physician Wellness Services. In fact, cultural fit was identified as the top controllable cause of voluntary physician departures.

"Employee 'fit' usually comes down to five things: beliefs, outlook, language, values and character," says Derek Kosiorek, CPEHR, CPHIT, principal, MGMA Health Care Consulting Group. "The best candidates are the ones who are able to clearly articulate how they like to work. Asking a candidate to describe the culture of his or her current workplace is a good starting point. Then simply follow with this question: 'How did you cope in that culture?' You will be able to quickly assess their fit with your organization."

Because cultural fit is paramount to landing and retaining the best candidates, assessing cultural integration aptitude during the recruitment process is essential. To do this effectively, you must have a comprehensive understanding of your organization's culture. After all, to know if a candidate will fit in with the culture that drives your organization, you must first be cognizant of it. To better identify and define the culture that exists at your organization, consider these 10 areas:

1. **Vision and mission.** Look at your vision and mission statements. Are they more than just words? Are these statements driving your

people and processes? Are they revealed in daily practices? Do your environment and communications reflect that vision and mission to a casual observer?

2. **Values.** What are the core values of your organization? What core values do you see in your staff members? Do your employees' actions match your organizational values? Do the people in your organization do what they say they are going to do? Do they embody what is said about your organization in the marketplace?
3. **Communication.** How do employees interact and communicate with patients, colleagues and staff? Are they formal or informal? Are they service-oriented? Is there an interpersonal hierarchy or voluntary segmentation in place? What is the emotional atmosphere? Do they appear to be enjoying their work? Is there a sense of apparent conflict or tension?
4. **Team vs. individual orientation.** Do you have a compassionate, team-oriented environment where everyone works together to get the job done or does your organization foster and reward productivity at the individual level? Are personnel evaluations based on individual performance, team performance or a combination?
5. **Physical environment.** Does your physical environment underscore your mission? Do your decorations, marketing materials, bulletin boards and other office artifacts lend credibility to your organization's narrative?
6. **Interpersonal.** How do your employees get along? Do staff members know each other's families and spend time together outside of work? Does your organization provide multiple opportunities for employees to convene formally or informally? Employees must trust, like and respect each other to be productive.
7. **Priorities.** What tops the value chain at your organization? Is it productivity? Work/life balance? Are hours flexible or strictly enforced? Is the company family-friendly or are employees encouraged to compartmentalize their professional and personal lives?
8. **Accountability.** How are staff members held accountable? What is involved in employee reviews and evaluations? Is there a reward or



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compensation system that acknowledges good work, good deeds, service or production? Are employees publicly or privately recognized for accomplishments?

9. **Leadership style.** Are administrators seen as micromanagers or do employees have autonomy? Is there an open-door policy in place or are scheduled meetings encouraged at regular intervals? Is the company driven by administrative mandates or is a more bottom-up approach supported?

Tactically recruiting and retaining top talent requires an understanding of organizational culture and an understanding of employee cultural fit and integration. You must be able to discover whether the attributes that your organization values — the ones that make employees and the organization more successful — are shared by candidates. Through evaluation of these 10 areas, you will be better able to gauge what makes your environment work well and what types of

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10. **Internal audit.** Go right to the source — your employees. Interview various levels of staff individually or in small groups. (Notice the interaction if in a group.) Ask questions such as:

- What would you tell a friend about working here?
- What is the one thing you would like to change about this organization?
- What kinds of people succeed or fail in this organization?
- What are the characteristics one must have to thrive in this organization?

individuals and traits will work well in your environment. An ideal workforce will be diverse and include a variety of personalities; the one characteristic each new hire should share, however, is the ability to integrate into, and thrive within, the prevailing corporate culture to drive the organization forward. ■
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