

avoiding the top 10 recruiting mistakes

BeaconFey

Better thinking. Better results.



market situation

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The future is now!

An aging baby boomer population is causing hospital officials to brace for a staggering increase in the patient population. But it isn't just the patients that are getting older. Experts say that the country's nursing corps is aging faster than nearly any other profession. The average age of a nurse in the United States is more than 44 years. The mean has grown so quickly in this decade that healthcare experts are predicting a severe nursing shortage in the not-so-distant future.

The time has come!

The fact is, the current pipeline of younger nurses entering the profession is not enough to replenish the supply of older nurses who are retiring, opting out of bedside nursing, or getting out of the industry altogether. With an older nursing staff, some of the most pressing issues are:

- **Dislike for current conditions**
- **Early retirement**
- **Choosing to work in non-healthcare settings**
- **Reduced hours due to strong economy**
- **And even a concern that age poses a greater risk of injury from the physical demands of the job.**

While the previous shortages in the nursing industry were across the board, the current shortage will be felt strongest in high-skill areas such as critical care, emergency, operating room, and the pediatric intensive care areas. This shortage will only increase with time, as more than 40 million Americans will be 65 or older by 2010.

The changes in the healthcare industry, in particular the shift to managed care systems, are causing a real shift in the usage of nurses in the healthcare field in general, as well as in hospitals. Specifically, this shift has resulted in:

- **Fewer inpatient admissions to hospitals**
- **A shift in settings in which nurses are utilized – more non-acute care settings**
- **Lower average length of stay in hospitals**

The industry is changing.

>Bad pay, bad communication on the units, and bad equipment in the clinical areas all add up to poorer working conditions, thereby speeding the movement of nurses away from acute care and into non-acute care settings.<

The shift to managed care has caused a decrease in hospital admissions for inpatient stays. However, while an overall decrease of the inpatient hospital population might reflect a decreased need for nurses working in hospitals, a higher concentration of severe needs requires a higher concentration of highly skilled nurses.

At the same time, freezes in spending have prevented many hospitals from investing in better nursing pay, better management systems, and better facilities. Bad pay, bad communication on the units, and bad equipment in the clinical areas all add up to poorer working conditions, thereby speeding the movement of nurses away from acute care and into non-acute care settings.

Three key factors have made hospitals less attractive places to work for many nurses:

- **Economic pressure to keep healthcare costs down, forcing personnel cutbacks**
- **An influx of older patients increasing care demands on nursing staff**
- **Growth in job opportunities in what is perceived as less stressful, non-acute facilities**

In the past, hospitals have used a number of new and not-so-new strategies to attract nurses. In today's competitive health care environment, these strategies are tired and worn and, most times, just not successful.

The bottom line

Based on this difficult market situation, marketing must go beyond the standard technique of placing classified ads in the local paper. That strategy, like many others, forces hospitals to spend thousands of dollars, with fewer and fewer results.

BeaconFey, L.L.C. are pioneers in new marketing approaches in the recruitment setting. For a meeting to discuss how we can help you save time and money, call 877.583.1203 and ask for Paul Wingate or Rob Fey. Until then, enjoy our top ten recruitment mistakes.

top ten recruitment mistakes

Learn how to make your recruitment efforts more effective by avoiding the following top ten most common recruiting strategies.

mistake number one: Failing to Leverage Internal Audiences

Your best recruiters and ambassadors should be your current nurses and employees. They can be your most cost-effective recruitment effort. Their satisfaction with their job at your hospital can be used as a recruitment tool. This is especially important as the features that attract nurses go well beyond choosing a hospital for the highest pay. Other factors include:

Convenient location

Career opportunities

Inviting working environment

Focus on patient care (low patient-to-nurse ratios)

Encouraging your staff, in fun and creative ways, to highlight the benefits that your hospital offers a potential employee, will be much more effective than a scatter shot of classified ads.

mistake number two: Failing to Understand the Market or Marketing Math 101

Review the supply and demand figures for your area. The number of nurses in your region provides you a specific and definable universe that can be reached directly via targeted direct mail, and yet hospitals continue to waste dollars on using mass media to reach a very select group of people. The good news is that the nurses reading the classifieds are usually so disgusted that they are highly motivated. The bad news is that you are competing with every other hospital in the market area for a select few.

Look at the marketing math. It is a fact that only 40% of the registered nurses are now in acute care settings, compared to the remaining 60% who are in outpatient settings, nursing homes, and other non-hospital locations. As a hospital, you are competing with facilities that offer better hours, more flexibility, and less stress for nurses. Whatever the effectiveness of the publication that you're currently using for recruitment,

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they simply do not reach a large enough pool of candidates.

The good news is that a recent study found that 66% of all nurses have given some thought to leaving their current jobs in the coming year. So there are obvious opportunities to recruit nurses who might be dissatisfied in their current position but are not actively looking. Another startling statistic is that 500,000 RNs move each year. Where are they, and how can you get them to move to your hospital?

>Give prospects a reason to take action that is meaningful.<

mistake number three: Failure to Provide an Offer Recruitment efforts should really be classified in the direct response business. In other words, the goal of the tactic is to get someone to take action NOW. Yet, very few recruiters include any call to action to motivate the target to act. The result is that the only prospects that are going to take action are those that are fed up with their current situation.

Let's put it another way. Banks, in all of their wisdom, keep relying on the "free checking" offer to bring in customers. How many people see one of those offers and jump up to take immediate action on that premium offer? Yet, when you view countless recruitment vehicles, you see the same old nurse fairs or special events being offered time and time again. Aren't we just offering another version of free checking?

Be different! Give them a reason to take action that is meaningful.

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mistake number four: Failing to View Retention as a Recruitment Strategy One of the issues that should be part of any integrated HR program is not just the recruitment of new nurses, but the retention of existing nurses. All the recruitment efforts in the world will not overcome a situation where nurses are going out the back door as fast as they come in the front door. Hospitals must be aggressive in their attempts to make their current nurses want to stay. Much of that is determined through finding out what they want and providing the internal programs to meet their needs. Understanding why new nurses chose you

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compared to why old nurses left provides insights into operation issues that need to be repaired or enhanced.

mistake number five: Failure to Provide a Message Most nurse recruitment messages can be summed up in three words: “Here We Are!” There is little to no differentiation and, as a result, all hospital recruitment ads look and sound exactly the same. When you have no message, or a message that says “Here We Are” in your print ads, it is any wonder that your advertising is failing? Just listing the various positions offered at a hospital is not going to provide differentiation – remember, everyone has almost the same positions to fill! Today, successful recruiters understand what makes their hospital best, better, or different and use that message throughout their recruitment efforts.

mistake number 6: Failure to Understand What Nurses Really Want Although no one would turn down more money, recent research has shown that there are other issues that concern nurses almost as much as salary and benefits. Studies have been done to determine which recruitment strategies and hospital practices nurses seek from employers and what they find most satisfying. Are your prospective nurses seeking opportunities to exercise professional judgment or is flexible scheduling more critical? Is it as simple as location or something more complex, like adequate nurse/patient ratios? Once hospital recruiters understand, through research, what their nurses really want, the message and offer are easily developed.

mistake number 6: Failure to Understand the Competition Who are your competitors? Are they other acute hospitals or are they the rapidly growing non-acute settings? Until you know who you are competing against, how can you develop the correct message? If your competition is other hospitals, then has a side-by-side comparison been done on each of the top three to five decision criteria on a hospital-by-hospital basis? The goal of

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this would be to compare and contrast the recruitment packages for each major competitor in order to identify and build upon the difference between your hospital and your competition. If your competition is offering more money, better environment, free day care, and sign on bonus versus your message of “Here We Are” ... you finish the equation. You lose.

However, if your competition is non-acute care settings, then your job is much more difficult. Many nurses begin in an acute care setting and leave for a less stressful environment. It may be more difficult to get this population to move back to an acute care setting. If your competition is these non-acute settings, you can see where your marketing message must be completely different.

Once you choose a competitor it gives you a frame of reference to create a mismatch. You can better determine how to get a target audience to switch. Some of the most successful organizations have understood the power of making a specific promise of value to a specific customer segment. With this promise you are building a strong brand, resistant to competitive forces. For nursing prospects it will answer the question of what your hospital will do for them that is “best, better, or different” from what the competition can offer them.

mistake number eight: Lack of Follow-Up The downsizing that many hospitals underwent several years ago (or are undergoing now) effectively demolished the recruitment infrastructure, and most hospitals aren't set up to efficiently recruit the needed number of nurses. As a result, the application process is slow, cumbersome, and unresponsive.

In today's highly competitive recruitment landscape, where nurses have multiple simultaneous options, processing time and immediate follow-up are critical.

mistake number nine: The Media Mix or Common Media Mistakes Again, in nurse recruitment, it is not a mystery in terms of finding prospects. In the Washington, D.C. area alone there are 6000

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nurses. But most hospitals constantly spend money on the newspaper ads because this is who is looking for a job, right? Let's look at it this way... in Washington D.C. there are 6000 nurses but only 40% in the acute care setting. Lets say you're spending \$250,000 per year to recruit 50 nurses. You are effectively spending \$104.16 for every nurse in your market area, but you're only communicating to approximately 10–20% of them. So, we advocate a mix of media that reaches out to the hard core lookers, but develops a brand, and a lead funnel, and talks to every nurse in your market area on a frequent basis, to tell your story and differentiate you from the pack.

mistake number ten: Failure to Build a Value Proposition for the Hospital

Understanding what you can offer nurses that conveys a magnitude of difference from the competition and is delivered in an offer form, is the very essence of this process. Of course if the hospital itself cannot define this value proposition, then it is even harder for nurse recruitment to have a chance.

In the end, understanding how to develop a compelling promise of value can mean the difference between success and failure in recruitment and marketing efforts.

There are six steps to building a value proposition:

Understanding your Core Competency

Understanding your Core Customer

Choosing a Market Focus

Understanding Dominant Needs

Choosing Competition

Building a Value Proposition