Law Office Manager

SPECIAL REPORT

7 Simple, Proven Steps to Hiring the Right Staff

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Special Report:

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7 Simple, Proven Steps to Hiring the Right Staff

STEP #1 The Job Description

Write a job description

First step in the hiring process is creating or updating the job description. Whether this is a new position, or one being vacated by a current staffer, you should take this opportunity to review and document what the job comprises. This is also time to see if jobs can be combined, separated or reassigned. Can someone else on staff take over part of the work? Should you add other responsibilities to this job?

Law practices often try to get by without formal job descriptions. The thinking is the manager knows what each position requires, and she or he can share this information with job candidates and new hires. Another argument is that because job tasks tend to change, job descriptions quickly become outdated.

Neither of these arguments takes into account the many ways in which job descriptions can—and should—be used in a law office environment.

Hiring

A job description allows you to identify the skills and experience needed for a position.

Referencing the person currently in the position is a mistake. She or he might have skills and experience that exceed the position requirements, particularly if the current staffer has been in the job for any length of time. Or, the current staffer might not meet the job standards.

A well-written job description, on the other hand, establishes standards for the position, and outlines tasks.

This information should be referenced when creating a job ad. It should also be referenced when interviewing job candidates.

A job description allows you to find candidates who are a fit for the position. Without a job description, you are winging it—and winging it rarely leads to good hires.

Onboarding

Once you hire a new employee, the job description serves as a reference point for onboarding. It allows you to review job requirements and tasks in an organized way, and in detail.

This provides the practice with a tremendous advantage, in that the new employee knows what is required and can hit the ground running.

Effective onboarding translates to greater productivity, and an employee who feels s/he is making a contribution—which increases the likelihood of job satisfaction. In addition, because the job requirements, tasks, and expectations have been clearly conveyed, the manager or immediate supervisor will not have to spend as much time with the new hire.

Training

A job description also serves a basis for employee training. When you establish standards for a position and detail tasks, training requirements become clear.

For example, if the practice is installing new software, reviewing job descriptions will help you determine which positions would benefit most from vendor training.

Referencing job descriptions to develop a training plan is especially helpful for the office manager with a large staff.

Staff development

Similarly, a job description can identify areas for staff development.

One example is when you are considering promoting an employee. The job description for the new position will alert you to areas where the staffer may require coaching, training or formal education.

Performance reviews

It's difficult, if not impossible, to measure performance unless you know what an employee should accomplish. To this end, a job description serves as a critical document. Indeed, because a job description serves a roadmap for performance, a manager should refer to it when preparing a formal performance review.

Referencing the job description during the actual review session is also advantageous—for both the manager and the employee.

For the manager, the document provides an official point of reference, which gives additional credibility to the review process.

For the employee, it helps alleviate any confusion about expectations.

As important, for both parties, the document helps keep the conversation on track and professional in tone.

Strategic planning

When it comes to strategic planning, job descriptions are extremely valuable.

These documents provide insight into workflow and routine tasks, while identifying areas for improvement.

This insight helps you effectively manage a law office under ordinary circumstances. When faced with significant change, like merging with another practice, this insight is critical.

To attempt strategic planning without the benefit of job descriptions ignores the most critical components of the practice office: the tasks and the people performing those tasks.

And speaking of planning and tasks, the law office manager should plan to review job descriptions on a regular basis.

An ideal time to do this is in connection to staff performance reviews. Then, if position duties and tasks will change, you can discuss these changes during performance reviews.

What if your law office doesn't have job descriptions? Well, first thing's first. Make a plan to create these essential documents.

Model Tool: Job description template

Job descriptions are critical management documents. A law office manager should make sure there is a formal, written job description for every position.

This template provides the major categories that you should include in your job descriptions along with an explanation of what to include in each category.

Follow this guide to create job descriptions for your law office.

Model Tool: Job description template

Job title	*The formal title of the position*
Reports to	*The title of the position that the job incumbent reports to*

Job purpose

Provide a brief description of the general nature of the position; an overview of why the job exists; and what the job is to accomplish.

- The job purpose is usually no more than four sentences long.

Duties and responsibilities

List the primary job duties and responsibilities using headings and then give examples of the types of activities under each heading. Using headings and giving examples of the types of activities to be done allows you to develop a flexible job description that encourages employee to 'work outside the box' and within reason, and discourages "that's not my job."

- Identify between five and eight primary duties and responsibilities for the position.
- List the primary duties and responsibilities in order of importance.
- Begin each statement with an action verb.
- Use the present tense of verbs.
- Use gender neutral language such as s/he.
- Use generic language such a photocopy instead of Xerox.
- Where appropriate use qualifiers to clarify the task – where, when, why or how often – for example instead of "greet clients as they enter the law office" use "greet clients, as they enter the law office, in a professional and friendly manner."
- Avoid words that are open to interpretation – for example instead of "handle incoming mail" use "sort and distribute incoming mail."
- Include a statement indicating that the position may be responsible for other duties, as assigned by practice management. This is a disclaimer of sorts, and allows for tasks like special projects or filling in for absent coworkers.

Qualifications

State the minimum qualifications required to successfully perform the job. These are the qualifications that are necessary for someone to be considered for the position.

Qualifications include:

- Education
- Specialized knowledge
- Skills
- Abilities
- Other characteristics such as personal characteristics
- Professional certification
- Experience

Working conditions

If the job requires a person to work in special working conditions this should be stated in the job description. Special working conditions cover a range of circumstances from regular evening and weekend work, shift work, working outdoors, working with challenging clients, and so forth.

Physical requirements

If the job is physically demanding, this should be stated in the job description. A physically demanding job is one where the incumbent is required to stand for extended periods of time, lift heavy objects on a regular basis, do repetitive tasks with few breaks, and so forth.

Direct reports

List by job title any positions to be supervised by the incumbent.

Approved by:	*Signature of the person with the authority to approve the job description*
Date approved:	*Date when the job description was approved*
Reviewed:	*Date when the job description was last reviewed*

Ideally, a job description should be reviewed annually and updated as often as necessary.

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STEP #2 Getting the Word Out

Attract job applicants

Your second step is getting the word out that your office is hiring. Here are 10 ways to do that:

1. **Networking:** Attend industry events, conferences, and job fairs to network with potential candidates. Reach out to professional organizations and groups to see if they have job boards or networking events you can participate in.
2. **Referral programs:** Implement a referral program to incentivize current staff members to refer qualified candidates. Offer bonuses or other rewards for successful referrals.
3. **Online job sites:** Post job openings on popular job sites such as Indeed, Glassdoor, and LinkedIn. Make sure to write a detailed job description and use relevant keywords to increase visibility.
4. **Social media:** Utilize social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to promote job openings and engage with potential candidates. Share company culture, mission and values to attract candidates who resonate with the values.
5. **Career pages:** Ensure the company career page on the website is user-friendly, up to date and has clear job descriptions. Make sure to highlight the benefits of working with the organization.
6. **Internship programs:** Develop an internship program with local schools, universities, or training programs to attract young professionals and fresh graduates who are eager to learn and build their skills.
7. **Employee branding:** Develop an employee branding strategy and use social media to promote it. Share success stories of current employees and showcase the company's culture, benefits, and perks to attract more candidates.
8. **Employee benefits:** Offer attractive employee benefits such as health insurance, paid time off, and retirement plans to attract potential candidates.

9. **Referral partnerships:** Form partnerships with other law offices or healthcare providers in the area to refer candidates to each other when hiring.
10. **Sign-on bonuses:** Offer sign-on bonuses to attract candidates who may be hesitant to leave their current position. Make sure the bonus aligns with the company's budget and hiring goals.

Here's how to write a job ad or job site listing:

- **Start with a clear and compelling job title:** The job title should be accurate, specific and descriptive enough to attract the right candidates.
- **Use a clear and concise job description:** Use clear and concise language to describe the responsibilities and requirements of the job. Highlight what makes the job unique and attractive to potential candidates.
- **Describe the ideal candidate:** Provide a brief description of the qualifications, skills, and experience required for the job. Be realistic with requirements.
- **Highlight the benefits:** Mention the benefits of working for the law office. This can include competitive salaries, benefits, flexible schedules, continuing education opportunities and other perks.
- **Share the company culture:** Briefly describe the law office's culture and values to attract candidates who share similar values.
- **Use keywords:** Use relevant keywords and phrases that job seekers are likely to search for. This will increase the visibility of the job listing on job search engines.
- **Make it easy to apply:** Provide clear instructions on how to apply for the job. This can include submitting a resume and cover letter or an online application.
- **Be inclusive:** Use inclusive language to attract a diverse pool of candidates. Avoid language that may discourage people from applying.
- **Proofread:** Proofread the job listing for errors and clarity. A well-written job listing can make a great first impression and attract more candidates.
- **Keep it concise:** Keep the job listing concise and to the point. Long job descriptions can be overwhelming and may discourage people from applying.

Remember to make the job listing stand out by showcasing the unique aspects of the job and the law office.

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STEP #3 The Short List

Decide on the top applicants

Sorting through applications for a job at a law office can be a daunting task, but it is essential to identify the top applicants for an interview. Here are some tips on how to sort through applications and choose the top candidates for an interview.

1. **Review the job description:** Start by reviewing the job description to ensure that you have a clear understanding of the qualifications and experience required for the position. Use this as a guide to screen applicants and eliminate those who do not meet the basic requirements.
2. **Review resumes and cover letters:** Review resumes and cover letters to get a better understanding of the applicant's experience and qualifications. Look for relevant experience, education, and skills that match the job description.
3. **Look for keywords:** Look for keywords that match the job description in resumes and cover letters. This can help you quickly identify relevant candidates and eliminate those who do not meet the requirements.
4. **Check for errors:** Check resumes and cover letters for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This can be a sign of poor attention to detail and may indicate that the applicant is not a good fit for the job.
5. **Review work history:** Review the applicant's work history to get a better understanding of their experience and qualifications. Look for relevant experience in the law field, as well as experience in customer service, administration, or other relevant areas.
6. **Check for references:** Check the applicant's references to get a better understanding of their work history and performance. Contact previous employers to ask about the applicant's work ethic, reliability, and performance on the job.
7. **Look for relevant certifications:** Look for relevant certifications or licenses that may be required for the job.

8. **Use an applicant tracking system:** Consider using an applicant tracking system to help you sort through applications and identify top candidates. These systems can help you quickly review resumes and cover letters, track applicant status, and communicate with candidates.

Once you have reviewed the applications, it's time to choose the top candidates for an interview. Here are some tips on how to make this decision.

- **Set criteria:** Set criteria for selecting candidates for an interview. This can include qualifications, experience, and skills required for the job. Use these criteria to identify the top candidates.
- **Rank candidates:** Rank candidates based on their qualifications and experience. This can help you identify the top candidates for an interview.
- **Consider diversity:** Consider diversity when selecting candidates for an interview. This can include diversity in terms of race, gender, age, and experience. A diverse team can bring new perspectives and ideas to your law office.
- **Conduct pre-screening interviews:** Consider conducting pre-screening interviews to narrow down the field of candidates. This can be done over the phone or through a video conference. Use these interviews to ask basic questions about the applicant's qualifications and experience.
- **Invite top candidates for an interview:** Once you have identified the top candidates, invite them for an interview. Be sure to provide clear instructions on the time, date, and location of the interview.

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STEP #4 The Interview

Set up and conduct the interview

1. **Determine the interview format:** Decide whether the interviews will be conducted in person, over the phone, or via video conferencing.
2. **Schedule the interviews:** Reach out to the selected candidates to schedule interviews. Ask for their availability and offer several options for interview times.
3. **Provide details:** Provide the candidates with the date, time, and location of the interview. If the interview is virtual, provide them with the appropriate video conferencing link and any necessary instructions.
4. **Confirm the interview:** Confirm the interview a few days before the scheduled date to ensure that the candidate will attend. This can be done via email or phone call.
5. **Prepare the interview team:** Ensure that the interview team is prepared for the interview. Provide them with the candidate's resume and cover letter so they can prepare relevant questions.
6. **Plan the interview:** Plan the interview format and questions ahead of time to ensure that the interview is structured and relevant to the job.
7. **Ensure a professional and welcoming environment:** Ensure that the interview environment is professional, welcoming, and free of distractions. This can help the candidate feel comfortable and prepared for the interview.
8. **Be punctual:** Be punctual and start the interview on time. This can show the candidate that you value their time and are organized.
9. **Introduce the interview team:** Introduce the interview team at the beginning of the interview to help the candidate feel comfortable and establish rapport.
10. **Allow time for questions:** Allow the candidate to ask questions at the end of the interview. This can help them better understand the job and the law office's culture.

Model Form: Notification to Applicants of Pre-Employment Screening

Collecting information about job applicants from social media websites like Facebook can get you into legal hot water. That's because the information you collect may be considered protected, personal information to the extent applicants can show they had a reasonable expectation of privacy in the material.

It's much harder for applicants to claim they had a reasonable privacy expectation if you notify them in advance that you intend to collect the information. That's why you should add language like the following to your employment application form if you do look at social media sites during pre-employment screening.

Read and fill in this notification. Then present it to the applicant.

XYZ Law Office

Notification to applicants of pre-employment screening

Thank you for applying for employment with us. Please understand that XYZ Law Firm reserves the right to collect information about you that's relevant to your application and qualifications from publicly available internet sources, including the following social networking sites: [*List the sites you intend to check.*]

Such checks will be performed by designated XYZ Law Firm personnel only after an offer of employment has been made. The information XYZ Law Firm obtains from this background check will be used to verify that you do indeed possess the professional qualifications and personal background that prompted XYZ to make you the offer of employment.

XYZ Law Firm is an equal opportunity employer and your application will be processed without regard to your race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, family status, sex, disability, sexual preference or other personal characteristics protected by employment discrimination laws.

Do you make this costly interviewing mistake?

Don't focus a job interview on whether the candidate can do the job. The purpose of an interview is not to evaluate hard skills or job experience or training. Anybody who makes it to the interview already meets the requirements.

Look instead for the behaviors of the person. The interview is the time to find out the motivators, the personality, and the soft skills of self management, organization, and the ability to solve problems and work as part of a team.

Digging past the pre-fab answers

Standard interview procedure is to spend the first half hour telling the person about the office and how great the job is. It's a sales pitch, and it's a waste of time. The applicant already wants the job. That's why that person is there in the first place— to get hired. Save the sales talk for when the office makes an offer and start instead with questions that force applicants to demonstrate that they have the behavior and competence to be successful in the job and to fit in well with the organization.

The way to do that is to ask questions that make the individual think. Most managers ask questions that can only produce the correct answers: *Are you results-oriented? Do you like working in a team environment? Do you like working with people?* Those don't work. Who's going to say, "*No, I hate working with other people. I'd rather work by myself and not be bothered*"?

Instead, list the characteristics the job requires and then ask for evidence of each by phrasing the questions in the format of "*tell me about a time you were results-oriented*" or "*tell me about a time you really acted as part of a team.*" People have to think to respond. They also have to be candid. Somebody who is not results-oriented is going to have a hard time making up an answer.

...and then? ...and then?

Keep going. Whatever the answer is, ask for more about it. Suppose the question is, Tell me about a time you solved a client problem and the answer is, We had a client who complained about such-and-such, and I did A.

Ask for more: *How did you accomplish A?* Answer: *By doing B.* Response: *And how did you accomplish B?* What happens is that the applicant winds up doing all the talking, and the manager gets lots of information plus a rich picture of what the office can expect from that person.

Job applicants are prepared. They come in with ready responses to the typical interview questions and can spit back exactly what the interviewer is looking for. But what they can't get past is the heavy follow-up. Asking question after question takes time; block out an hour, if not more. Spending the extra time is far easier than having to deal later with somebody who's not suited to the job.

Picking up the dropped hints

Throughout the interview, listen for offhand comments about job preferences and expectations that indicate a bad fit. Don't expect the candidate to come out and say there's not a match or even give any indication of a problem. Jobseekers are going to say whatever will get them in. It's the little remarks that tell the real story.

If a front-desk candidate says, "*My goal is to be making $60,000 in four years*," stop and think. Will the position ever warrant a $60,000 salary? Is there opportunity for that kind of promotion within the office? If not, it's not fair to hire that person. What's more, in a month or two, the new hire will hear about the salary limits from coworkers and leave.

Or suppose a candidate says, "*I'm on the fast track. I want to be assistant manager in five years.*" No matter how great a fit that person may otherwise be, if that's not what the office is offering, it's a bad hire.

Love at first sight

One last rule: Don't get dazzled. Someone comes in dressed perfectly, sounding like just what the office wants, and the manager's first response is, "Wow! I've got to hire this person!" Now a halo perches on that candidate's head, and what follows is not an interview at all but a search for evidence— however poor—that the office should hire that applicant.

Even the most experienced interviewer can fall into that trap. It's human nature. And it happens just as often with physician interviews as with staff interviews. The doctors see a glowing resume from a prestigious school and think, "This person must be really smart." No one ever listens for any indication that the applicant may not be right for the practice or vice versa.

Job interviews: how to ask personal questions without committing discrimination

The job interview process is a breeding ground for discrimination complaints. One common mistake: asking job applicants inappropriate questions about their nationality, marital status, religion, disabilities and other characteristics that discrimination laws ban you from considering when making hiring decisions.

Applicants on the receiving end of such questions are apt to come away feeling like you discriminated against them, especially if they do not get the job. Yet, it may also be legitimate to seek this kind of information to evaluate an applicant's credentials.

The problem, in other words, is not necessarily the question but how you phrase it.

The bottom line: To avoid discrimination complaints, you need to know what questions you can and cannot ask. This article explains where to draw the lines.

Why certain job interview questions discriminate

"*Are you pregnant?*"

You don't have to be an HR manager to just know that this is a question that should not be asked during a job interview. The instinct is sound. But *why* is asking a job applicant if she is pregnant illegal?

Answer: Technically, it is not illegal. The anti-discrimination laws do not say employers may not ask questions about pregnancy. What the laws do say is that employers cannot use gender, including pregnancy, to make hiring decisions. The question "are you pregnant" suggests that you do factor pregnancy into your hiring decisions. The other problem with "are you pregnant" is that it is a question you would only ask female applicants.

When you may ask personal questions

The rules are meant to combat the stereotype that women who want to have children are less dedicated to their jobs and ensure women equal hiring opportunity. But what if the employer has a legitimate, non-discriminatory motivation to ask about pregnancy? For example, what if the job involves exposure to chemicals shown to cause miscarriages or birth defects?

The laws do allow employers leeway for these circumstances. **Rule of thumb:** You may consider personal characteristics protected against discrimination to the extent necessary to evaluate the applicant's ability to perform the essential functions of the job. The corollary is that you can ask questions during job interviews to obtain the personal information you need for your evaluation as long as you phrase your questions the right way.

The questions you can and cannot ask

Over the years, the EEOC has issued guidance explaining which pre-employment questions employers can and cannot ask. To make your life easier, we assembled the piecemeal guidance into a single, comprehensive chart.

Pre-Employment Inquiries

CAN'T ASK	CAN ASK	COMMENT
What's your maiden name?	What's your current name? Have you ever been known by any other name?	Maiden name may indicate marital status, national origin or ancestry
Are you married/divorced/single/widowed? Are you planning to get married? Are you dating anyone? Listing Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss:		You may not ask women or men questions or seek to get information about their marital status
Name of spouse? Where does your spouse work? May spouse get transferred? Other questions about spouses	Describe travel/relocation requirements of job and ask applicants if they can meet them	Info on marital status and dependents required for payroll, etc., can be obtained after job offered
Are you pregnant? Do you use birth control? Are you planning to have children?	Describe the physical requirements and hazards of the job and ask applicants if there is any reason they cannot perform them	You may ask about pregnancy after offering the job to determine if the applicant needs accommodations
Do you have any children or dependents? What are your childcare arrangements? Any other questions about children or dependents	Describe the schedule and overtime requirements of the job and ask applicants if can meet them, e.g., "this job requires working on weekends—will that be a problem?"	Questions about children and dependents are evidence of intent to discriminate on the basis of gender and/or family status

Pre-Employment Inquiries

CAN'T ASK	CAN ASK	COMMENT
Are you related to or friends with anyone who works for the company?	Describe company's anti-nepotism policy and ask applicants if their hiring would create any problems under it	Family relations and friendships with other employees have no bearing on an applicant's competence
How old are you? What is your birth date? Asking for a birth certificate When did you graduate high school?	The law says you must be at least X years' old to work/do this job. Is that a problem?	Asking about age is evidence of discrimination unless an age limit or requirement is a bona fide occupational qualification
Are you a U.S. citizen? What country are you from? Where were you or your parents born? List all previous addresses/ military service.	Are you legally entitled to work in the U.S.? Do you read, understand, speak and/ or write all the languages necessary to do the job as specified in the ad or job description?	You may not ask questions or seek information about an applicant's nationality or citizenship
What kind of military discharge did you receive?	Did you serve in the military? What periods of service? What training or work experience did you receive while in the military?	You can ask whether applicants served in the military but not about the kind of discharge they received
What is your race? Questions about race or color including color of skin, hair, etc		Although race cannot be an occupational requirement, employers are allowed to collect racial information to implement affirmative action plans, recruit minorities and other legitimate, non-discriminatory purposes
What's your religion? What church do you belong to? Can you work on Sabbath, specific religious holidays, etc.? Asking for a reference from the clergy		Asking about religion or even availability for work due to religious restrictions is evidence of religious discrimination except in very narrow circumstances

Pre-Employment Inquiries

CAN'T ASK	CAN ASK	COMMENT
List names, dates and locations of all schools attended	List grade level completed/degrees obtained/courses taken	Okay to ask for names of technical, vocational and post-secondary schools unless it would reveal religious affiliation, nationality or race
Do you have any physical/mental disabilities? Do you have X illness or disability? Do you have any health problems? Do you have a disability that would interfere with your ability to perform the job? Are you in good health? Have you ever been treated for alcohol or drug addiction? How much alcohol do you drink each week? What medications do you use? Have you ever been treated for emotional or psychiatric problems? Are you under a doctor's care? Are you receiving counseling or therapy? Do you have any allergies? Have you ever received workers' compensation? How many sick days did you take last year?	Describe essential requirements of the job, as specified in the job ad and job description and ask if applicant can perform them with or without reasonable accommodations Describe or demonstrate how you would perform the essential functions of the job Can you meet the attendance requirements of this job? Do you use illegal drugs?	Law questions, tests, evaluations may be appropriate after job is offered to determine need for accommodations

Pre-Employment Inquiries

CAN'T ASK	CAN ASK	COMMENT
Have you ever been arrested? Have you ever been convicted of an offense? Do you have a criminal record?	Asking about a conviction that is related to the job is allowed if the employer can prove that it has a business necessity to justify use of a conviction record based on 3 factors: Nature and gravity of the offense Amount of time elapsed since the conviction and/or completion of the sentence Nature of the job being sought	Criminal records questions may violate state laws even if permitted by EEOC Questions about arrests are never permitted Criminal background and other checks might be allowed after the job is offered
Height: Weight:		Height and weight requirements are considered discriminatory unless the employer can justify them as a bona fide occupational qualification
Do you own/lease your home/car? Have your wages ever been garnished? Have you ever declared bankruptcy?		Questions about a job applicant's financial situation violate fair credit and consumer credit laws unless those financial considerations are essential to the job in question

Note: In many cases, the ban on asking personal questions and seeking personal information during the pre-employment phase no longer applies after you make the applicant a job offer and before he/she starts work.

Takeaway: Law offices, like all employers, need to make sure their hiring processes are compliant with the law and don't discriminate or otherwise violate federal and state law.

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STEP #5 References

Check references

When it comes to hiring for a law office, checking references is a crucial step in the hiring process. Checking references allows you to verify the applicant's work history, performance, and suitability for the job. Here are some tips on how to effectively check the references of applicants for a job in a law office.

1. **Ask for references:** During the application process, ask applicants to provide at least two professional references. Make sure the references are relevant to the job, such as previous supervisors or colleagues who can speak to the applicant's skills and experience.
2. **Verify the references:** Verify the contact information of the references provided by the applicant. This can be done by making a phone call or sending an email. You can also use an online verification service to ensure that the contact information is accurate.
3. **Ask relevant questions:** Ask the references relevant questions about the applicant's performance, work ethic, and job responsibilities. Ask open-ended questions that allow the reference to provide specific examples of the applicant's strengths and weaknesses.
4. **Check for consistency:** Compare the information provided by the applicant with the information provided by the references. Look for consistency in the dates of employment, job titles, and job responsibilities. Any discrepancies should be addressed with the applicant.
5. **Look for red flags:** Pay attention to any red flags that may arise during the reference check. These can include negative feedback, inconsistent information, or hesitation from the reference. If red flags arise, follow up with the reference or the applicant to clarify any concerns.
6. **Follow up with additional references:** If necessary, follow up with additional references to gather more information about the applicant. This can help to provide a more comprehensive picture of the applicant's work history and performance.

7. **Document the reference check:** Document the results of the reference check for future reference. This can be helpful in the event of any legal issues or disputes.

By following these tips, you can effectively check the references of applicants for a job in a law office. This can help you make informed decisions and hire the best candidate for the job. Remember to be thorough, consistent, and professional throughout the process.

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STEP #6 The Offer

Present a job offer to the best applicant

After conducting interviews and checking references, you have finally found the right candidate for the job. The next step is to make a job offer to the successful candidate. Here are some tips on how to make a job offer in a professional and effective manner.

1. **Confirm the terms of employment:** Before making the job offer, confirm the terms of employment, such as salary, benefits, and start date. This will ensure that you are prepared to provide accurate information to the candidate.
2. **Call the candidate:** Call the candidate to make the job offer. This can be more personal than sending an email or letter. Begin the conversation by congratulating the candidate and expressing your excitement to have them join the team.
3. **Provide the details:** Provide the candidate with the details of the job offer, including the salary, benefits, start date, and any other relevant information. Answer any questions the candidate may have about the job or the company.
4. **Follow up with an offer letter:** After the call, follow up with an offer letter that outlines the terms of employment. The offer letter should be clear, concise, and professional. It should include details such as the job title, salary, benefits, and start date.
5. **Set a deadline:** Set a deadline for the candidate to accept the job offer. This will give you time to make alternate arrangements if the candidate declines the offer.
6. **Be flexible:** Be open to negotiating the terms of the job offer. This can include salary, benefits, or other aspects of the job. However, be sure to set limits and be clear about what is negotiable and what is not.
7. **Close the deal:** Once the candidate has accepted the job offer, confirm the details in writing and provide any additional information they may need. This can include information about orientation or onboarding, company policies, or other relevant information.

Should you notify applicants they didn't get the job?

Open positions, especially those advertised, often generate many applications. If your practice is located in a major metropolitan area or large town, you may receive a huge pile of applications, electronic or otherwise, in response to a job posting.

Fortunately, not all job applicants will have the appropriate qualifications—otherwise, interviewing would become your full-time job.

Nevertheless, you will likely find several qualified individuals among the applicants, whom you will invite for interviews. Typically, one of these candidates will turn out to be your new hire.

Screening and hiring

It sounds rather routine, right? And, if you've been a manager for a while, you've probably been through the process numerous times.

Still, there is room for improvement—and the area requiring improvement is an important one.

But before going there, let's take a closer look at the process.

As a manager, your focus is initially on screening in order to find the person who is right for the job. First, you screen applicants, by reviewing qualifications; then, you screen qualified individuals, which requires more time and effort, including interviews.

After you find your ideal candidate, you turn your attention to hiring, which involves bringing the person onboard and ensuring that she or he becomes familiar with the office and its procedures and receives training for the job.

There are many steps to recruiting and hiring. Meanwhile, as a busy manager, you still have a million other tasks to accomplish.

Missing link

Yet, the workflow, as described above, leaves out an essential step.

What about the applicants who were passed over in the pile? What about the candidates who interviewed but didn't get the job?

Are you letting them know they weren't selected for the position?

If not, you are missing out on an opportunity to further the reputation of your practice; and, in fact, you are risking damage to your practice's reputation.

Job seekers are also potential clientss, as well as friends and family members of potential clients. When you treat these individuals poorly, you have lost their respect and probably their future business.

What's more, in an age of social media, word spreads quickly, for better or worse.

Which update would you rather a job seeker post on Facebook?

Example A: "Guess I didn't get the job at XYZ Law Practice. It's been two months since I submitted my application. The least they could have done was get back to me. I hope they show more concern for their clients."

Example B: "Heard back from XYZ Law Practice that I didn't get the job. Nice of them to let me know, though. Seems like they care."

Best practice

The job seeker experience is so important that it is now considered a best practice for companies to get back to everyone who applied for a job. There is even a prestigious award, the Candidate Experience Award, known as the CandE Award, which recognizes excellence in enhancing the candidate experience.

Indeed, top companies have made job seeker communication a routine part of the recruiting and hiring process.

Of course, most large companies have an applicant tracking system (ATS) or other recruiting technology that facilitates notification.

Nevertheless, small and midsize businesses, including law practices, should follow up with all job applicants and candidates who interview for a position.

Your practice may not have recruiting software, but it does have the tools necessary for easy communication.

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STEP #7 Onboarding

Onboard your new staff member

Congratulations on successfully hiring a new employee for your law office! Now that the hiring process is complete, the next step is to onboard the new employee. Onboarding is a crucial step in the process of integrating a new employee into the company culture and ensuring their success in their new role. Here are some tips on how to onboard a new employee for a law office.

- **Provide a warm welcome:** Begin the onboarding process by providing a warm welcome to the new employee. Introduce them to their colleagues, show them around the office, and make them feel comfortable in their new environment.
- **Have the new employee take care of paperwork:** This is the time to provide insurance benefits policies, team member contact information and company policies.
- **Provide an overview of the company:** Provide the new employee with an overview of the company, its mission, and its values. This will help the employee understand the company culture and their role within the organization.
- **Provide an overview of the job:** Provide the new employee with an overview of their job responsibilities, expectations, and performance metrics. This will help the employee understand what is expected of them and how they can be successful in their role.
- **Provide training:** Provide the new employee with any necessary training to ensure that they are proficient in their job duties. This can include training on company policies and procedures, as well as any specialized training required for their specific role.
- **Set goals:** Set goals for the new employee and provide regular feedback to help them achieve those goals. This will help the employee stay focused and motivated in their new role.
- **Assign a mentor:** Assign a mentor to the new employee to provide guidance and support throughout the onboarding

process. The mentor can help the employee navigate the company culture, answer questions, and provide feedback on their performance.

- **Follow up:** Follow up with the new employee regularly to ensure that they are adjusting well to their new role. This can include regular check-ins, performance evaluations, and feedback sessions.

9 tips for virtual onboarding of new remote employees

1. Designate someone who will communicate with the new employee in terms of the expectations of their first day, first month, and beyond. Consider assigning the new employee a mentor or 'buddy' in their department who will check in regularly and answer any questions.
2. Consider having a representative from upper management meet the new hire. Showing they are valued in the organization will help new employees feel welcomed and motivated. Ensure consistent communication and updates from company leaders.
3. Digitize your onboarding process. Utilize the tools available to you by amalgamating onboarding documents and welcome packages into organized PDF documents that can be easily shared digitally.
4. Arrange to have a laptop configured and shipped to their home in a timely manner, and coordinate secure sharing of any profile logins or passwords. Avoid setting up systems over video conference—the more you can do in advance, the better.
5. Plan for e-learning. Review any training that will need to be modified in order to be shared virtually— can you provide visual aids, are you able to effectively screen share? Does your company provide training videos or links? Consider recording and sharing real-time videos of your processes if not readily available.
6. Set out clear and concise expectations of remote work. How can they prepare? Do they have a strong Wifi connection and a quiet space to work?
7. Consider welcoming new hires through a virtual conference call with team members, in addition to a welcome letter including information the new employee should be aware of (i.e., any insurance benefits policies, team member contact information, company policies, etc.).

8. During the employee's first couple weeks, plan for individual introductions to each of their teammates. Can you set up a virtual on camera coffee date with key team members? Leverage your digital tools to foster community within your company and reduce isolation while working remotely.
9. Assign the new employee a series of tasks that they can complete within their first week, utilizing their new training. Plan ahead to provide either concise written instruction, or clear instruction via videoconference. When delivering any new tasks or training, be sure to check in frequently with the new employee.

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