

HOW TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE THROUGH HR EXCELLENCE



Most doctors don't identify themselves as small business owners, but when it comes to private practices, doctors can find themselves in a uniquely challenging environment. And many doctors struggle to apply management strategies to their private practices because running their business usually takes a back seat to providing excellent patient care.

What happens when practices don't have the time or resources available for things like human resources, staffing, and increasing overhead expenses?

This leads to doctors scrambling to keep their practice running efficiently while struggling to provide a positive patient experience. Operating with this "crisis mode" mentality means they incur additional costs caused by high employee turnover, legal fees, or losing clients.

So how can healthcare practitioners in Hawaii effectively manage their business while still focusing on their mission of providing better patient care? At the same time, is it possible to proactively address HR issues in order to reduce overhead expenses and improve operations? Most importantly, how can doctors set the stage for a better patient experience?

This ebook will show you how to implement strategic initiatives — with tactical tips — that can lead to a more functional office environment, freeing up your time to focus on delivering the best patient care possible. Learn how to:



Close the healthcare talent gap by finding the right people



Improve employee retention for administrators, healthcare staff, nurses, and doctors



Improve quality of care by reducing administrative burden

CLOSING THE HEALTHCARE TALENT GAP BY FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

When it comes to delivering a memorable patient visit, having the best staff is key. A nurse that is known for her ability to expertly draw blood on patients with hard to hit veins will calm even the most nervous patient. A flexible doctor who can fit in a follow up appointment on a Saturday morning will be recommended by busy patients. Patients who are greeted at the front desk with familiar smiles instead of new faces each visit will know you value your staff as much as they do.

A friendly and competent staff is the lifeblood of a healthy private practice. From patient care to revenue, it all boils down to the people.

People represent a substantial investment for the healthcare sector, so it's no surprise that staffing is one of the biggest challenges. And while the entire U.S. is facing a looming talent shortage in the healthcare field, **the situation for private practices in Hawaii is even more challenging.**

LOW UNEMPLOYMENT AND HIGH TALENT SHORTAGE IN HAWAII

In Hawaii, which has the **lowest jobless rate in the U.S. at 2.1%**¹, many healthcare employers are frustrated by how difficult it is to find skilled talent. Let's take a look at the numbers:



687K+ Labor Force

In August 2018, 672,700 people were employed and only 14,600 people were unemployed for a **total adjusted labor force of 687,300 Hawaii residents.**²



~200 Fewer Jobs

~200 fewer jobs available in the Healthcare Services industry in August compared to July 2018.³ With the talent gap widening, it's tougher for private practices to find skilled candidates.



Applicants **DECLINING**

The number of applicants per position has been declining over the last three years for the healthcare industry as a whole as well as for its various component parts, such as hospitals, ambulatory care clinics, nursing homes and assisted-living facilities.⁴

3 STEPS TO FINDING THE RIGHT STAFF FOR YOUR PRACTICE

Before we dive into finding the perfect candidate to join your staff, let's take a minute to step back and answer one critical question: **What does the RIGHT person for YOUR practice look like?**

With the widening healthcare talent gap, there is a scarcity of skilled candidates. This global shortage of healthcare talent drives private practices to aggressively seek out the best. And in this talent-focused environment, the rules of finding the right the right people have changed. The people who have the talent you need are already employed, can take their pick of top opportunities, and will make a career move only if the opportunity is truly compelling.

Which is why finding the right staff means understanding which candidate would be the best fit with your culture. Does this person have the necessary skills to perform their job duties but also the motivation to go above and beyond their job function? Does this person have the attitude and drive to help your practice achieve its goals? Do they have a commitment to excellent patient care?

There are also black and white requirements that must be met. Do they have the certifications and training needed? When it comes to a field like healthcare, it can be quite challenging to fill jobs with the RIGHT people, not just qualified people.

Here are three steps to help as you begin your talent search:

01



The Strategy

CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To best approach hiring needs, the first step is to figure out your current staffing needs by identifying if the right things are being done by the right staff in the right way.

To do this, start by taking inventory of who is in what role and analyze their job duties and performance. How many people, with what kinds of background and training do you need? Now compare that personnel listing with your actual staff. Do you have multiple people doing the job of one? Are certain jobs being done by staff who are overqualified for them — and probably overpaid and underchallenged? Could those individuals take on additional work?

By fully understanding your needs and the staffing potential already available to you, you can make an informed decision on whether you can promote from within or need to hire externally.

02



The Debate

ADVANCE FROM WITHIN VS. HIRE EXTERNALLY

When you realize you have a role that needs to be filled, it's tempting to immediately draft a job description, share it externally, and hope that you can attract a qualified candidate. But in a market like Hawaii, what if a close match can't be easily found? Should you consider bringing in a person with less experience or even someone from a different specialty area? Or is there an opportunity to advance from within? There might be staff members that can advance into an open role with the proper training and support.

Instead of immediately heading to the job boards, consider an existing employee for the role. While it will require additional or sometimes mandatory training, certifications, or education, investing in your employees is investing in your company's future.

In fact, professional development and training are among the top five most important factors for professionals considering a job offer. Adding learning and growth opportunities to your culture can go a long way towards recruiting and retaining top talent.

03



The Right Fit

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE AND SOFT SKILLS

It's no easy task, but private practices that place a high value on culture-fit as well as soft skills — such as critical thinking, initiative, teachability, and positive attitude — during the hiring process are more likely to see higher employee retention than filling roles based solely on skill-set. How can you ensure that you are hiring for culture and the right fit? Start by reaching out to your best employees and your professional medical network for referrals. Birds of a feather flock together, and you might have success finding a similar high performing employee when you reach out to their networks.

Once you're in the interview phase, it's important to ask the right questions for the role. Asking questions that look beyond experience to look for character indicators. For example, if you're interviewing a dental hygienist, a right question to ask would be "how do you feel about educating patients about home care?" A question like this give you a deeper understanding of their knowledge and shows if they have the interpersonal communication skills necessary to develop rapport with patients.

Training people is easy; finding the right employee is the hard part.

SECTION 02

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

While attracting top talent in the highly competitive Hawaii market is challenging, it's even tougher to retain skilled staff. And in a field like healthcare, retaining staff is critical to the success of your private practice. One key factor to boosting revenue for healthcare practices is to have a steady flow of loyal patients. To be the provider-of-choice, your practice must deliver outstanding customer service that leads to high patient satisfaction and ultimately, patient loyalty.

How do you provide a great experience for your patients?
With a happy and engaged staff that is invested in the growth of the practice.





WHY STAFF RETENTION MATTERS

Here's the story of Molly H., a Registered Nurse at a dermatology clinic in Honolulu. She's been with the same practice for two years and even though she really enjoys working alongside her colleagues, she's found herself at a fork in her career.

In her current role:

She is looking for an upward move in her career. She has a pending offer from a competing practice, but it's a much longer commute from where she lives and requires her to work some weekends and holidays. So what's enticing her to make these sacrifices? With this other employer, she would be managing two other nurses and attending to outpatient procedures, two things she has wanted to take on to develop as a professional.

But what if:

One of the partners talked to Molly and learned she had an interest in assisting with outpatient procedures and offered to cover training costs that would allow her to perform laser treatments, chemical peels, and microderm abrasions. She would be able to provide these treatments to her patients and potentially train other nurses on staff. This could lead to better performance reviews, career development, and even a raise.

So let's recap the two options:



A high-performing employee who wants to advance, but doesn't see the opportunity to with her current employer, so she seeks employment elsewhere.



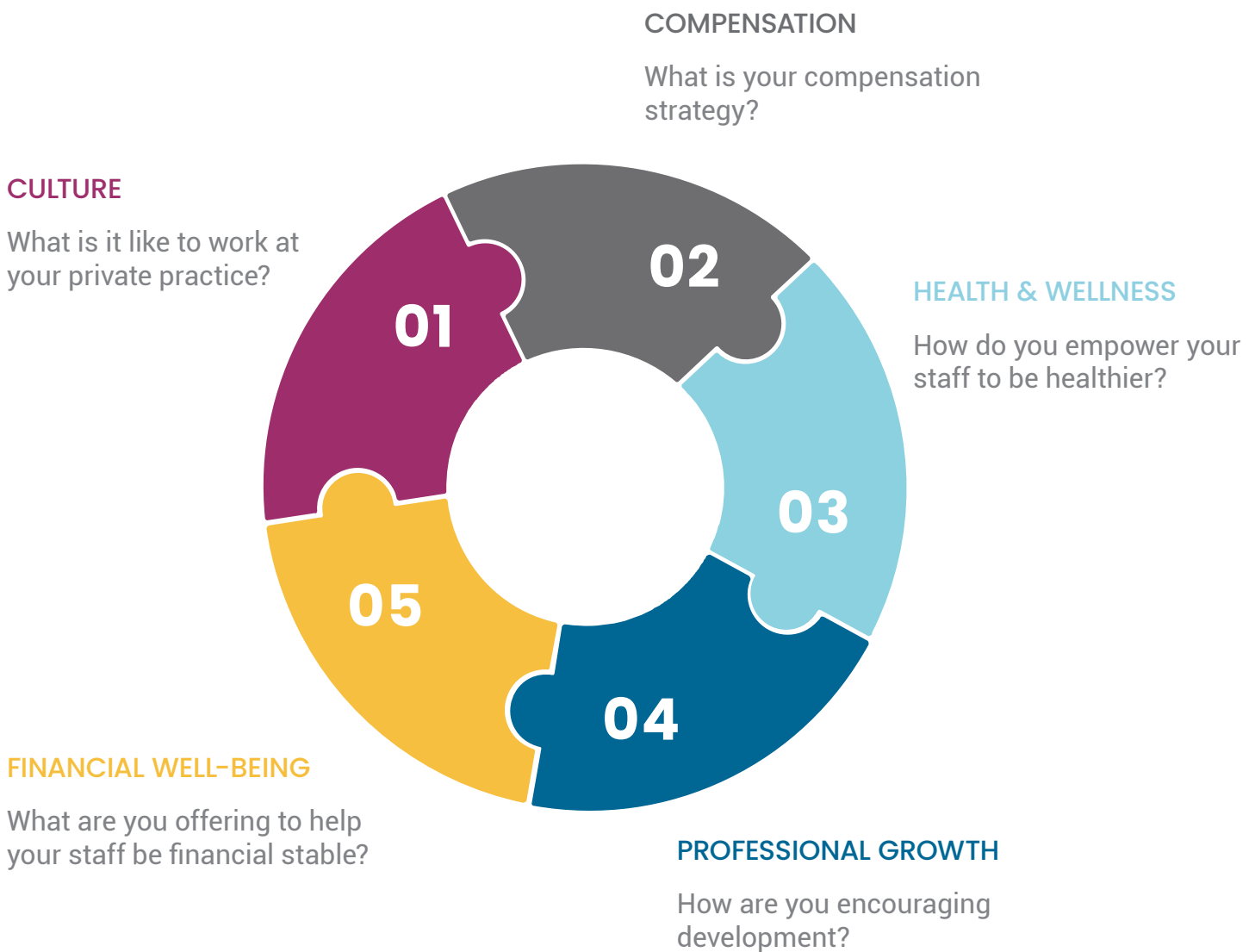
A high-performing employee who has a conversation with her manager has an initiative to learn and is rewarded with professional development opportunities, keeping her satisfied at work.

In this case, most doctors would agree that the second option is ideal, but this is just an example of many different scenarios healthcare practices face when it comes to employee retention. Like many other industries, pay is not the sole factor that influences someone to join or stay with a practice. In fact, a comprehensive approach to attracting and retaining talent includes compensation, health and wellness, professional growth, culture, and financial health.

DEVELOPING AN EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGY

Implementing an employee retention strategy may seem daunting, but investing in one will help avoid costly and time-consuming human resource issues that may arise down the line. It doesn't have to be an all or nothing approach: most companies cannot perform well in all of the areas below. Instead, focus on excelling in one area that works best for your unique situation and use it to your competitive advantage.

Now, let's break down the core principles of an employee retention strategy:



EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGY WORKSHEET

Whether your practice has been treating patients for years or you are just getting started, the first step to successfully keeping qualified employees is to develop or re-evaluate your employee retention strategy. Use this worksheet as a starting point for your staff retention plan:

Design Your Culture

Create a practice culture that fosters growth, collaboration, and is patient-centric.

1. Describe what you want your practice culture to be. _____

2. Would that description be the same if you asked your staff what they want it to be? And do you already have that culture in place? _____

3. What activities could you introduce that would help you create the culture you desire? _____

4. What perks would your employees enjoy? _____

5. Are there any ways in which you can give employees flexibility or control over where or when they work? _____

Assess Your Compensation Strategy

Offer a pay scale and benefits package that is competitive and fair.

1. Are you currently paying above or below the market? _____

2. When is the last time you bench marked your employee salaries? _____

3. Do you have written job descriptions for every role? _____

4. What is your compensation philosophy? Above, mid, or below market? _____

5. Do you have established pay grades? _____

6. Do you have established salary ranges for each role? _____

7. Do you have a regular cadence of analyzing and updating employee pay? _____

Review Your Wellness Offerings

Physical, emotional, or mental wellness plays a critical role in overall performance. Increased employee well-being positively impacts most jobs.

1. Do you offer any benefits or programs to help employees improve their health? _____

2. Do you offer paid time off or sick time for employees to go to medical appointments? _____

3. How do you encourage employees to complete preventive annual wellness screenings? _____

4. Do you encourage employees to get flu shots and biometric screenings? _____

5. Do you participate in safety training to prevent injuries and accidents? _____

6. What wellness activities do you think would be engaging to your employees? _____

Focus on Development

Establish programs for employees to continue education, learn new skills, and understand how their work contributes to the success of the practice.

1. Do you offer employees the opportunity to participate in other external training? Do you have consistent onboarding for all positions? _____

2. Do you have clear career paths? _____

3. How often do you transfer or promote people internally? _____

4. Do you have any kind of leadership training for your employees? (MCP) _____

5. Do you have consistent performance reviews for all levels of employees? _____

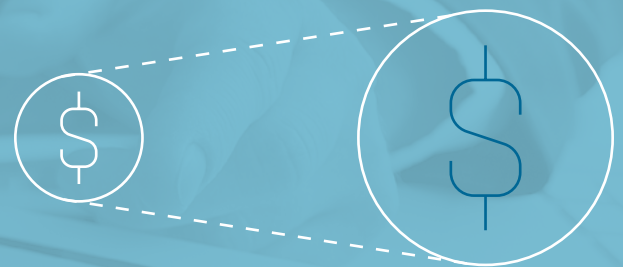
6. Do your leaders act as coaches and mentors and take accountability for developing others? _____

[Click here](#) to download the worksheet as a PDF file.

WHAT NOW?

At this point, you may be thinking HR management strategies for your practice would be a “nice to have” but are simply not a priority right now. The truth is, you’ve just done most of the heavy lifting. Planning is a critical step to getting started and with the building blocks laid out in front of you, you can start developing a retention strategy that works for you and your practice.

And what happens when you don’t have an employee retention plan? Failing to keep high performers can leave your practice understaffed, with a less qualified workforce, and can ultimately hinder your ability to remain competitive and provide quality patient care.



The cost to replace a highly-trained employee can **exceed 200%** of their annual salary.

SECTION 03

DELIVERING HIGHER- QUALITY CARE

Most doctors would agree that managing the business of medicine is more challenging now than ever before.

Practice expenses, such as staff salaries and insurance premiums, continue to grow; hiring and retaining skilled talent is a full-time job; and the burden of government regulations, such as HIPAA, is more difficult than ever.

And while most doctors have a team of trusted advisers, such as an attorney, an accountant, and an investment counselor, who regularly assist them with personal and business issues, when it comes to running the day-to-day aspects of their medical practices, doctors depend heavily on their own skills to make key HR decisions. Or the help of an office administrator who is not formally trained in the areas of HR or business operations.



CASE STUDY: WINDWARD FAMILY PRACTICE

This was the case for Dr. Samsami of Windward Family Practice. On top of seeing a minimum of 40 patients a day, he was spending long hours after the clinic closed to ensure he was completing payroll correctly, filing paperwork for Workers Compensation, and many other HR tasks. Whatever business responsibilities he wasn't taking on were handed to his office manager, Elizabeth, who is also Dr. Samsami's wife. She too was working long hours to get the new practice up and running successfully. Not to mention, the Samsami's also just welcomed a newborn to their family.

For many private practices, this is a familiar situation. To see your practice survive and flourish, what can you do?

HOW CAN DOCTORS REFOCUS ON PROVIDING PATIENT CARE?



MAINTAIN WORK-LIFE BALANCE

While it may seem like a good idea to take home payroll and complete it over the weekend, bringing home uncompleted tasks takes time away from your family, friends, and personal life. Set boundaries for your home and professional duties in order to stay refreshed and energized in both aspects of your life and avoid burnout. Evaluate what you're doing after hours when you could/should expand your staff to offload the workload.



EMPOWER YOUR STAFF

From onboarding new hires to staying abreast of new standards, the training burden placed on doctors of private practices takes away precious time from seeing patients. By cross-training your staff (providing webinars that can be watched at work, having outgoing employees document their responsibilities for new hires, offering video training, or letting a senior staff member lead meetings) doctors can maximize efficiencies and decrease time away from patients.



OUTSOURCE BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

Whether it is hiring employees, submitting payroll, or verifying billing, working with an HR services provider is a great way to reduce costs, expand capacity, and take advantage of outside expertise. It can also be the key to helping your private practice survive in a market as complex as Hawaii, and even grow your revenue.

Let's revisit the Windward Family Practice. Elizabeth Samsami made the decision to outsource HR management functions and reached out to ProService. Today, the practice is thriving because Dr. Samsami and his staff are able to focus on delivering a great patient experience and the Samsami's have finally found work-life balance.



WINDWARD FAMILY PRACTICE

Because of ProService, we're now able to spend more time with our patients, our employees, and our families. We have a great time and are able to get to know everyone on a one-on-one basis.

ELIZABETH SAMSAMI
OFFICE MANAGER



AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF ANY PRACTICE IS TO PROVIDE THE HIGHEST QUALITY HEALTHCARE TO ITS PATIENTS.

To achieve that goal, your staff must be engaged and qualified to ensure operations run smoothly, as well as trained and supported to feel invested in the success of the practice. As the leader of the practice, you — the doctor — must be laser focused on providing exceptional care that results in loyal patients. **This means less administrative distractions, more work-life balance, and better patient care.**

Again, while you might not think of a private practice like a typical business, the reality is your patient experience ultimately determines the success of your practice.



ProService Hawaii is the state's largest and most experienced provider of HR solutions.

ProService Hawaii is the largest and most experienced provider of HR solutions in Hawaii. More than 2,100 local businesses use ProService's comprehensive suite of HR solutions, which includes payroll, human resource services, health benefits management, workers' compensation and 401(k) management, as well as risk management and regulatory compliance, to more easily hire, retain and manage employees. ProService provides consistent, reliable and responsive service backed by nearly 25 years of expertise – not only saving time and money, but giving clients the peace of mind that comes from knowing they're doing right by their business and their people. Accredited by the Employer Services Assurance Corporation (ESAC), the company is headquartered in Hawaii Kai on Oahu, with additional offices located in Downtown Honolulu, Kona, Kahului and Kapaa.

Learn more at www.proservice.com.

SOURCES

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