

Why are Certified Physician Recruiters the Best Choice?

By Bob Eskridge

Physician recruiters are responsible for understanding the legal, professional, and technical aspects of the physician recruiting industry, just as with any professional. When a hiring manager begins the search for a new physician, or a physician chooses to embark on a job search, they need to be able to rely on the physician recruiter to have the skills and knowledge to represent them properly. The ability to match a physician with the proper opportunity and to manage hiring and retention issues requires specialized skills and experience. While there are many job search firms and recruiters in the field, not all recruiters are created equal. There are relatively few barriers to entry in becoming a recruiter. With so many choices, how can physicians and organizations find the best recruiter for their job needs? To be with make sure they are board certified!

The business community, and the industry as a whole, view certifications as a seal of excellence. In *Fortune* magazine's July 20, 1998 issue, they recommended that one way to choose a recruiter is to ask if they've been certified. Board certifications tell clients and physicians that the recruiter has taken the time to study a body of knowledge that the leaders of the physician recruiting industry have determined to be the crucial knowledge for this profession. The certifications can reassure clients that the recruiter will conduct him or herself professionally; certification provides the knowledge and the guidelines to perform according to the highest professional placement standards. Certifications hold the industry to a higher standard, as well as the individual. "It is imperative for every recruiter to understand the laws that govern our industry", says Conrad Taylor, President of the National Association of Personnel Services (NAPS).

Today, more than any other time in the history of the staffing profession, credentials are well-recognized in the industry. The idea of credentialing is being received more credibly. This has come about through recognition of the specialized nature of staffing, as well as recent regulations such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

However, some hiring organizations may not care specifically about using a recruiter with certifications; they are just looking for physicians. They might question why they should use certified recruiters. There are several specific reasons why hiring board-certified recruiters can prevent problems. Hospitals and organizations must be able to answer the question, “Are you using outside sources that are credible?” The rigorous education requirements for certified recruiters ensure that the organization is working with a reliable, credible provider. Additionally, organizations are taking a risk that their insurance provider might question the staffing or recruiting decisions. They might have provide justification to an insurance provider on who they’re using, and being able to show that they’ve utilized the skills of certified recruiters will help in justifying their choices. Finally, using certified recruiters will help the entire staffing industry, thus giving clients access to professionals who are held to high standards. Until organizations are accountable for professional standards through regulation and certification, anything goes. It is important for recruiters to adhere to credentials and best practices, but by also becoming a member of trade association where the recruiters are answerable for their behavior and business practices.

Since 1961, the National Association of Personnel Services has been certifying recruiting and staffing professionals nationally. Today, there are more than 10,000 professionals designated as Certified Personnel Consultants (CPC) or Certified Temporary-Staffing Specialists (CTS). Over 300 professionals hold both certifications, since the market and demand dictates more

blended capabilities in recruiters. NAPS also offers the first staffing specialty certification designation, the Physician Recruiting Consultant (PRC). NAPS certification initially provided a vehicle for self-regulation in the staffing profession, stay abreast of current legal laws, in addition to ongoing training and education. The association now provides the opportunity for professionals to expand the industry knowledge base in employment law, changing regulations, best business practices and the highest standards of ethics.

There are several different certifications offered by NAPS. The CPC certification focuses on direct hire placement, CTS certifications pertain to recruiters specializing in temporary or contract staffing (e.g. locum tenens), and the focus of PRC is the skills on the physician side of the business. The CPC and PRC candidates should be experienced in direct hire physician placements. They might obtain this experience through roles as an owner, partner, manager, recruiter, placement consultant within a private firm, or corporate human resources or employee relations professional within a large corporation. CTS and PRC candidates should be experienced in physician temporary/contract staffing. Roles that provide this experience include owner, partner, manager or staffing professional working full time in a temporary service business.

Individuals seeking the CPC, CTS or PRC designation must display their knowledge of the content of the applicable manual written for the NAPS certification program. After studying the knowledge base for the desired certification, the recruiter must take an exam. The CPC examination will test candidates on employment law and regulations, business situations, standards of business practice and certification program rules. The CTS examination will test candidates on their knowledge of discrimination law, family leave, ADA, drug testing, joint employee, contract issues, standards of business practices and certification program rules. The

PRC examination covers such subjects as physician training, licensing, credentialing and referencing of physician recruiting laws, and regulations. Candidates who seek the PRC designation must complete two exams to qualify. They must pass either the CPC or CTS exam, along with the PRC exam.

When a recruiter is certified, he or she must agree to uphold the National Association of Personnel Services (NAPS) Standards of Ethical Practices and certification program rules. In addition, the recruiter must participate in continuing education programs and re-certify every three years. The continuing education requirement helps keep recruiters current with legal, business and related practices. To remain certified, staffing professionals must complete 50 contact hours of professional development or training experiences in each three year period after certification. If the continuing education requirement is not met every three years the recruiter's certification rights will be revoked until the credits are achieved. The continuing education expectation requires recruiters to complete 50 hours of learning, which can be face-to-face training, conferences, training materials, or even seminars with industry leaders.

Years ago, recruiters were required to work in the industry for two years prior to being certified. Now, recruiters can work toward certification as soon as they begin the job. Anyone can begin learning the knowledge base for certification from day one. This provides new recruiters with the benefit of credibility from the start, as they can explain to clients that they are going through the certification process developing good habits from the beginning.

As certifications become more common and well-regarded, those recruiters who have become certified can serve as ambassadors for the certification program. "I always let my clients know that I'm a certified recruiter," says Taylor. "It's a symbol of excellence that gives credibility. It also instills the value of personal accountability that you've got to deliver to your

clients." Many physician recruiters now designate their certification levels on their business cards or on conference name tags. It's important to note that not all professionals understand a designation such as CPC or CTS, and that the certified recruiter may have to educate clients or colleagues. If a recruiter lists that they are a "Certified Personnel Consultant", he or she is more likely to entertain questions about the certification than if the designation is simply CPC. Board-certified recruiters have a responsibility to help educate others on the certifications of their profession. The entire industry is helped by helping physicians and client know what to look for in board-certified recruiters, as well as helping other recruiters understand how they can enhance their skills and knowledge to remain at the top of the game.

The future of staffing profession certification will be a time of change. Recruiters must respond to new challenges in the profession as a whole. Retention is a large issue in the physician field; the challenge for talent affects the ability of recruiters to find the best placement for a client. For every ten professionals who leave the workplace, only four or five physicians are replacing them. Certified physician recruiters can help alter outcome if they precipitate discussions with clients on retention issues and best practices, while providing solid advice on managing the workplace to minimize attrition. Those recruiters who are certified through NAPS have the advantage of a wide network of information and resources to remain on top of current issues and trends. To address the retention issue, NAPS has most recently added a fourth certification...Certified Employee Retention Specialist (CERS). This certification is based on the groundbreaking work of Roger Herman, Joyce Gioia and Tom Olivo in the book "Impending Crisis: Too Many Jobs, Too Few People."

Certified recruiters can be a source of guidance and counsel for HR professionals and hospital environments as they work with personnel issues. When a physician leaves one practice

to join another, this career decision affects them deeply – especially if they are relocating. By making sure procedures are followed when a physician is hired, and by making sure that no steps are missed during the process, physicians are assured of a smooth transition and a favorable impression of the new organization. Ongoing reviews of the situation, with both the client and the physician, can help uncover problems with the position that are more easily resolved if caught early on. The physician recruiter is a key part of retention and satisfaction in the client/physician relationship.

In fact, board certified recruiters can be seen as the ultimate professionals in the personnel arena. Just as someone would go to an accountant for tax issues or a mechanic for car problems, if someone has staffing questions, they should call their recruiter. By calling a certified recruiter, the caller is assured that they are contacting a professional who has gone the extra mile to learn all he or she can about the profession. The client is working with a true professional with high standards and an up-to-date education about the industry.

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