



JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Administrator

Department: Administration

Immediate Supervisor Title: Chief Executive Officer, Board of Directors

Job Supervisory Responsibilities: Managers and directors of all departments

General Summary: An exempt, management position responsible for leading and directing operations in smaller organizations. Responsible for assisting the chief executive officer in leading and directing operations in larger organizations.

Essential Job Responsibilities:

1. Manages the daily operation of the organization by creating and implementing policies and procedures.
2. Directs operation of the organization and supervises all staff.
3. Helps chief executive officer develop organizational strategic plans and objectives based upon identified needs of patients.

Education: Master's degree in health care administration, business administration, or health administration.

Experience: Minimum seven years executive-level experience including five years of experience in the administration of a health care organization.

Other Requirements: Licensure or ability to obtain licensure when background credentials warrant.

Performance Requirements:

Knowledge:

1. Knowledge of principles and practices of health care planning and management sufficient to manage, direct, and coordinate the operation of a health care organization.
2. Knowledge of the purposes, organization, and policies of the community's health systems sufficient to interact with other health care providers.
3. Knowledge of the policies and procedures of a clinic sufficient to direct its operations and to provide effective patient care.

Skills:

1. Skill in exercising a high degree of initiative, judgment, discretion, and decision-making to achieve organizational objectives.
2. Skill in analyzing situations accurately and taking effective action.
3. Skill in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with employees, policy-making bodies, third-party payers, patients, and the public.
4. Skill in organizing work, making assignments, and achieving goals and objectives.
5. Skill in exercising judgment and discretion in developing, applying, interpreting, and coordinating departmental policies and procedures.

Abilities:

1. Ability to assume responsibility and exercise authority over assigned work functions.
2. Ability to establish and maintain quality control standards.
3. Ability to organize and integrate organizational priorities and deadlines.

Equipment Operated: Standard office equipment including computers, fax machines, copiers, printers, telephones, etc.

Work Environment: Position is in a well-lighted office environment. Occasional evening and weekend work.

Mental/Physical Requirements: Involves sitting approximately 90 percent of the day, walking or standing the remainder.

New Administrator

Job Title: Administrator

Department: Administration

Report to: Chief Executive Officer, Board of Directors

Supervises: (Insert titles of appropriate staff supervised such as managers and directors of all departments)

Overtime Status: ☐ Exempt ☐ Non-exempt

Job Summary: The Administrator is responsible for successfully managing and operating medical practices involving one or more specialty disciplines and/or clinic sites. Provides medical specialists with the resources required to meet patient needs and meet the financial objectives of the group practice.

In larger group practices, the Administrator is responsible for assisting the chief executive officer in planning, leading and directing day-to-day clinic operations.

Primary Job Responsibilities: (Select and/or modify these job responsibilities for your position)

1. Establishes\implements goals, objectives, policies, procedures and systems for all operational areas of the clinic.
2. Develops/implements long-range plans.
3. Manages the daily operations while developing, monitoring, and analyzing budget and financial information cost effectively.
4. Oversees HR and ensures effective administration/implementation of compensation, benefits, job descriptions, personnel policies and payroll practices.
5. Participates in the selection, training and supervision of all clinic staff.
6. Participates in staff supervision, performance evaluation, merit increases and disciplinary actions.
7. Resolves administrative and operational problems including the maintenance of clinic property, computer systems and installed software applications.
8. Ensures compliance with regulations and standards.
9. Gathers and reports data for fiscal and statistical analysis.
10. Coordinates with medical staff to ensure quality patient care and services are provided.
11. Serves as a liaison between clinic and external agencies.
12. Helps chief executive officer develop clinic strategic plans and objectives based upon identified needs of patients.
13. Maintains the strictest confidentiality.
14. Performs other duties as assigned.

Education: Master's degree in health care administration, business administration, or health administration.

Experience: Minimum seven years executive-level experience including five years of experience in the administration of a health care organization.

Other Requirements: Licensure or ability to obtain licensure when background credentials warrant.

Performance Requirements:

Knowledge:

1. Knowledge of principles and practices of health care planning and management sufficient to manage, direct, and coordinate the operation of a health care organization.
2. Knowledge of the purposes, organization, and policies of the community's health systems sufficient to interact with other health care providers.
3. Knowledge of practice management computer systems and applications.
4. Knowledge of the policies and procedures of a clinic sufficient to direct its operations and to provide effective patient care.
5. Knowledge of government and reimbursement regulations and requirements.
6. Knowledgeable of Medicare, Medicaid, managed care and other third party payor's guidelines.
7. General knowledge of accounting practices and procedures.

Skills:

1. Skill in exercising a high degree of initiative, judgment, discretion, and decision-making to achieve clinic objectives.
2. Skill in planning, organizing, delegating and supervising.
3. Skill in leading employees to accomplish all job objectives while inspiring confidence and motivation.
4. Skill in gathering and interpreting data, analyzing situations accurately, and taking effective action.
5. Skill in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with employees, policy-making bodies, third-party payers, patients, and the public.
6. Skill in organizing work, making assignments, and achieving goals and objectives.
7. Skill in exercising judgment and discretion in developing, applying, interpreting, and coordinating departmental policies and procedures.
8. Skill in verbal and written communication.

Abilities:

1. Ability to assume responsibility and exercise authority over assigned work functions.
2. Ability to take initiative and to exercise independent judgment, decision-making and problem-solving expertise.

3. Ability to establish and maintain quality control standards.
4. Ability to foster teambuilding with all clinic staff.
5. Ability to organize and integrate organizational priorities and deadlines.
6. Ability to research and prepare reports or other correspondence as required.
7. Ability to competently use Microsoft Office, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and appropriate practice management software.

Equipment Operated: Standard office equipment including computers, fax machines, copiers, printers, telephones, etc.

Work Environment: Medical office, well lighted, well ventilated. Work may be stressful due to continual interaction with others. Occasional evening and weekend work.

Physical Requirements: (Documenting physical demands and work environment conditions ensures ADA compliance.) Either go to [this link](#) to customize and insert MGMA's ADA Matrix for this position or, modify and use this recommended statement: *"Must possess the physical and mental abilities to perform the tasks normally associated with an Administrators including walking, bending, standing, reaching and sitting."*

Salary Range:

Date:

Disclaimer: Please note that this sample job description is intended to serve only as a guide. It is important to note that state laws may vary regarding requirements concerning scope of practice, care, and/or service across different settings. Prior to using this document, you should consult the appropriate state agency for any applicable state rules and regulations.

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THE EHR THAT SOLVES HEALTHCARE'S BIGGEST PROBLEM: THE EHR

Hiring a Medical Practice Administrator

Pearl | May 23, 2012 | Pearls, Hiring Firing, Recruitment, Staff
By Susanne Madden

Hiring an administrator or practice manager may be one of the most significant hires you make. But how do you hire one successfully? If you get it wrong not only is it expensive to rehire, but you could create quite a bit of discord among staff members! Don't despair; done thoughtfully, it is possible to make a good choice the first time. Here's a roadmap to help you hire successfully.

Construct a wish list

First, you need to properly identify what you are really looking for in a candidate. And that can be a little harder than you think. Determine the needs of your practice by speaking with your partners and your staff. If you have previously had somebody in this position it's a great time to revise the role based on the needs of your practice. For example, you may have had an employee that "grew up" with the practice and was very loyal, however, they may not have had the skill set needed to carry out the job effectively. So determine what the most important elements and aspects of the position are before you go looking for the person to fill it. You may find that what is most important to you may not be most important to your partner. So make a laundry list of all of the characteristics and skills that people in your organization would really like to see. Then you can prioritize traits based on that list to ensure that your next hire meets at least some of what each of your partners would really like to see in this employee.

Write the perfect ad

Second, write a good ad. This is a critical step as your ad will attract your potential candidates. If you put forward something very general such as "practice manager needed for busy practice" you will receive a multitude of unqualified responses. Don't be afraid to describe exactly the sort of person you're looking for. If you advertise for "an articulate, highly personable, experienced manager capable of dealing with multiple

personalities" you are much more likely to get responses from candidates that fit that description.

Third, place your ad in the best place possible. Often practices simply run a

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newspaper ad. But in a newspaper, you have a wide range of people looking for jobs. A much better use of your money is targeting candidates within your industry. For example, the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) has a recruitment section, and candidates searching for jobs through that source are the ones that have experience in management in healthcare. In other words, target only the market where you'll find candidates specific to your needs.

Prescreen candidates

Fourth, screen your candidates carefully. Instead of listing a fax number for candidates to send in resumes, consider having them apply online instead. For example, ZipRecruiter.com is one online source that I use when assisting clients with hiring. This platform allows you to create an online survey for applicants as well as upload their resumes to that site. Using a process like this allows you to get a sense of a candidate prior to spending any time on the phone or in person. For example, you can ask questions such as how candidates might handle their first day on the job, what are the most important aspects of the position to them, and what salary range are they looking for. So instead of being inundated by faxes, you now have a neat, orderly queue of respondents online that you can work through.

Phone interviews first

Once you have a nice pool of candidates to choose from, your next step is planning an in-person interview. Make a shortlist of candidates and set up phone interviews first. If their phone manner is not appropriate, if they sound lackluster, or if you simply do not like their tone or manner, you spent 10 minutes on the phone versus what can be a drawn out interview in person. Once you have done a preliminary screening over the phone you should end up with a very short list of people you actually want to meet.

But don't just stop at the in-person interview. It is hard to determine if they will be a good fit with your practice. So I recommend having that person be "manager for a day." Pay the potential candidate to spend a day on site at your practice speaking with staff and getting a sense of your operations. Poll your staff to see what they thought of the candidate. The feedback you want from the candidate at the end of the day is identification of potential problematic issues in the practice, and thoughts on things that might need to be improved.

Lastly, you want to have some sort of formal written documentation on this employee. At the least, have a written job description that spells out in detail the requirements of the position. Then use that job description to assess your candidate at the end of the trial period.

Hiring the right person is often a game of chance, but you can significantly alter the odds to be in your favor by following the steps outlined here.

Susanne Madden, MBA, is founder and CEO of The Verden Group, a consulting and business intelligence firm that specializes in practice management, physician education, and healthcare policy. She can be reached at madden@theverdengroup.com or by visiting www.theverdengroup.com.

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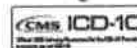
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THE EHR THAT SOLVES HEALTHCARE'S BIGGEST PROBLEM: THE EHR

Hiring Your Next Medical Practice Administrator

December 25, 2011 | Staff, Hiring Firing, Managers Administrators, Productivity, Recruitment, Technology, Operations
By Aubrey Westgate

Good things come to those who wait. That's a lesson family physician Kristen Dillon learned firsthand when she and the rest of the staff at Columbia Gorge Family Medicine in Hood River, Ore., were searching for a new administrator. It took seven months for the four-physician practice to find one that matched its needs; seven months in which the practice operated without one.

"The administrator is just a crucial person," Dillon says. "It was a huge amount of work for us, and it took some good leadership and messaging for the practice to continue to run without someone in that position."

Though the practice received several resumes, Dillon says the staff just didn't feel like the candidates had the right qualifications. And, when they did find a strong candidate to interview, they turned her down, too, because she didn't seem to mesh with their management style.

About three months into the search they thought they'd found their man, but he backed out at the last minute.

"It was very disappointing, and really kind of anxiety provoking," says Dillon.

Still, instead of reconsidering applicants from the original pool they'd previously discarded, the practice re-advertised the position and started its search again from scratch.

Despite the headaches and the delay, Dillon says it was a smart choice not to settle.

Ultimately, they found a great administrator; one who has been working with them for more than five years.

"Even if it means that your operations or some things are a little shaky for a few months, it's absolutely worth taking the time to find the right person and not settling for someone that you have reservations about," says Dillon.

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Defining the role

Finding the right administrator who fits your practice and your needs is crucial. A great administrator can strengthen your weaknesses and keep things running

smoothly. But how do you find him or her? And how do you do it quickly?

Maureen Waddle, senior consultant at BSM Consulting based in Incline Village, Nev., says identifying the skills and training the administrator needs to possess is the first step. Without clearly defined requirements, you won't be able to write a clear job description and you won't be able to attract the right applicants, she says.

There are key skills and training that all successful administrators in all practices need to have, says Stacy Orrick, co-owner of Orrick Associates, a practice management and staff recruitment consulting firm based in Newton Center, Mass. "You need someone who has strong people skills, a good communicator, accounting skills, management, supervision," she says.

And, she notes, previous experience in healthcare — at least three to five years worth — is essential. That's because some things integral to the administrator position, such as understanding the latest healthcare rules, regulations, and technology, can't be taught in the classroom or learned in other office settings, says Orrick. "The administrator needs to know how to do everyone's job."

Raising the bar

Of course, no two practices are the same, and it's also important to identify the additional skills your practice administrator needs to have.

A good place to start is by soliciting staff feedback, Waddle says. Ask what skills and training key staff members think the administrator needs to have.

This "will help you define the characteristics and personality traits" required, she says.

Judy Bee, a principal at Practice Performance Group, a management consulting firm in La Jolla, Calif., says a good administrator can also help address and improve your practice's weaknesses. For instance, if you are struggling to adapt to EHRs, an administrator with previous experience in an EHR transition would be ideal.

But Bee, who worked in a medical practice for seven years prior to consulting, says practices should be cautious when looking for that "something extra" in applicants. Don't be tempted to hire someone who has great additional skills (like social-media marketing), but lacks more essential practice-management skills (like billing, collections, personnel), she says. "You don't want somebody who's a hot rod with Facebook trying to run a multimillion-dollar medical practice."

New recruitment methods

Once you have your skills and requirements defined, it's time to start the recruitment process. First, ensure that you have a clear and concise job description, Orrick says, because it will catch the attention of the right applicants.

Waddle says the description should include a straightforward job title, a one-to-two sentence overview of the position and its primary responsibilities, and the qualifications and skills required.

Then, it's time to advertise. Take note: The recruiting process has changed drastically in the past few years. "Even five years ago people were placing newspaper ads, which nobody really reads anymore, and they're pretty expensive," Waddle says. Today, she says, think Internet, not print.

Bee says posting jobs on state Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) websites is an ideal tactic because you're sure to reach your target audience. "People who are in the business, who belong to the MGMA, are already self selecting," she says. "Somebody who's more experienced understands the value of a professional organization."

Craigslist, Monster, CareerBuilder, and your practice's Web portal (if you have one) are other great recruitment outlets, Orrick says.

And don't forget about good old-fashioned networking — well, with a spin. Social networking sites like LinkedIn and Facebook are great job posting resources as well and a lot of tech-savvy administrators go there to look for openings, says Waddle.

Narrowing the playing field

When the resumes start pouring in, it's decision-making time. But since you've already defined your required skills and training, it should be simple to make cuts. "Eliminate anyone who doesn't meet the minimum criteria," Waddle says.

Next, conduct phone screenings of the remaining candidates, says Orrick. This brief conversation will help you gauge an applicant's personality, plus his phone and communication skills.

Finally, invite your remaining top applicants into the office for interviews.

This process will vary depending on the amount of time your practice can put into it.

Ideally, Waddle says, once you've narrowed it down to one or two top contenders, they will be invited into the office for an "all-day interview" during which they will observe operations, interact with staff, participate in a formal interview, and enjoy a meal with key staff members.

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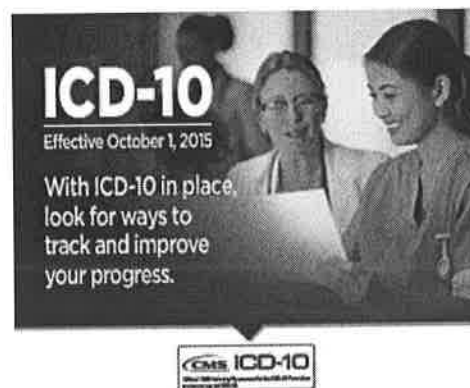
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"[The candidate and the practice] both need to have the right expectations of each other," says Waddle. "There's got to be enough time for both to understand the good, the bad, and the wonderful."

It's also important that all staff members meet your final candidate before you hire her — even if it's just for a brief phone conversation, Orrick says. "Usually, right away staff either likes or does not like the person. Getting respect and getting along with staff is big."

Skills tests

During the interview process, it's important to make sure your final candidates can back up their skills and training, Bee says. She suggests conducting an Excel test and a test for dyslexia (which makes filing difficult).

Practices should also administer a judgment and communication skills test in the form of scenario/challenge questions during the interviews, she says.

For example, Bee might ask an applicant, "You are new on the job and a physician comes to you demanding an employee be fired on the spot. What do you do?"

Practices should form scenario questions around problems their office is currently facing, Bee says. That way your practice can gauge how the applicant's personality and professional skills match up with your practice's needs.

Waddle also recommends a "presentation test." For example, she might provide an applicant with productivity measures related to the number of office visits at a practice per month. Waddle will then ask the candidate to present the measures, detail his concerns, and suggest improvement plans. "You get a good idea of their analytical assessment and their ability to take data and information and turn it into something meaningful," says Waddle.

Finally, before hiring anyone, Waddle says perform criminal background checks, credit checks, and speak to references.

"Really the goal of the administrator is to take the owner's vision and create and implement that action plan that's going to achieve that vision," she says. "You really need to take the time to find the right match."

Aubrey Westgate is an associate editor for Physicians Practice. She can be reached at Aubrey.westgate@ubm.com.

This article originally appeared in the January 2012 Issue of Physicians Practice.

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How to Hire the Right Medical Office Manager

March 14, 2014 by **Holly Regan** Building your primary care practice's office staff can be a daunting challenge.

Physicians are busy caring for patients, and many lack formal training in hiring and human resources—yet hiring decisions can be key determinants in the success level of your practice.

The office manager is an especially crucial member of your staff. He or she must be a “Jack of all trades,” possessing both clinical and business acumen. In addition to keeping the office running smoothly, the manager has to supervise practice staff, handle patient complaints and oversee bookkeeping and finances. So, how do you find the right person to hire?

I spoke with experts on the subject to discover how your primary care practice can hire the right office manager. Here are top characteristics to look for, warning signs to look out for and questions to ask to identify the best candidates for the job.

Office Manager Hiring Checklist			
THE IDEAL CANDIDATE HAS...		AND SHOULD BE...	
✓	HS diploma/College degree/MBA	✓	Empathetic
✓	Bookkeeping experience	✓	An excellent communicator
✓	Business acumen	✓	Capable of motivating & delegating
✓	RN/Clinical experience	✓	A skilled negotiator
✓	Leadership capabilities	✓	Attentive to detail
RED FLAGS & WARNING SIGNS			
✗	Slams former colleagues		
✗	Asks about salary up-front		
✗	Asks if the hours are long		
✗	Has poor “people” skills		
✗	Ignores the human element		

Experience and Education

The amount and type of experience and education required for success as an office manager will vary somewhat from practice to practice. All candidates should have at least a high school diploma; in most cases, a college degree (or

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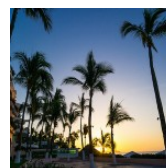
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beyond) is best. The necessary background will depend largely on how many of the practice's business and/or medical functions your office manager will be expected to assist with.

"I've known successful office managers with college degrees and without; with decades of experience and with none," says Joe Mull, president of [Ally Training & Development](#), an agency that specializes in leadership development training for healthcare managers. He notes that most practices require their candidates to have either higher education or equivalent experience working in the healthcare industry (or some combination of both).

The necessary level of education will also depend partially on the size of the practice, says Brian White, managing partner of [Competitive Solutions](#), a consultancy that helps grow physician practices. Small to midsize practices may not require (or be able to afford) a manager with an advanced degree, such as a Master of Business Administration (MBA). However, "For a large practice of 10-15 physicians, you should be expecting someone who is an MBA-level, and can handle the strategic decision-making... of the practice," White says. Such a person can help grow the practice and take the business in new directions.

Even more important than education is a candidate's work experience, says Tom Ferkovic, managing director of consulting firm [SS&G Healthcare](#). The person you hire must be able to handle operations, staff, bookkeeping, billing and finances—and the level of business-savvy they need will depend on the experience of the physician(s) in charge.

"A physician [who] is active in running the practice requires a manager with less experience," Ferkovic says. "[A physician who] delegates a lot needs more. Three to five years of experience is good for a non-complicated, less-than-five-doctor practice."

In addition to experience with finances and a degree of business acumen, Linda Ryan, a registered nurse (RN) who ran a busy medical practice for 15 years, looks for something extra in an office manager: they, too, should be an RN.

Of her own experience, Ryan says, "I was able to jump in when it got crazy and help. I could give a shot, I could do a physical, I could do a hearing test—I [had] all those skills. And that's really helpful when you're short-staffed or inundated with patients." This, she adds, puts the manager more in touch with the practice's clinical staff, and fosters respect for the manager amongst the team.

Qualities and Characteristics

In addition to their degree or years of experience, there are some important qualitative and behavioral characteristics the office manager you hire should possess.

Personality, Ryan says, is key. Your office manager must be friendly, even-tempered and outgoing. They must have excellent people skills, and be able to communicate effectively with everyone who passes through the office: physicians, clinical and administrative staff, patients, drug company representatives and other clients or partners. Your manager should also be



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empathetic towards everyone in the office, and should enjoy talking with, listening to and helping others.

White emphasizes the importance of strong leadership capabilities. Your office manager, he says, must lead the way in meeting daily patient care responsibilities while also completing all necessary administrative work. They need to help streamline routine processes and effectively motivate practice staff to work more efficiently. And, of course, all good leaders know when it's best to handle things themselves, and when it's best to delegate.

Your manager must also be an effective negotiator who can quickly mediate and resolve conflicts, says Mull. Medical offices are high-stress environments, and it's not uncommon for, say, a patient who has spent a long time in the waiting room to become irate. The manager you hire, Ferkovic says, must be unafraid of stepping in to help resolve issues amongst staff, physicians and patients.

Ferkovic also notes that your office manager must have an excellent eye for detail, with a strong follow-up to ensure things get done. However, a good office manager is "able to see the job as more than just schedules, reports and other operational responsibilities," says Mull. "The manager influences the atmosphere and relationships on the team."

Questions to Ask During the Interview

To help surface the qualities you seek in an office manager, there are some key questions you can ask candidates during the interview process. How the candidate answers these questions can be an important indication of how they would perform in the role.

Ryan asks candidates, "What did you like best about your current or past position?" The answers you want to hear, she says, include: "I loved the doctors; I loved the patients; I loved my team. I loved how it was a dynamic job, never the same two days in a row; I loved when it all ran well." These answers evidence effective interpersonal skills and a desire to improve operational efficiency. They also indicate that the candidate understands and appreciates the fast-paced, fluid nature of medical office work.

Ryan also asks candidates what they liked least about their current or previous job. Acceptable answers include low pay and unreasonably long working hours. However, she says, almost any other answer is merely a reflection of poor performance on the candidate's part: for example, "To say that it was really disorganized, well, you're the manager—so that's your fault."

Another important question Ryan asks is, "What hours do you want to work?" The right answer: "What hours do you need me to work?" She wants to hear that candidates are willing to work a variety of shifts, including evenings and weekends, so that they get a chance to work with all members of the staff.

"Managing a medical practice is typically not a 40-hour-a-week job, and the manager needs to not be looking at the clock," Ryan says. "They should want to be there as much as they need to."

White, too, suggests digging into candidates' work histories. The questions you ask, he says, should cover: "What leadership roles have they been involved in? What successes have they had? What failures have they had in the past, and how did they respond to those failures? What did they perceive as the most important elements of the role you're going to put them in?" You want to determine what their plan is for your practice, White says, and "find out how they would execute that plan on a day-to-day basis to make the practice efficient and operationally profitable."

Ferkovic advises asking open-ended questions and "listening for decisive, yet thoughtful, answers." Have candidates provide examples of the biggest surprises they encountered on the job, the hardest decisions they had to make, what sorts of choices they made and why, he says. These answers can shed light on what sort of leader they would be, and how they might handle difficult choices and situations as your manager.

If there are specific qualitative characteristics you're looking for, says Mull, you can simply ask candidates to tell you about a time when they displayed that characteristic. "For example, 'tell me about a time when you had to negotiate. Tell me about a time when you had to mediate a conflict. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a highly-charged emotional situation at work,'" he says. When listening to their answers, Mull adds, ask yourself, "Did their response demonstrate the skills, knowledge or behaviors you are looking for? If that situation occurred in the new job, is their response appropriate?"

Mull also notes that, rather than listening for a specific response, you should read between the lines to understand the motivation behind a candidate's answer. "For example, if a candidate says that the first thing [she] did when confronted with a patient who was angry and shouting was move them to a private office where they could speak one-on-one, I could infer that she was concerned about the other people in the waiting room—even if the candidate doesn't say that," he explains.

Red Flags and Warning Signs

Just as there are important skills and characteristics you want to look for when screening candidates, there are some red flags you want to look out for, as well. These warning signs can help you spot potential weaknesses and weed out problem candidates before they make it to the offer stage.

When a candidate speaks negatively about the doctors or staff they worked with in a previous job, that's a huge red flag, Ryan says—especially if the candidate was in a managerial position. "If they were attracting people who were catty, immature and unprofessional, I think that says a lot about the management," she explains. They should've been able to spot those characteristics in people during the hiring process, or deal with those problems once they became evident.

Asking about salary over the phone is another red flag for Ryan. Salary questions aren't appropriate, she says, until the candidate has seen the office, met the staff and understood exactly what the position will entail—because a great medical office job isn't primarily about the money. Asking about the hours

at any point in the interview process is also a bad sign. “[That means] they just don’t understand that the hours are whatever they need to be,” Ryan says.

Ferkovic warns against candidates who give too many “I” answers. “If the answers are all, ‘I did this’ or ‘I made this happen,’ [you] need to probe more to see if they can delegate,” he says. Team dynamics are integral to any medical office, and your manager must be a team player who is capable of assigning the right tasks to the right people so that the practice can operate efficiently.

Mull notes that a lack of awareness for the human element of the office manager position is another major warning sign. “If the candidate seems to view the role simply as managing processes... if they share no experience, interest or awareness that the job will require ‘people skills’... I would be concerned,” he says.

Putting Candidates to the Test

Administering a test to office manager candidates can be an effective screening tool, says Mull. The material covered on the assessment will depend upon the particular needs of your practice and the specific knowledge or experience you want to ascertain in applicants.

“Some are used to ascertain personality preferences to evaluate cultural fit; others assess intelligence, service skills and even ethics,” Mull says. “I’ve seen scenario-based questions, math equations, picture puzzles and even vocabulary quizzes.”

White notes that a sample test would be especially worth considering “if there were specific issues confronting the practice... or a new level of expertise in their practice was needed.” Such an assessment could help ensure that you hire the right person to handle the strategic, long-term issues that are affecting your practice and goals you want to achieve.

Administering a test can be an effective way to screen internal candidates as well as external ones. Some practices may want to promote internally to fill an office manager position—but they must ensure that internal candidates have the knowledge and skill required. White cautions that a track record of success in a lower-level position isn’t necessarily a predictor of a candidate’s success in a managerial role.

Trust Your Instincts

Ryan says that while her practice gave tests to clinical job applicants, for the office manager position, she came to rely on a much less quantitative type of assessment: gut instinct. After hiring two office managers based on good-looking resumes who ended up not working out, Ryan says she learned to trust her own impressions more than just what she saw on paper.

“It was more their experience, where they came from and... their personality,” she says. “A positive attitude is just so important, and you can sense that when you’re in the room with someone more than you can really qualify it.”

Finding the right office manager isn’t easy—but you can make the process

simpler and more effective. Before you begin screening candidates, decide what sort of education and experience is necessary for the role. During the interview process, look and listen for the qualities and characteristics that are important for success at your practice, and be on alert for red flags and warning signs. Administer a test if you want to check for specific skills or knowledge—and when in doubt, go with your gut.

By following these guidelines, you can hire the right medical office manager for your primary care practice.

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About the Author

[Holly Regan](#) is the Content Editor for Software Advice. Her work has appeared on many notable sites, including The New York Times, PRNews and oDesk. She has also contributed to works on top-tier publications such as Entrepreneur, the Wall Street Journal and Business Insider.

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Sample Interview Questions for the Administrator Position

At some point your physician medical practice may need to hire a new office manager or administrator (I'm assuming you know the difference between the two). During the interview process, the questions you ask your applicants are crucial to making the right hire. I've put together a few questions below to ask your applicant during his or her interview. You might not use all of them but I suggest trying to use most of them.

Applicant Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Grade:** _____

To the Interviewer: Ask the applicant to respond to the following:

- Quote the mission statement of a recent employer and tell us about one or more ways you helped fulfill it.
- Describe a challenge you have faced in dealing with a physician governing board and how you dealt with it.
- Tell us about the professional organizations in which you participate.
- Describe your continuing education activities in the past year.
- Given a budget for your own professional education, what areas would you seek education in to better be able to serve this practice?
- Describe the professional achievement of which you are proudest.
- What would your recommended budget ratios be, as a percentage of revenues, for labor, facilities and marketing, for a practice similar to the one you left, and why?
- Describe how you believe a practice should optimally use its CPA and attorney.
- Describe how you might correct an over-budget situation in any one fiscal quarter.
- In your opinion, what are the most important financial benchmarks to monitor on an ongoing basis.
- Specifically, what revenue cycle benchmarks should be monitored on an ongoing basis.
- Describe how you would monitor our overhead to make sure costs are contained and efficient.
- A part-time temporary person wishes to be an independent contractor rather than an employee. Explain how you would determine if this were feasible and the risks to the practice.
- List the regulatory issues/agencies with which a medical group needs to monitor compliance.
- Describe the most common internal controls for a medical practice.
- Do you have accounting/bookkeeping experience? If yes, please describe.
- How often would you want to meet with which physicians and why?
- Describe the computer programs in which you are proficient.
- Name or describe any organizational tools you use to improve your own performance or keep track of issues and responsibilities.
- Describe how you would handle a repetitively tardy staff person. Physician?
- You suspect an employee of having an alcohol or drug problem. How would you handle it?
- How would you handle an employee complaint of sexual harassment by a physician?
- Describe how you would go about firing an employee who merited termination.
- Describe how you would handle a disruptive physician in a meeting.
- How would you ensure patients are constantly satisfied with our medical practice?
- Describe the difference between internal and external marketing and how each is used.
- Describe how you close out a day and tie to the daily deposit slip.
- Describe how you would monitor accounts receivable.
- Describe how you would monitor the front desk and billing/collection activities.

What Does a Medical Practice Manager Do?



Whether the title is manager, medical practice manager, physician practice manager, administrator, practice administrator, executive director, office manager, CEO, COO, director, division manager, department manager, or any combination thereof, with some exceptions, people who manage physician practices do some combination of the responsibilities listed here or manage people who do.

Human Resources: Hire, fire, counsel, discipline, evaluate, train, orient, coach, mentor and schedule staff. Shop, negotiate and administer benefits. Develop, maintain and administer personnel policies, wellness programs, pay scales, and job descriptions. Resolve conflicts. Maintain personnel files. Document Worker's Compensation injuries. Address unemployment inquiries. Acknowledge joyful events and sorrowful events in the practice and the lives of employees. Stay late to listen to someone who needs to talk.

Facilities and Machines: Shop for, negotiate, recommend, and maintain buildings or suites, telephones, hand-held dictation devices, copiers, computers, pagers, furniture, scanners, postage machines, specimen refrigerators, injection refrigerators, patient refreshment refrigerators, staff lunch refrigerators, medical equipment, printers, coffee machines, alarm systems, signage and cell phones.

Ordering and Expense Management: Shop for, negotiate and recommend suppliers for medical consumables, office supplies, kitchen supplies, magazines, printed forms, business insurance, and malpractice insurance as well as services such as transcription, x-ray reads/over-reads, consultants, CPAs, lawyers, lawn and snow service, benefit administrators, answering service, water service, courier service, plant service, housekeeping, aquarium service, linen service, bio-hazardous waste removal, shredding service, off-site storage and caterers.

Legal: Comply with all local, state and federal laws and guidelines including OSHA, ADA, EOE, FMLA, CLIA, COLA, JCAHO, FACTA, HIPAA, Stark I, II & III, fire safety, crash carts and defibrillators, disaster communication, sexual harassment, universal precautions, MSDS hazards, confidentiality, security and privacy, and provide staff with documentation and training in same. Make sure all clinical staff are current on licenses and CPR. Have downtime procedures for loss of computer accessibility. Make sure risk management policies are being followed. Alert malpractice carrier to any potential liability issues immediately. Make sure medical records are being stored and released appropriately.

Accounting: Pay bills, produce payroll, prepare compensation schedules for physicians, prepare and pay taxes, prepare budget and monthly variance reports, make deposits, reconcile bank statements, reconcile merchant accounts, prepare Profit & Loss statements, prepare refunds to payers and patients, and file lots and lots of paperwork.

Billing, Claims and Accounts Receivable: Perform eligibility searches on all scheduled patients. Ensure that all dictation is complete and all encounters (office, hospital, nursing home, ASC, satellite office, home visits and legal work (depositions, etc.) are charged and all payments, denials and adjustments are posted within pre-determined amount of time. Transmit electronic claims daily. Send patient statements daily or weekly. Negotiate payer contracts and ensure payers are complying with contract terms. Appeal denials. Have staff collect deductibles, co-pays and co-insurance and have financial counselors meet with patients scheduling surgery, those with an outstanding balance, or those patients



with high deductibles or healthcare savings plans. Make sure scheduling staff know which payers the practice does not contract with. Liaison with billing service if billing is outsourced. Credential care providers with all payers. Perform internal compliance audits. Load new RBRVS values, new CPTs and new ICD-9s annually. Run monthly reports for physician production, aged accounts receivable, net collection percentage and cost and collections per RVU. Attach appropriate codes to claims for e-prescribing and PQRI. Have plan in place for receipt of Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) letters. Make friends and meet regularly with the provider reps for your largest payers.

Marketing: Introduce new physicians, new locations and new services to the community. Recommend sponsorship of appropriate charities, sports and events in the community. Recommend sponsorship of patient support groups and keep physicians giving talks and appearing at events. Thank patients for referring other patients. Track referral sources. Recommend use of Yellow Pages, billboards, radio, television, newspaper, magazine, direct mail, newsletters, email, website, blog, and other social media. Prepare press releases on practice events and physicians awards and activities. Recommend practice physicians for television health spots.

Strategic Planning: Prepare ROIs (Return on Investment) and pro formas for new physicians, new services, and new locations. Forecast potential effect of Medicare cuts, contracts in negotiation or over-dependence on one payer. Discuss 5-year plans for capital expenditures such as EMR, ancillary services, physician recruitment, and replacement equipment. Explore outsourcing office functions or having staff telecommute. Always look for technology that can make the practice more efficient or productive.

Day-to-day Operations: Make the rounds of the practice at least twice a day to observe and be available for questions. Arrange for temporary staff or rearrange staff schedules for shortages, meet or speak with patients with complaints, and meet with vendors, physicians and staff. Open mail and recycle most of it. Unplug toilet(s).

Stay Current in Healthcare: Attend continuing education sessions via face-to-face conferences, webinars, podcasts and online classes. Maintain membership in professional organizations. Pursue certification in medical practice management. Network with community and same specialty colleagues. Participate in listservs, LinkedIn and Twitter.

What did I leave out? Take a lunch?

Read my post on “How Much Do Medical Practice Managers Make?” [here](#).