

# POSITIVE **OUTLOOK.**

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## ***Ken's Korner:***

### **Creatively Dealing With Turnover**

Turnover is still an issue for many entry level positions. A long term client of ours, University Physicians Healthcare (UPH) in Tucson, has developed an innovative answer to a serious turnover problem in front and back office positions. Their efforts earned them a Workplace Excellence Award in 2010. Their answer can apply to many other positions requiring highly technical skills.

Traditionally front and back office positions have high turnover because once individuals are trained they are valuable to operations and other healthcare companies compete to hire them.

In 2008, University Physicians decided to take a radical approach. Instead of waiting until positions became vacant they decided to proactively hire. They also decided to hire for service-oriented competency versus technical competency. Applicants with desired skills and abilities, but lacking healthcare experience, were targeted and exposure to healthcare was provided through an intensive training program. This was completely consistent with what has been known for many years; that it is often much easier to train technical skills than service oriented skills.

The program was called MOST, Medical Office Specialty Training.

Recruitment was done with very little cost. Flyers were sent out to current employees, posted in the hospital and at the corporate center. Almost all interviewees had a friend or relative that was currently employed by UPH. In one round 150 applicants were initially screened by HR. Further screening was then done using telephone screening, Prevue testing and essay questions. Panel interviews were conducted with 12 applicants. Background checks were completed and offers were made to ten applicants; all accepted. Education was a four week program covering healthcare overall, with front office operations and rotations to multiple departments. Trainees were assigned mentors in their area of selected specialty.

As of this time 30 individuals have been selected into three programs. Of those over a period of a year and a half only one person did not work out. That is some record.

This program was developed to meet a specific need for a healthcare organization. Healthcare is increas-

ingly facing work force shortages. This program brings in workers who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to work in healthcare. The program would be applicable to other healthcare providers and the concepts and goals could potentially be used by any organization.

Excluding an individual just because they do not have technical prerequisites for a specific position may be very short sighted. One of the biggest challenges in the workplace today is communication. With increased specialization people tend to “silo” within their specialty areas. There is very little understanding of how what they do fits into the company overall. As a result, they take very little initiative to communicate with the people in other departments who are affected by what they are doing. This program not only trains people in the essential technical skills required to do the job, it gives them an overall perspective of the importance of what they are doing, encourages them to communicate and, for some, gives them a perspective that can further their career development.

This program represents the kind of innovation we need going forward to deal with the challenges brought about by increased technical shortages. My hat is off to UPH and the MOST program.

**Kenneth H. Kasner, PhD**

## Hiring - What HR Pros & Business Leaders Look For

A national survey was conducted by the Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania to find out what employers are looking for in new college grads. They found that personal professionalism seems to be the characteristic most people are looking for. Nearly 60 percent of the hiring decision is based on an assessment of the applicant’s professionalism. A total of 520 human resource professionals and business leaders participated in the survey.

Five primary characteristics identified were:

- Personal interaction skills.
- The skills to communicate, and listen.
- A great work ethic; being motivated and staying on task until the job is completed.
- Professional appearance.
- Self-confidence and awareness.

Nearly 90 percent of the respondents said that professionalism is related to the person and not the position.

These findings are consistent with what we are seeing. More and more jobs are interdependent and the skills required to function well personally and interpersonally are requirements for success. Assessing these characteristics pre-hire is not all that difficult if the desired characteristics are well delineated, the process well designed and the measures tailored to fit. The future can be much more rewarding when you hire with an accurate assessment of professionalism.

## Strong H.R. = Strong Company

An article in the Wall Street Journal on April 18, 2010, entitled, “Ten Things Human Resources Won’t Tell You” confirmed several things we have observed for some time. Although many traditional H.R. services such as recruiting, background checks, payroll, etc. are being outsourced and absolute numbers of department staff are dropping, H.R. is having a bigger impact in successful companies.

While this article focuses on advice to benefit the employee, it also makes four strong points delineating benefits to the company of having a strong H.R. role.

There is a proven relationship between the strength of an organization's HR department and the company's financial performance: "Companies with strong HR departments have been shown to do better financially." Smart companies recognize that HR Managers can be key influencers of talent retention: "Human resources managers do much more than handle employment agreements, medical forms, and 401(k) paperwork. They can also have a hand in helping to retain and promote top talent."

Properly acculturating employees, such as by communicating the organization's expectations or them, can drive company productivity: "Strong HR departments are now focusing on boosting productivity by helping employees better understand what's expected of them and by showing managers how to be more effective."

HR can directly influence employee career development and retention: "Empowered human resources reps can also help guide employees through their careers."

It truly is time to see HR as a major link in the strategic success chain.

***We can help.*** Give us a call at (602) 357-4399, or check us out on the web at [positiveoptions.net](http://positiveoptions.net)

## Quick Quip:

### Mothers

Answers given by 2nd grade school children to the following questions:

Why did God make mothers?

1. Mostly to clean the house.
2. To help us out of there when we were getting born.

How did God make mothers?

1. He used dirt, just like for the rest of us.
2. Magic plus super powers and a lot of stirring.

What ingredients are mothers made of?

1. God makes mothers out of clouds and angel hair and everything nice in the world and one dab of mean.
2. They had to get their start from men's bones. Then they mostly use string, I think.

What kind of a little girl was your mom?

1. My mom has always been my mom and none of that other stuff.
2. I don't know because I wasn't there, but my guess would be pretty bossy.

What did mom need to know about dad before she married him?

1. His last name.
2. She had to know his background. Like is he a crook? Does he get drunk on beer?

Why did your mom marry your dad?

1. My dad makes the best spaghetti in the world. And my mom eats a lot.
2. My grandma says that mom didn't have her thinking cap on.

Who's the boss at your house?

1. Mom doesn't want to be boss, but she has to because dad's such a goof ball.
2. Mom. You can tell by room inspection. She sees the stuff under the bed.

What's the difference between moms and dads?

1. Moms work at work and work at home and dads just go to work at work.
2. Moms have magic, they make you feel better without medicine.

What does your mom do in her spare time?

1. Mothers don't do spare time.
2. To hear her tell it, she pays bills all day long.

What would it take to make your mom perfect?

1. On the inside she's already perfect. Outside, I think some kind of plastic surgery.
2. Dye it. You know, her hair. I'd dye it, maybe blue.

If you could change one thing about your mom, what would it be?

1. She has this weird thing about me keeping my room clean. I'd get rid of that.
2. I'd make my mom smarter. Then she would know it was my sister who did it not me.

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