Our Biggest Hiring Mistakes in Health Care

By Paul Wright


In the last 20 years I have interviewed hundreds of health professionals, read many more CVs and made a multitude of terrible (and fortunately some very good) hiring decisions for my health care businesses.

Here are a couple of the biggest and most common mistakes that many health business owners make when looking for new team members.

Mistake Number One – We Hire Based on Technical Skill

Now this is one of the most controversial mistakes– and raises much discussion - especially from the highly technical clinic owners and university types. However, I fundamentally believe that we where all indoctrinated at our undergraduate courses to be so technically excellent that we neglected any significant study in the essential area of people skills and rapport building – just look at the number of therapists attending technical updates as opposed to those attending a “Developing People Skills” or an “NLP” program – assuming you can even find these courses.

I have conducted employment interviews on health professionals who have many years of experience and completed every seminar ever held (one applicant had done more nearly 80 courses in less than 8 years post grad – and the CV was nearly 20 pages long ) – however many of these “technically excellent” applicants could not maintain eye contact, stared off into space, and when questioned about issues outside of their technical knowledge – seemed vague and vacant – I am sure I am bringing back some of your own hiring nightmares as you read this.

That being said I am not for a moment thinking that we can just employ anybody – you do need a high level of competence to perform the task required in your practice – and we worked exceptionally hard on our clinical education and in-services – however I would employ a new graduate with great people skills (and often did) any day of the week over a highly experienced therapist who failed to “connect” in an interview - because I know technical skill is much easier to train than “people skills”.

I always remember something I once read which relates exceptionally well to the overwhelming majority of our patients in health care well and you could do worse than have this little saying in your staff rooms:

“People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care” – I think it puts things into perspective nicely – don’t you.
Hiring Mistake Number Two – We Waste Time on Duds

Sorry for the harsh reality of this but we have to face the fact that there are a large number of job applicants that are just not suited to our individual clinics – whether it is the overseas trained therapist without current registration, to the new graduate with no people skills to the inactive therapist looking to work in a sports clinic – many people do not have a great concept of reality and as a result we spend too much time on applicants that really are not suitable at all.

I think your most important asset is your time as a health business owner and you should treat it like gold – be more ruthless in your interviews and culling procedures – if the person doesn’t feel right when you speak to them on the phone – then politely say “I’m sorry but I just don’t think you would be the right fit for our clinic” – you don’t have to go into any more detail and waste any more time.

This is not a personal attack on the applicant but a simple statement of fact – there is no doubt a position out there that this person would be much better suited to – and to continue any further with your application is not only wasting your time but stopping the applicant from finding the right position with the right fit for them.

I also suggest that you tell the potential applicant (once they have passed the quick chat phone call stage) to drop into your clinic at their leisure and have a look around – then after this visit if they are still interested in applying is not only wasting your time but stopping the applicant from finding the right position with the right fit for them.

Hiring Mistake Number Three – We Hire too Fast

This is one of my specialities (and why I made so many mistakes early on in business) – the hiring process can be so long, drawn out , expensive and draining that often we just want to get the position filled and will take the first vaguely qualified health practitioner that comes along - even though they are on a 3 month visa, don’t have a car to get to your clinic which is not near public transport, has just got out of hospital for chronic fatigue, cant work past 5pm and lives more than 90 minutes away.

One of my business mentors told me years ago to “Hire Slow and Fire Fast” – and I still believe this is one of the best pieces of advice I have ever received in business – I suggest you try and do the same. Take your time for the right person will always come along and filling a spot with the wrong person just takes up the spot that the “right person” would have filled nicely.

Murphy’s Law dictates that the “right person” will always call the day after you have hired the “wrong person”- I can hear your groans from here.
Mistake Number Four – We Get Too Close to Our Team

This is another interesting concept and will again raise some controversy from those employers that believe they can be “friends” as well as employers – from my experience this is a very delicate balance act and one better avoided. I do my best to get to know my team but am always area of keeping a respectful distance.

It is very difficult to enforce discipline and rules when you have positioned yourself too close to your team members – I also find it easier to gradually release the ropes of discipline than it is to reign them in – a very experienced and well respected school teacher once told me that he “did not smile until November” – as he felt that it was only at this late stage of the school year that he could release the controls a little and be more relaxed with his students.

So be firm and in control with all new employees and always try to keep your distance – this makes it much easier to enforce discipline in your team and to make those difficult decisions that we all face as business owners at some time of our business lives.

Summary

In health care (and many other businesses) it is simply a fact of life that you will always be hiring - so just accept this reality and do your best to enjoy the process– it is easy to look back and laugh when you have finally filled a position with someone great – but then they resign (because their spouse has been transferred to Tanzania) and the smile seems to disappear from your face as the “employment shuffle” starts all over again.

Free Business Building Tools

Paul has made available a free 60 minute MP3 “How to Ethically Increase Profits from Your Health Business” as well as his full e-book “Why Health Professionals Operate Poor Business and What to Do About It” to by going to:

www.HealthBusinessProfits.com

Paul also works with a limited number of one on one clients in his personal mentor program – to find out more and to register your interest go to:

www.HealthBusinessProfits.com/coachpaul
About Paul Wright

If you are like most health professionals YOU are an excellent clinician – but YOU are so time poor and busy that you don’t have enough time for your family and friends. Life may be passing you by while you are at work and away from home.

BUT there is a better way, health professional Paul Wright can show you how to create a “turn-key” health business that makes money for you while you’re at home, on holidays, or spending time with your family...just as he has done.

Since graduating as a Physical Education teacher in 1987 and then as a physiotherapist in 1990 Paul Wright has opened multiple multi-disciplinary health clinics, closed a few, been locked out of one and sold some others. He has employed countless therapists and support staff, fired some and re-hired others.

Paul has been actively involved in clinical education around the world having lectured to over 20,000 health professionals - in the areas of program design, injury prevention, rehabilitation and business development and even found the time to win multiple titles as a competitive bodybuilder.

Paul Wright is living proof this “Ultimate Health Business Lifestyle” is possible. At one stage he owned 6 successful Get Active Physiotherapy clinics in Australia, yet still spent more time at home than his wife preferred, never missed a school concert or sports carnival, and visited his clinics for only a few hours each week. While doing this he did not even live in the same city as 5 of his clinics!

Since selling his health businesses Paul now prefers spending even more time with his family and friends, at the beach, or at home working on the Million Dollar Health Professional Program, Profit Club, DVD Program, One on One Coaching, The Practice Acceleration Program, presenting live seminars and working on his PhysioProfessor.com online education portal.

“It was only after 7 years at university and 10 years in clinical practice that I realized that I was totally unprepared and unskilled in the area of running a health care business. I have spent the past 10 years making up for my early mistakes by learning all I can about marketing, sales, and health business management. I am pleased and proud to be able to share this business knowledge in health care with you – my fellow health professionals. We should have learnt this at university.”

Paul Wright
Don’t Forget to Claim Your Free Business Building Tools

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