

How to Dramatically Decrease
Your Hiring Costs and Eliminate the
Nursing Shortage at Your Facility



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THE PROBLEM TODAY

In the Middle Ages, doctors often prescribed a technique called “bleeding.” When all else failed, they would make a small incision in a patient’s vein and deliberately drain their blood. As the blood flowed steadily out of the body, they believed the cause of the sickness would, too.

Needless to say, the practice of medicine has come a long way since then. But unfortunately, health care recruiting hasn’t. Today, most hospitals and other patient care facilities still use outdated recruiting techniques—methods that unintentionally drain their potential for growth.

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According to an April 2006 report from the American Hospital Association, around 118,000 nurses are *currently* needed to fill U.S. hospital vacancies. This translates to an 8.5% vacancy rate nationwide, a shortage that not only shackles your quality of care, but your bottom line as well.

With such dire statistics, it may seem like it’s virtually impossible to fill every one of your open positions. The truth, however, is that thousands of nurses are looking for new jobs every day. You just need to do a better job than your competitors of finding and convincing the new blood you need.

THE PROBLEM YESTERDAY

Historically, nursing recruiters have been faced with a recruiting Catch 22. On the one hand, recruiters can’t afford to wait for large groups of qualified candidates to come to them. On the other hand, recruiters can’t afford to go directly to large groups of qualified nurses themselves.

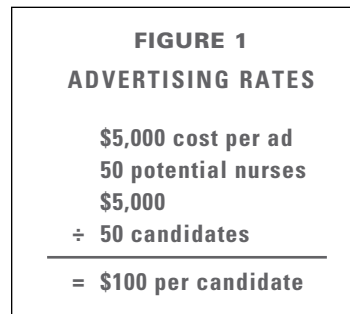
Why? Because recruiting on a mass-market scale was typically too expensive to merit the investment.

For decades, recruitment advertising has been the most viable—and the most cost-effective—way to reach qualified nursing candidates on a broad-based level. But even though traditional advertising is *cost-effective*, it isn’t a *cost-efficient* technique when it comes to attracting nurses.

Its inefficiency is due to the way advertising rates are determined. For example, suppose you want to advertise for nurses in your local paper. Your advertising costs will depend on the size of the paper’s circulation. Obviously, the higher the circulation, the higher your advertising costs will be.

To keep things simple, say your local paper has a circulation of 500,000 readers, and its advertising rates are \$5,000 for a quarter-page ad. On the surface, the cost might seem reasonable. For \$5,000, you're only paying a penny for each of the 500,000 people your ad will reach.

But remember, you don't want to reach everyone. You just want the nursing candidates. To keep things simple again, suppose only 50 of the paper's 500,000 readers are actual nursing candidates. Figure 1 shows what that same ad would cost you in real dollars:



No matter how you look at it, paying \$100 to reach *one* potential candidate *one* time is far too expensive to make good business sense. Nevertheless, health care providers have been doing it for years, simply because they haven't had a better alternative.

NURSING THE RECRUITING WOUND

But that was yesterday. Today, there is a bona fide cure for the ills of wasteful recruitment spending. A cure that not only eliminates excessive advertising costs, but also offers the potential to recruit more qualified nurses than ever before.

The cure—and the opportunity that awaits you—is called: *the Internet*.

The rise of the Internet has dramatically changed the way recruiters are able to promote their job openings. With the Internet, you're no longer forced to pay for advertising that doesn't target your own, specific audience. And unlike traditional magazines or newspapers, the Internet doesn't just help you find the candidates you're looking for, it also helps the candidates you're looking for find you.

Candidates, for example, like highly qualified nurses who, as research shows, are turning to the Internet in rapidly increasing numbers.

Ideally, you want to use a Web site that provides a simple way for a nurse to submit a résumé only after learning about your job offer, your company and your requirements. And when the candidate is aware she is delivering one résumé to one company, you're already pre-qualifying your lead.

According to an April 2006 survey by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), 68% of respondents said they used the Internet on a daily basis and a slightly higher number, 72%, used e-mail daily. In a similar study in 2003, only 45% said they used the Internet daily and a mere 54% used e-mail.

Such a dramatic increase speaks for itself. Today, the Internet is the most important mass medium for communicating with nurses, and as younger nurses enter the job force tomorrow, it will play an even more pivotal role.

BEST PRACTICES IN INTERNET RECRUITING

Not all Internet recruiting techniques are created equal. Despite the Internet's power and reach, there are right ways and wrong ways to use the Internet for recruiting purposes. To minimize your recruitment spending and maximize your results, your Internet strategy should include three essential components:

1. Targeted Web sites for promoting your openings
2. The ability to track and test your recruiting messages
3. A quick response and feedback mechanism.

Figure 2 illustrates how all three components work together to lower your recruiting costs and increase the number of qualified candidates who come to you. By managing each component professionally, you'll see dramatic improvement in your recruiting effectiveness.

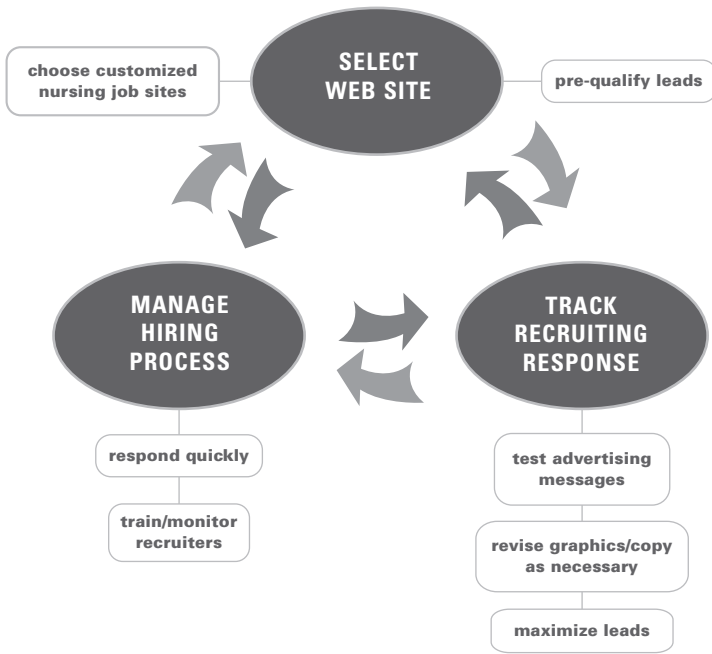
CHOOSING THE RIGHT JOB-SEARCH SITE

The Internet offers a multitude of options for promoting your openings, and sites that specifically target nurses actively looking for jobs are among the most powerful.

But proceed with caution. Most of these sites use a résumé database model that allows recruiters to search for nurses they might like to hire. This method can be very time consuming, and the results are hit-or-miss. A candidate who at first appears to be perfect for your opening may actually have no interest in your facility, your city or your specific position.

An alternative model requires the nurse to fill out a résumé that is then "blasted" to every medical facility registered to receive solicitations from this

FIGURE 2
THE INTERNET RECRUITING PROCESS



particular Web site. Again, such an approach is inefficient because you can receive dozens of résumés from candidates who have no interest whatsoever in your specific opportunity, and vice versa. What's more, the candidates themselves will be fielding calls from dozens of recruiters who make it virtually impossible for you to stand out from the crowd.

Ideally, you want to use a Web site that provides a simple way for a nurse to submit a résumé *only after* learning about your job offer, your company and your requirements. And when the candidate is aware she is delivering one résumé to one company, you're already pre-qualifying your potential lead.

TEST AND TRACK YOUR MESSAGES

The next step is to promote your available job openings. On a Web site, the most cost-effective way to do so is typically via *direct-response* advertising.

According to an April 2006 survey by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), 68% of respondents said they used the Internet on a daily basis and a slightly higher number, 72%, used e-mail daily. In a similar study in 2003, only 45% said they used the Internet daily and a mere 54% used e-mail.

Unlike traditional print advertising, banner ads and other forms of Internet promotions are highly efficient. Not only is the cost of the banner ad itself usually much lower than what you would invest in a magazine or newspaper, a targeted nursing job site is specifically geared to the kind of audience you are trying to reach.

But that's not the biggest advantage. The most serious mistake recruiters can make is to guess at what works and what doesn't, and then to accept poor results without revising the messages to achieve the desired results.

Once again, the Internet provides a solution to the problem. With the ability to re-work advertising content in real time, it's easy to analyze the results of your ad and, if necessary, to change it to improve response.

Some Web sites offer the ability to change your ad regularly. Some will even do all of the work for you, including graphics, layout and copy. If these services are offered at no extra cost, you can measurably increase your recruiting ROI.

For example, suppose you have been promoting a sign-on bonus and you're disappointed with your short-term responses. Maybe focusing on your working conditions, your compensation package, or your benefits would yield better results. Until you test different messages, you won't know for certain what works best for you. The Internet makes it possible to do so as often as you want.

MANAGING THE PROACTIVE HIRING PROCESS

No matter how effective your advertising is—via the Internet or anywhere else—you'll never hire the nurses you need if your hiring process itself is flawed.

For example, if you're advertising on a site that brings pre-qualified nursing candidates to you specifically, the candidates will judge your facility by how quickly you respond to their queries. And in a sellers' market as competitive as it is in the nursing industry, slow response times are absolutely lethal.

Common mistakes to avoid include:

- Failure to answer candidate phone calls
- Allowing an untrained staff member to speak with the candidate

- Responding slowly to e-mailed résumés or applications
- Disqualifying potential candidates based on too little information
- Failure to arrange an in-person interview in the short-term
- Taking too long in the hiring process
- Having no recruiting staff on evenings or weekends
- Spending too much time on unqualified applicants
- Inadequate recruitment training.

These are just some of the recruiting mistakes health care facilities often make, and all of them are correctable. Remember—your goal is not only to attract more qualified nurses, it's also to *lower your average cost-per-hire*.

By fueling your recruiting program with the Internet and by managing your hiring processes professionally, you will not only be able to attract more nurses at lower costs, you will also improve your facility's quality of care. In the health care industry, best practices in recruiting translate to best practices in medicine.