



## **Recruiting in a World of Rising Minimum Wages**

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Recruiting for any position is not usually a favorite task among managers – especially in the veterinary field when you may be stuck trying to fill a shift as quickly as possible – even filling it yourself on some days.

The current unemployment rate in the Portland metro area is around 4% or less as of recent numbers. Compare this to 2014 when it was at 7%!

What this means for us:

- More people are already employed
- There are less candidates applying for jobs everywhere
- Candidates are typically less qualified than we would like
- We see more job hopping and quitting for usually tolerable reasons

The current Portland metro minimum wage is \$12.00 / hour, slated to increase to \$14.75 by 2023. This makes it increasingly difficult to recruit for our lower wage, entry level positions as we are competing with all other entry level jobs: fast food, retail, servers, etc.

So how do we work with this?

First, we have to know who we are looking for. Are we looking for a truly entry level, no experience candidate that we can train on the job or do we really need someone with some animal handling skills, ability to read animal body language, etc.? Having job descriptions for the positions you are hiring for can greatly increase your success of hiring the right candidate. It sets an outline for what you need for the job and sets expectations for the candidate coming into the job.

Know your expectations when reviewing applications and resumes, and filter them appropriately. In this job market, we may have to discount things we might not normally, so flexibility on our part is important.

Next, we have to know what job hunters are searching for. With so many vacant jobs, we have to stand out to even have our ads seen. The current job hunters for more entry level positions typically want to see a position with: flexible hours, growth opportunities, and a feeling of making a difference with their work. Often these candidates have a second job or are in school, so flexibility is key for them.

What is your pre-interview screening? Do you complete phone screens, video screens, etc.? Whichever course you take, you need to move quickly. Job seekers expect a faster turnaround than ever before.

When interviewing, set the candidate up for future success. Provide some real-life scenario questions based on the position. Not only will their answer give you a good idea of how they will respond in real life, but it also prepares the candidate for what the position actually looks like. Not just playing with puppies and kitties all day!

Think about doing working interviews if you don't already. They work especially well with more entry level positions. Candidates can often have a misperceived idea of what working in your practice is like. Give them an opportunity to

really see it. Have them shadow a rock star at your clinic for 4 hours or so to see what it's like. It can often weed out candidates who may otherwise leave after a week or two of employment.

It's important to have a strong onboarding and training process. Many candidates leave their new jobs when they are just thrown in and expected to learn while working the shifts. Provide solid training where the new employee can ask questions freely. Having a training or orientation schedule from day one can set good expectations for the candidate and will also provide you with a structured training platform.

Remember – have regular check-ins with your new employee. Provide a safe place for them to talk about their challenges and what they need to be successful at your practice. Practices that don't provide feedback can have the highest turnover rates.

While the unemployment rate is not expected to increase in the near future, as practice managers, we need to remember to think more creatively about recruiting and employee retention.