Operational Excellence Through Communication
Attracting, Training, and Communicating with the Right Employee

By Morgan Hutchings
Kolbe Certified Consultant & Business Strategist

Are you looking to build an autonomous healthcare team with purpose and passion? With changes in the economy and in our industry, you should be working towards changes in your business. It’s no secret that hiring has become increasingly difficult in the last two years, but not nearly as difficult as it is to find the right person to hire. To run an effective practice and build an autonomous team, you must first learn how to define the role of each ‘seat on the bus,’ then learn how to communicate effectively with each person on your team resulting in an autonomous ‘well-oiled machine.’
Private practice owners tell me all the time, ‘I just can’t find any good people.’ It’s difficult enough to be a successful provider in the office today with online sales of OTC and manufacturers trying to force consumers to make decisions before seeing the provider. The business owner also has to look out for the marketing, people, culture, and science in the office. It’s no wonder that when it comes to adding new employees to the whirlwind that can be a busy private practice on a Monday morning with the overflow of patients to be seen, that owners simply ‘check out’ of the recruiting process. This is what typically results in, ‘I can’t find any good people.’ And hiring is just the beginning; you still need to onboard, train, and hold accountable a specific employee along with the rest of your team. It’s no wonder that the number one question I get from owners is centered around people-problems in the office and the majority of those questions surround the one common theme.

If any of the above sounds like you or your practice, my hope is that you too can find Operational Excellence Through Communication. There are three phases you will go through on your journey towards excellent communication and make no mistake—this will be a journey for you as a leader. Reading one article, one book, or watching some videos won’t make you excellent at anything. It is my sincere hope that you use the lessons that follow as a tool to ensure great success in the next weeks, months, and years to come for you and your team.

ATTRACTING THE RIGHT EMPLOYEE
Possibly one of the biggest misconceptions about hiring new employees is that the right employee will come along at the right time. If hiring people was fishing, let’s say, the bait you use to attract a mahi tuna and the bait used to attract the salmon in our rivers would be different. Seems simple and effective right? Know what you are trying to attract so you can use the right bait. Under the same logic, trying to hire an employee in your office shouldn’t be so hard. So, how do you know what to put out there to attract the right employee? After all, 76% percent of hiring managers admit attracting the right job candidates is their greatest challenge.¹

We have a phrase we use in our group—‘data drives decisions.’ Anytime you are going to add to your team, you need to have the data to prove that the decision is worth the investment. On average, a new employee costs a small business (doing less than one million dollars a year in revenue) approximately $17k to onboard successfully in the first 90 days. Energy, time, and money are all factors that go into hiring your next rockstar employee.

To make it simple, pull out a blank sheet of paper to begin establishing the WHY, HOW and WHO you are hiring. Across the top of the page write the job title. Under that, put the 5-7 roles and responsibilities that the person will have in the company (what you expect them to be accountable for). Then, in about 2-3 sentences, write what the single most important part of the job that this person will do in your office is. Lastly, at the bottom, please list 4-8 core values of your company.

Congratulations! You have just designed your first draft of ‘bait’ that you will use to attract the right person. I’ve helped hire hundreds of employees, and I can tell you that when you are trying to find great employees they want to know what

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makes YOU great and why they should work there. Incorporating your core values and expectations of the employee up front allows you to begin attracting people who agree with your core values and expectations.

**KNOW YOUR PEOPLE**
Possibly the single most important factor when communicating on a high level with someone is understanding how they prefer to receive your communication. You might have amazing communication skills, knowing what to say and when to say it, but if you want to ensure that your message is truly received, you have to make sure you deliver it in the correct form. This understanding doesn’t come easy and it’s certainly not mastered quickly. There are many tools available for striving to understand your team—personality assessments, IQ tests, and performance reviews, just to name a few. These include Clifton Strength Finder or the Myers Briggs’ personality assessment. However, I will share information from an assessment that I am familiar with that renders understanding of what makes you, you.

I prefer the Kolbe A Assessment for two reasons. One, it only measures a person’s strengths; and two, it focuses on the instincts that a person has. Hiring people is hard enough, but hiring the right people for the right position on a team is even more difficult. It’s important for me to know what strengths a person is bringing to the team once hired. We try to hire people based on their strengths and then put them in a position in the office where they get to use those strengths daily! Another way of thinking about instincts is ‘intuitive.’ If I can hire a person who naturally has a gift at doing the specific job, how much easier will it be for them to train, work, and adapt to changes in the position?

You see, your personality has changed over the years; what you liked at nine-years old and what you like today are most likely different. The things that motivated you at nine-years old and today are most likely different. But instinctually, what drove you as a child and what drives you today hasn’t changed. If you have a nine-year old boy or girl take the assessment and then have them take it at 19-years old, the results will be relatively the same.

There are three parts of the mind that we all use simultaneously, but only one is responsible for the driving force behind the way we do things. Those three parts are: affective, cognitive, and conative. You see, the first two can change over time. Affective, meaning—the personality or likes and dislikes. The second part is cognitive—that is demonstrated when you read an article such as this one and learn something new, go to school, and get a degree. Last, the conative side is your instincts. It’s what drives us all as individuals to do. In better words, it’s your Modus Operandi, or your preferred mode of operations.

A person’s conative aptitude can be broken down into four different modes of operation, or ways that a person prefers to act: fact finding, follow through, quick start, and implementor. Learning what mode of operation that a prospective employee tends toward will help a manager focus on a person’s strengths, instead of their inadequacies, and communicate more effectively with them. Here is what you need to know about each of the four action modes.

- Fact finders are exceptional at setting priorities, developing complex strategies and providing detailed information.
- Follow through people are amazing at developing plans, organizing information and materials, and bringing things to closure.
- Quick start individuals stive with experimenting, creating urgency and thrive under short intense deadlines.
- Implementors are remarkable at ensuring quality and durability, producing tangible solutions and experts with tools and equipment.

It’s vital to the employee’s success to understand what communication they prefer to receive when they begin training, receive a 90-day review, or even learn about surprise changes that commonly occur in all of our offices. Let’s say you go from using one certain software in your office, or selling one specific manufacturer, to another. Depending on which initiation action mode they are, they will want to hear and understand the reason behind the changes in different ways. Some will want all the details; others want the bullet points. Certain employees will...
want to understand the timeline, while others just want to put ‘hands on’ the new tool to better understand.

**HOW DO YOU DETERMINE THE RIGHT FIT**

Doesn’t it make sense that we should hire someone based on their instincts, knowing their preferred way of operating? Wouldn’t it be a perfect world if we knew exactly what type of instincts are needed for the position in the company AND we knew exactly what instincts the potential new employee had.

It would be like two magnets being pulled together or, the right fit employee. That is why utilizing an assessment that can help a business owner or manager identify which instinctual strengths would be a good fit for the position, is best. When a hiring manager knows what a good fit for the position looks like, then they can focus on having potential new hires take an assessment that identifies a candidate who is most likely to operate successfully within their business.

Ideally, you will have your expectations, core values, and responsibilities in the job ad; an interview lined up with someone who agrees with the company’s culture, paired with the instincts of the new person; and your right fit and analysis to tell you if this person will operate well inside the business. You have the ability to take all the questioning and fear out of your next hire, no need to doubt or question, “Is this person potentially a good fit for what I need them to do?”

It’s then your job to decide if you believe this person is coachable. Years ago, I learned a valuable lesson on the difference between a person being a learner versus being coachable. A person who is a learner has the ability and the desire to learn new information. A person who is coachable has the ability to take in new information and then make a change in their behavior. There is a huge difference, and your ability as a leader to establish the difference as quickly as possible in a relationship with a new employee is key to setting realistic expectations on an employee.

**How Do We Train?**

Regardless of what school you went to or how far you went in your education, I believe we all discovered at one point or another that we all learn differently. From kindergarten to high school and beyond we all prefer to receive information differently. Some of us want information documented and handed to us ahead of time so we can do our own discovery and preparation, others want the bullet point list. Do you like information put on a bar graph, printed in color and handed to you? Would you prefer to be shown in real time ‘hands on’ how to do something?

Once we finished with schooling, that need for preferred communication didn’t just go away. Granted, I wish all schools did a better job at teaching about the learning types, but I digress, that’s a conversation for another day.

In your practice, you are the teacher, and you have total control surrounding the subject. If you want an autonomous team that operates without you, then the better you can articulate what you want, the better they will be at doing just that. Giving your team the information that they need in the way they prefer will make them more coachable. You can cut your onboarding and training timeline

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down by 6-12 months by increasing the effectiveness of the training by communicating the information in the employee’s preferred way. You don’t need to tear down any foundational training or onboarding tools that you have currently; you just need to work on communicating the information in a more effective way.

**GOALS AND HABITS**
Knowing how to hire the right people and how to properly onboard them isn’t the end game. I don’t assume to know your goals, but I am assuming if you were a business owner you would in fact have goals. I would venture to guess that your goals would align with one of two principles: growth or freedom. If you agree, then you may also agree when I say that if you want growth or freedom out of the business, you are going to have to track your progress in order to know if your behavior and actions are getting you the results you desire to be where you want to be.

One of my favorite quotes of all time is: “People do not decide their futures, they decide their habits and their habits decide their futures.” — F.M. Alexander

One of the habits you need to develop is keeping score. People have fancy titles and advice when it comes to tracking numbers, KPI, lead indicators, lag indicators, metrics, index, etc. For me, simple is always best. Even if you aren’t a sports fan you can understand that if basketball, football, or soccer games didn’t keep score, games would be a lot less fun to watch. I like the word ‘scoreboard’ because it works for me. We look at our scorecard weekly to identify and discuss if we are ‘on track’ or ‘off track’ with our goals. You may already be doing this to some degree, which is amazing! Something that often gets overlooked by business owners is what we call peer-to-peer benchmarking. Are you measuring the best performer you have and the lowest performer?

Let’s say you have a telemarketer named Jennifer who has an appointment booking rate of 80%-amazing, right? You also have Lisa on your team and her booking rate is 20%. Knowing that information gives you the ability to make changes in the business that get you closer to your goals of growth or freedom. You have two choices; force Jennifer to get her booking rate up to 90% which would make a small change or, you go to Lisa and ask her some powerful questions, i.e., “What do you think Jennifer might be doing that you aren’t?” If you could switch Lisa’s booking rate from 20 to 50%, that is a massive shift in your company.

**Daily Continuous Improvement**
We have had great success improving our team’s overall communication skills with daily morning huddles with our staff. We begin each 15 minutes of our day following the same process. First, we watch a video testimonial from a patient to get us in touch with the empathetic side, or the ‘why’ we do our jobs. Then we role play or ‘practice’ one scenario from the office, at times, using commonly heard objections like:

- Why are your hearing aids so expensive?
- I need to go home and think about it.
- What’s the difference between you guys and Costco (or competitor)?
Morgan Hutchings, a Kolbe Certified Consultant and Strategic Communication Coach, is the catalyst behind building great teams for a growing list of private practices and companies. His specialties include strategic analysis, establishing and reinforcing core values, opening communication, and instilling discipline so your team can thrive while fulfilling your entrepreneurial vision. He is former Director of Operations for an Inc. 500/5000 Organization and has led America’s Highest Rated Hearing Healthcare Team.

Acting out these real-life conversational topics prepare us for how we do our jobs. This ensures that by the time our first patient shows up, we are ready for action.

The rest of the 15 minutes is spent game-planning the day. This is to ensure that no operational errors take place (to the best of our abilities). This may sound something like,

• “Don’t forget Suzanne is coming in today and she needs those custom ear molds fit.” Or,
• “Everyone be aware that today at 1 p.m. our provider will be visiting, so no patients can be booked.”

At the end of this morning session the team is calibrated and ready to take on the day. One thing we are very conscious of is we don’t spend time talking about what went wrong yesterday or what we WISH we could do better at. This time is used to motivate and calibrate the team so they are ready to give our patients their best selves.

We call it a ‘huddle’ for a reason. Just like in football you don’t spend time talking about the last play that didn’t work, or the fumble that happened last time. No, you call the play and get out there and do it. We have found a way to make this fun and enjoyable for the staff including music, dancing, donuts, coffee and even prizes. It’s a great chance to help every day start off on the right foot.

“Begin each day with a 15-minute morning huddle.”

USE THE TOOLS
I’d fully expect that if you have made it this far you would have learned at least one to two actionable items for your office that can ensure an awesome change. I want you to go forward using the tools you have at your disposal to make a change for your team to get you closer to your goals.

1. Know the why/how/what before you hire someone new.
2. Make sure you know the instincts of the person you are hiring so you know how to work with them effectively.
3. And lastly, hold them accountable to the numbers that matter most. Track the numbers and celebrate the wins as you make progress towards your goals of operational excellence through communication!

Source
IHS Continuing Education Test

Operational Excellence Through Communication, article on page 22.

1. Daily continuous improvement should include
   a. discussion of the previous day’s challenges.
   b. role play scenarios with each staff member individually.
   c. calibration of team by focusing on how you wish they would engage with clients.
   d. a 15-minute huddle each morning.
   e. all of the above.

2. Keeping score
   a. helps you achieve your goals.
   b. should involve peer-to-peer benchmarking.
   c. can take the form of KPI, lead indicator, or a team scoreboard.
   d. all of the above.
   e. none of the above.

3. People decide their futures, and then their futures decide their habits.
   a. true
   b. false

4. Helping the highest team performer achieve greater success typically has more impact than helping the lowest performer improve their success.
   a. true
   b. false

5. This person will have the best chance of making a change in their behavior.
   a. the highest performer
   b. a coachable person
   c. a person who is a learner
   d. the lowest performer
   e. none of the above

6. The best way to present information to trainees is
   a. through colorful graphs with easy bullet points.
   b. by showing them detailed, hands-on, live demonstrations.
   c. by discovering and implementing the way an individual learns best.
   d. none of the above.

7. The three parts of the mind that we use simultaneously are
   a. implementor, quick start, and follow through.
   b. affective cognitive, and conative.
   c. Kolbe, Clifton, and Myers Briggs.
   d. none of the above.

8. Fact Finder individuals typically
   a. are exceptional at ensuring quality and durability.
   b. thrive under short, high-pressure deadlines.
   c. excel at bringing tasks to closure.
   d. all of the above.
   e. none of the above.

9. If you have a child take a personality test at 9-years of age and then administer the test at 19-years of age the results will likely be the quite similar.
   a. true
   b. false

10. The following assessment focuses on an individual’s instincts and doesn’t measure their personality:
    a. Clifton Strength Finder.
    b. Myers Briggs.
    c. Kolbe A Assessment.
    d. none of the above.

For continuing education credit, complete this test and send the answer section to: professionaldevelopment@ihsinfo.org or International Hearing Society, 33900 W. 8 Mile Road, Suite 101, Farmington, MI 48335

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