PERSONNEL

Hired Help

If you’re thinking about adding staff, you already need it. Here’s how to start.

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One of the biggest obstacles we face is knowing if and when we should hire an assistant. The questions on most agents’ minds are: “Can I afford to do so?” And, “If I do hire someone, how much should I pay him?” The truth is that if you’re thinking about hiring someone, you’re ready.

Based on my experience, you should hire an assistant as early in your career as you possibly can. Trying to save money by not hiring someone will only backfire in the long run. I recommend hiring the best assistant you can afford, so that you don’t fall into the trap of replacing a key employee every year. Remember, you get what you pay for.

Use your assistant wisely
Delegation is the key to making the most out of having an assistant. But how do you know what you should be delegating? To find out, ask yourself this question, “Is this the most effective use of my time, or can I pay someone less to do what I am doing?”

Quick Tip
Silverman’s client appointments take place almost exclusively in his office. “Remember, the home team always has the advantage. I once asked the late, great John Savage, ‘How do you get people to come into your office?’ John’s answer was simple: ‘Just ask them,’” says Silverman.

Let’s take the example of filling out applications. To figure out if you should delegate this task, first look at what your hourly rate is. Say your practice’s gross income is $100,000 a year. Assuming you work 2,000 hours a year, your time is worth $50 an hour. If you can pay someone $20 an hour to fill out applications, why would you spend $50 an hour trying to do it yourself? By having an effective administrative assistant complete your applications and take care of all the details that you are probably not good at, you can move your practice to the next level.

Think support
In addition to delegating what you know others can do for you, you should take a look at what you think only you can do—you may be in for a surprise. In my case, one of the smartest things I did was to hire a support staff person to make all my appointments. I used to think I was the only one who could make appointments; I was sadly mistaken. I found out there are people far better at making appointments than you are, but there are not too many people better at making sales. So, I stick with sales.

This one support person is responsible for setting up all the appointments for the two salespeople in our office. We see approximately 20 people a week. The benefits are great: I no longer worry about making phone calls to set up appointments, I have more free time and our appointment book is filled.

Having support staff also allows me to take better advantage of my vacation time. In the past, I would typically be “out of work” for three weeks when I took a one-week vacation. The week before I left I was mentally on vacation; the next week I was truly on vacation, and then it took me a week after getting back to fill my appointment book. This doesn’t happen any longer because I have someone making appointments for me.

I have an old friend in the business, Seemore Sellmore. The more people you see, the more people you’ll do business with. Hiring good staff will make all the difference in the world and will enable you to get to the next level.

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