



remarks

A Ten-Step Plan for Finding a Great Position

Devote some time and work hard at finding the best position to start your career. You've invested a lot in your training; invest in finding the best possible first job.

BY BRETT WALKER



If you are completing a residency or fellowship in the summer of 2004 and have not started your job search, now is the time. You might be thinking, "I know I need to get my search started, but there just is so little time." My advice: block out some time during the week to devote to your job search. For example, in dealing with recruiters who call, page, and e-mail you, just set a time during the morning or afternoon when you will make yourself available to chat. To make sure you devote adequate time to one of the most important decisions you'll ever make, set the time in your PDA.

You might be thinking this is not really necessary. After all, you believe you have a pretty good idea of the type of practice

opportunity you are seeking. You probably do—until you actually make a few site visits and interviews and see a whole new world appear right before your eyes. We have all heard the term, "Perception is not reality." This applies when searching for the ideal fit and practice opportunity that will best match your style as well as personal and professional needs. After recruiting physicians for over ten years, I

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see the same pitfalls year after year: candidates who do not have their ducks in a row or a well thought-out strategy for finding the right opportunity. Follow the ten steps below to get your plan in order.

10 Steps to finding the right practice opportunity:

1. BLOCK OUT DEDICATED TIME EACH WEEK FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH.

This can be in the morning, lunch hour, afternoon, or evening. Spend one or two hours each week to:

- View opportunities on line.
- Read direct mail letters.
- Browse ads in medical journals.
- Return calls and e-mails to in-house recruiters and search firms.
- Network with other residents and fellows in your program.
- Look up some of your previous colleagues who finished training the previous year and see how they are doing: Are they happy?

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What advice can they give you about your job search? Learn from those who just went through the same process you are going through now.

2. COMPLETE YOUR CV AND OBTAIN THREE LETTERS OF REFERENCE.

It is very important to complete your CV prior to starting your job search. In fact, most recruiters won't even share much about the opportunities that are available until they review your CV. Having your CV completed along with three letters of reference demonstrates that you are a serious job seeker.

3. DECIDE WHICH FACTORS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND RANK THEM IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE.

You'll need to think about your personal as well as professional objectives. What are your hobbies? What are your interests outside of medicine? What family needs should you consider? Developing this list will help set your priorities and provide some much needed order to the complex task of finding an opportunity that is right for you.

Some of the most popular factors are:

- Location
- Size of community
- Climate
- Educational Opportunities
- Call schedule
- Income potential
- Quality of colleagues
- Type of practice: single or multi-specialty, employed, academic affiliation, group size

4. DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

For whichever state or region you choose to practice, learn the medical climate. Inquire about:

- Malpractice rates
- HMO presence
- Fee for service
- Supply/demand analysis
- Understand the competition

- History of the group and local hospitals
- Physician turnover rates
- Cost of living

5. GO ON AT LEAST FIVE TO SEVEN SITE VISITS OR INTERVIEWS.

Even if your first two choices seem like the "perfect fit" and you receive offers, do yourself a favor and plan at least three more visits. You may learn it just keeps getting better or it may help confirm that your first two choices were indeed good options for you.

6. DEVELOP A PRO/CON LIST FOR EACH OPPORTUNITY TO HELP NARROW YOUR OPTIONS.

This process can be very helpful in seeing the big picture. Make a list of the

PROS	CONS
1. Established group	1. Average public schools with limited private options
2. Growing community	2. Five-hour drive to nearest family members or relatives
3. Competitive income guarantee	3. Limited cultural activities
4. High quality colleagues	4. Climate
5. Good payer mix	5. Limited job opportunities for spouse

top five things that are most attractive about the opportunity. Make a similar list of the cons, or negative aspects from your perspective. For example:

Using this type of evaluation system and relating it back to step 3 (where you decided which factors are most important to you and ranked them in order) will help you determine the right opportunity for you.

7. MAKE SECOND VISITS TO THE TWO FINALISTS.

Prior to arranging your second visit you should work with the local recruiter in tailoring the visit around the things you want to see and do. During the second

visit, decide if you can call this place home for many years to come. Look at the location in terms of your personal interests and family considerations.

8. REVIEW THE OFFER AND CONTRACT AND NEGOTIATE APPROPRIATELY.

Don't be afraid to ask for things—within reason. Why not? You are a physician and have worked very hard to get to this point in your career. It never hurts to ask for more money, vacation, CME, loan repayment, shorter partnership track, or a sign-on bonus. After all, in most cases the ball is in your hands.

9. HAVE A LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE REVIEW YOUR CONTRACT OFFER.

It is very important that you have an attorney represent you during the negotiation process. More importantly, be sure to have a professional review the entire contract before signing it.

10. SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE AND YOUR JOURNEY WILL SOON BEGIN.

If you follow these ten steps, your job search will be less hectic and more enjoyable. Keep an open mind and have fun. There is a shortage of physicians throughout the U.S. and, in most instances, you're in a position to call the shots. Your skills are in demand so don't settle for the average opportunity. Invest the time and trust your instincts. You have worked hard and made countless sacrifices to be a physician. Hopefully, you will put just as much effort into finding the perfect match for your career as you did in training to become a doctor. If you do, the rewards will follow. ■

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