

# Finding and Developing Qualified Imaging Service Professionals

Manny Roman

**Y**es, there does appear to be a real shortage of diagnostic imaging service professionals. The cause could be a demand increase due to the multivendor environment or a supply decrease due to retirement or an exodus to the information technology field. Or it could be that the biomedical service profession, where many imaging professionals come from, is not getting the influx of people from the colleges like it used to.

We do know this: The average age of the medical equipment service professional is increasing and the shortage is getting worse. So what are you to do to find, attract, and retain quality imaging service professionals to your organization? Well, if it were easy, you would probably not be reading this.

Your decision is the classic “make or buy” decision. Do you build your own professionals with the attendant costs of recruiting, selecting, training, etc. or do you just find, attract, and pay for experience? Everyone is looking for a professional with three to five years of experience. Why this particular number? Probably because if they survived for three to five years they have the soft skills and hard skills and are still relatively cheap, uh, I mean affordable.

What can you do? First, have a well-defined job description delineating exactly what your expectations are. This will allow you to recognize the ideal individual when

you see him or her. The description should include the soft, people skills you expect as well as the hard, equipment skills. Do you want a Certified Radiology Equipment Specialist (CRES)? There are only 397 of us available. Scratch that, 396. I’m already taken.

There are numerous headhunters, I mean recruiters, I mean career consultants, eager to move people from one job to another who will provide you with candidates to interview. The fees are normally a pretty high percentage of the individual’s first-year salary. So you either pay low or have a higher cost for the first year when you are still evaluating the individual. Of concern is how long the individual will stay before being recruited away. In order to get an experienced person, you must take him or her away from your friend down the road. In turn he or she takes someone from some other manager, and the emptiness moves along like the hole theory in semiconductors.

Whenever you hire someone with experience, you should ascertain their reasons for leaving the current position. If you will be providing the same reason, you know what will happen in a short time. Check references and ask the references for references. It is not wise to provide a reference without talking to the individual to ensure a good recommendation. But the reference can provide someone else who may shed a different light on the individual.

## Check Points

A well-developed job description is key to a successful search. Be sure to include:

- ✓ Hard skills
- ✓ Soft skills
- ✓ Certification requirements

Make sure that the individual has actual growth experience. Three years of doing the same thing is really only one year’s experience times three. When a candidate lists all the equipment he or she has worked on, does it mean that they have seen it once or have they really worked on it?

## Training vs. Education

Education and training are not the same thing. Education is broad based while training is very specific. What true capabilities does the individual have? Check to ensure that candidates really did attend trainings. We have had instances where individuals did not attend courses that they listed on resumes.

If you decide that you want to “make” the service professional, ensure that you choose a motivated, eager individual with a good electronics foundation. You will spend good money for training but you will be able to mold the individual to your objectives and constraints more easily. Have realistic expectations. Sending someone to fundamentals training is not going to make a cardiac cath lab specialist overnight. Don’t

send the individual to all the training at once. This allows you both to see if it is going to work out. Make sure that you look at the curriculum outline and verify that the training organization provides exactly that training.

Well, let's say that you have lucked out and either bought or made a quality diagnostic imaging service professional. What you have is a target for your buddy in the organization down the block or across the country. How do you keep the person you've invested in?

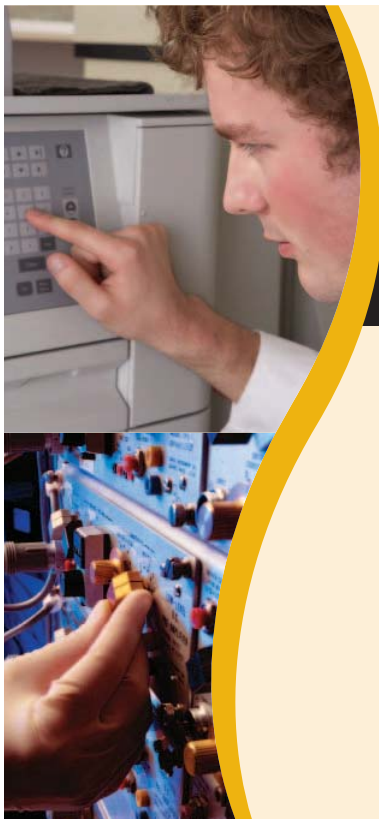
You can hide him away in the basement and only allow escorted trips to service calls. Or you can provide job enrichment. I said enrichment, not enlargement. Giving him more to do is not the same thing as making him feel enriched by what he does where he does it.

Ensure that the salary is on par with, or maybe more than, others get in the profession. Can you provide value with unscheduled bonuses, days off, department picnics, pizzas, etc.? Things that let your employee and the others in the department know that as a manager, you care for more than just the bottom line and that you personally appreciate what they do. Can you have a customer appreciation day where you let customers know how great your people are?

If the individual desires a career path, can you provide a clear and achievable path for him or her? If you take care of people, they are not going to get recruited away very easily. Take a chance on them getting recruited away by letting them participate in local, regional, and national conferences where they can enhance their professionalism. Encourage them to present a session on what they learned from attendance.

Provide frequent informal and formal performance reviews that are not tied to salary. Make them an objectives-setting evaluation where the individuals have an input to not only the objectives but also the path to achieving them. People work much more efficiently if they have a sense of ownership, and urgency, of their daily lives. Give individuals the opportunity to show you how good they are, and they will show you. By the way, if they just want to be the best at what they do, no aspirations to management, isn't that what you wanted? Let them be that. If you want to replace yourself, then that is a different article. ■

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Others who manage healthcare technology

