



# New Prescription

The value proposition for healthcare recruitment outsourcing rises with hiring complexity.

By Katie Molloy

The growing complexity in recruiting high-quality healthcare clinicians is driving hospitals and health systems to engage in recruitment process outsourcing (RPO). Approximately half of all expenditures by healthcare systems are spent on staffing. The caliber and quality of clinicians are critical—sometimes a matter of life and death. In the past, healthcare facility leaders didn't feel that they could trust such a responsibility to third-party recruitment firms. That is changing.

An historic transformation has begun in healthcare. Enormous changes from healthcare reform created mounting pressure on healthcare systems to reduce costs while, at the same time, raising quality, accountability, and patient satisfaction. Additional new challenges have led to a perfect storm of fundamental change for the healthcare industry:

- Significant shortages of physicians and clinicians
- An aging population requiring more care

- Growing marketplace demands for improved quality at reduced costs
- Radical changes in reimbursement and compensation formulas
- A health information technology revolution
- Ever-increasing complexity of medical treatments

Just as hospitals focus and develop their expertise in providing affordable quality patient care, RPO providers have honed their expertise in rapidly delivering high-quality hires. Maintaining focus on patient care takes so much attention that more and more healthcare system leaders are seeking expert partners to undertake the specialized process of clinical recruitment. At AMN Healthcare RPO, expert teams use advanced recruitment methods that most hospitals don't have the resources or capacity to create.

#### Digital Recruitment

Demand for high-quality clinicians is significant, and the hiring needs of many healthcare facilities are extremely specialized. Placing ads using online job boards isn't enough to produce an adequate number of quality candidates. Effective social media and other online outreach are essential. But with resources focused on patient care, many hospitals aren't able to keep up with the rapidly-changing world of recruitment through digital media.

During the past 28 years, AMN has developed the nation's largest network of qualified physicians, nurses, and allied professionals. To bolster this network, social media recruiting has been added through investment in a major digital initiative, helping the organization become the industry leader in reaching clinicians through social media and a variety of other online recruitment strategies. Getting in touch with each type of clinician—physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals—requires a unique social media/online strategy. In addition, social media constantly changes; keeping up with the pace of change and creating new recruitment strategies to take advantage of the latest trends requires focus and know-how.

In the highly competitive patient-care marketplace, healthcare systems must spend most of their marketing dollars attracting patients to their facilities. But RPO experts focus on attracting clinicians and non-clinical support. That makes partnerships between healthcare providers and social media/online recruiting experts a natural fit.

#### Case Study: CHRISTUS Health

Often, the need for RPO stems from pressures caused by recruitment capacity that hasn't kept pace with growth and the

specialized needs of an increasingly complex industry. In addition to filling open positions, hospitals might need to increase the experience level, technological know-how, or education of their nursing or allied workforce—or find staff to fit in with the company's culture. In such cases, RPO isn't a short-term fix but instead is a strategic move integrated into the hospital's long-range objectives.

A good example is the recent RPO partnership with CHRISTUS Health. The initial challenge for CHRISTUS Health was to help its recruitment team catch up with a backlog of open positions through a contract to fill 75 permanent RN positions in 12 months. CHRISTUS also wanted to raise the experience level and quality of its nursing staff, while at the same time finding candidates who embodied the core values of its faith-based health system.

"The AMN RPO team went above and beyond to learn about our system and really made an effort to understand what the managers were looking for," said Nina Campos, HR generalist. "AMN was fully committed, and they delivered on what they promised."

The result of the partnership was that the RPO tripled the experience level among nurse hires and completed the projected hiring volume five months early. The caliber of candidates was so good that CHRISTUS Health requested AMN continue filling positions. The partnership ultimately filled a total of 128 RN positions during the first 12 months. Before the partnership, nurses at the flagship CHRISTUS hospital averaged five years of experience. AMN hires averaged 15 years.

The partnership accelerated the process of recruiting and placing high-quality candidates in open positions, reducing the time to fill for RN hires. After the initial one-year term, CHRISTUS continued the partnership.

A seminal study by the research firm Aberdeen Group concluded with a few key points for a successful RPO program including: finding a trusted partner, identifying and measuring key performance indicators, and choosing an RPO provider with a deep domain expertise in healthcare. The CHRISTUS engagement certainly met all three.

Opportunities for RPO in healthcare are blossoming as hospital and health system managers must focus so much of their attention on coping with the dramatic changes in the healthcare industry. RPO is no longer an ancillary service, but rather a strategic initiative toward achieving today's critical healthcare objectives.

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