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Recruiting for the compliance office in a tight market

by Cheryl Gilbert, CIPP/US, CIPM, CCEP

The last couple of years had seen employment in healthcare sputter to serious lows during “the great resignation” when one in five healthcare workers left their jobs^[1] and then skyrocketing employment growth, increasing by over 400%.^[2] Healthcare compliance departments have not been impervious to these staffing pendulum swings and face recruitment challenges in an ever-changing market. Traditional pipelines for talent are not as robust as in the past. A recent survey by Gartner found that 46% of human resources (HR) leaders surveyed listed recruitment as one of their top five priorities for 2023, and 50% expect increased competition for talent.^[3] Rethinking your recruitment strategies can give you an edge in growing your pipeline of qualified compliance candidates.

Recruit yourself as a recruiter

Given the growth in healthcare hiring, your open compliance position may be one of many your HR department is working to fill. Further, there may be nuances to your opening that require time and understanding. For example, does the recruiter know what the alphabet soup of all those certification acronyms actually means (CHC, CCEP, CHPC, CIPP, CFE, etc.) in the context of your position? Do they understand that not all compliance experience is the same, e.g., healthcare compliance versus financial compliance? While you want to ideally see an array of candidates, you want to make sure they are *qualified* candidates to avoid wasting time—yours, your organization’s HR staff, and the candidates. How can you facilitate this?

To foster communication and collaboration with your HR department, if you plan on handling recruitment tasks normally managed by them, you should have an initial conversation to explain what you want to accomplish and how it will benefit your department, their department, and the organization. Schedule weekly status calls with them so all stakeholders can stay on track and have a specific regular time to get questions answered.

Listing for success

The starting point is your job listing. Is it recycled from a previous job listing? Is it based on a generic organizational template? Was it written by a compliance professional who understood the qualifications being sought? Does it need to change because the role has evolved? Objectively but thoroughly review the job listing before it is posted. Is it consistent with the current written job description for that role? Does it accurately describe the day-to-day tasks and qualifications of the ideal candidate? Is it written in an appealing way that would attract qualified candidates? Is it comprehensible?

If you are continuously recruiting for the same role and find you are not hearing from qualified candidates, there

is a good chance your job listing needs to be updated. Job descriptions too broad or too narrow (seeking that nonexistent “unicorn” with a too-broad skill set that may not exist) may deter applicants. List the essentials and appeal to candidates by stating how an employee can grow into a role. Check out other job listings, such as those on the Health Care Compliance Association (HCCA) job board, for example.^[4]

Quality time with your recruiter

If using a third-party recruitment site such as Indeed or ZipRecruiter, ask your HR department if you can be the point person for receiving and reviewing the submitted resumes. By doing this initial screening yourself, you can assess if the job listing is on target and expedite the screening process.

If using an internal or external recruiter, speak to the recruiter directly. Make sure they understand the skill set and candidate profile you are seeking and respond to their questions. Follow up with them regularly, so they remember you and your listing does not get put aside. If they refer candidates to you, give feedback on why or why not they are being considered.

Screen and track

Take it to the next step: when you have identified candidates of interest, do the initial screening call yourself. Keep a file, chart, or spreadsheet that lists who you interviewed, when, impressions, and action items. If you think you have considered a candidate before, your spreadsheet should have those details.

Leverage your network

What’s the net-net on networking? Estimates contend that the majority (70%–85%) of all jobs are filled via networking.^[5] This means you should not solely rely on traditional means to bring you candidates; you need to tap into your own network to create a rich pipeline of prospects.

Start with the low-hanging fruit. Confirm that your listing is posted on your organization’s internal and external job board(s). Tell your colleagues you’re hiring and ask if they know anyone suitable. There is a return on investment on being the town crier for your open position: according to Jobvite, 7% of applicants are employee referrals, but 40% of those referrals are hired.^[6]

Help your job listing go viral. Consider these resources for posting your listing:

- **Peer networks and professional associations.** Many have job banks, message boards, or LinkedIn pages, including HCCA. For example, here in southern Connecticut there is a local chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel with an active compliance group (with lawyers and non-lawyers) that frequently circulates job openings. Investigate your state or local hospital association to see if they sponsor a job board or have an active compliance group. Check out your state or local bar associations for compliance sections. Consider the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics (SCCE), which has a job board and a social network called SCCEnet (with discussion boards including regional boards).
- **Networking groups.** They thrive on putting people together. Many have memberships based on referrals. Ask your peers and colleagues about groups they may belong to or know about, or search for them on the web. They may not be a group made up of compliance professionals such as those in your peer networks, but they may know people who know compliance people.
- **Colleges and universities.** They are committed to ethics and compliance education; they may offer degrees or certifications in disciplines related to your job opening and can be a source of potential candidates for

your pipeline. For instance, a local college in southwest Connecticut offers a graduate Master of Legal Studies degree with an emphasis on corporate and healthcare compliance. Check out HCCA's list of universities participating in the Compliance Certification Board Accrediting Program.^[7]

- **LinkedIn.** Not only should you ask to feature your job listing on your organization's LinkedIn page (add the language: "We're hiring!" or "Work on a great team!" to make it irresistible), but you should post the listing (copy the link from your organization's external job board) on your own page and ask your contacts to share it. Leverage that network! If each of your LinkedIn contacts has, for example, 150 contacts, 100 of your contacts reaching out to 150 of their contacts equals 15,000 contacts! Chances are candidates are more likely to click on a job opening if they see it coming from someone in their network.
- **Outplacement offices or other job seeker or career transition networks.** Outplacement companies, such as Lee Hecht Harrison and Keystone, may have an office in your region and may be willing to post your listing in their office, to be seen by local job seekers you may not reach otherwise.
- **Localstate labor department or unemployment office.** Each may have a job bank for you to post your listing or a resume bank with resumes posted by those looking for jobs that can be searched by keyword.

The return on your time investment

You may question whether the yield from tapping into some, or all, of these resources will be a "juice that's worth the squeeze," but to put it in context, you only need to find one suitable candidate to hire for your opening. The more your listing is out there, the more likely you are to find that one person.

Plan B: Widen the net

What happens if you've spiffed up your job listing, sent it to multiple outlets, and you still have not found talent with the background you seek? This is when you should start thinking outside the box.

If you are not attracting applicants with the background you want, be open to at least screening or interviewing candidates with the skill set you seek. For instance, you may desire candidates skilled in program management, personnel management, prior work in healthcare, investigations, billing, or coding but find they have no experience working in a dedicated compliance role. Those skills honed in other jobs can be useful in your department.

If you are seeking candidates with experience in multiple disciplines, such as compliance, privacy, law, and/or revenue cycle, identify which experience is the priority for the role and which skills can be learned on the job. Widen your search to seek out candidates with skills in those priority areas. They could come from other areas in healthcare with exposure to the compliance function, such as quality, risk management, regulatory, or operations. Or they could come from a compliance role, not in healthcare. Once you are open to considering candidates who want to transition into healthcare compliance, you may find highly motivated candidates whose skills can be leveraged in your department and bring a new perspective to the role.

Sorting it out

What happens when you find quality talent, but they are not suitable for your open role or would be ideal in a higher-level role? Pay it forward and recommend that candidate to your colleagues who have appropriate openings.

Use your gut instinct. If a candidate has a good resume but something does not feel right, don't be hesitant to move on. For example, suppose a candidate has a stellar resume but forgets or doesn't show up for an

appointment with you, or lives 3,000 miles away and has no intention of moving to your area (for a nonremote position), then it's safe to assume that candidate will not be a good fit.

Refer to your spreadsheet to track applicants. Sometimes candidates apply multiple times for the same role, or there is an applicant you may want to reconsider.

Tie up loose ends

After you have found that suitable candidate and the job offer has been made and accepted, be courteous to the talent who took the time to apply for your opening and participate in a phone screening or interview. Let them know that you will not be going forward with their application. They will appreciate this gesture, and you will leave a positive impression about yourself and your organization.

Takeaways

- A more active role in recruiting for your open position can help you quickly target suitable candidates.
- A comprehensible and appealing job listing is the backbone of finding qualified talent.
- Leverage your network to get the word out about your open position to create a pipeline of prospective candidates.
- Consider candidates with the appropriate skill set versus compliance department experience.
- Track the applicants that you screen and interview to avoid duplicate efforts.
- Keep your human resources department in the loop.

1 Ed Yong, "Why Health-Care Workers are Quitting in Droves," *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/11/the-mass-exodus-of-americas-health-care-workers/620713/>.

2 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation Summary," news release, December 2, 2022, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nro.htm>.

3 Gartner, "Top 5 Priorities for HR Leaders in 2023," accessed December 7, 2022, <https://emtemp.gcom.cloud/ngw/globalassets/en/human-resources/documents/trends/hr-top-priorities-2023-ebook.pdf>.

4 Health Care Compliance Association, "Job Board," accessed December 7, 2022, <https://www.hcca-info.org/all-jobs>.

5 Gina Belli, "How Many Jobs Are Found Through Networking, Really?" PayScale, April 6, 2017, <https://www.payscale.com/career-advice/many-jobs-found-networking/>.

6 Laurence Hebbard, "Why Employee Referrals are the Best Source of Hire," Undercover Recruiter, accessed December 7, 2022, <https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/infographic-employee-referrals-hire/>.

7 Health Care Compliance Association, "CCB Accredited University Compliance and Ethics Programs," accessed December 7, 2022, <https://www.hcca-info.org/university-program>.

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