



A Job Hunting We Will Go

BY GENEVIÈVE M. CLAVREUL RN, PHD

THE JOKE BELOW HAS BEEN KICKING around the internet for quite some time now and can be found in many versions, but all share the same sentiment.

A nurse died and was given the choice of Heaven or Hell. She tried Heaven first. It was nice, but a little dull and routine. So she decided to try Hell. Everyone there was so enthusiastic and happy to meet her—they all called her by name and greeted her with a smile. All the inhabitants, including a number of nurses, couldn't say enough about how great Hell was and how much they hoped she'd join them.

So she picked Hell.

When she showed up the next day, things were totally different. Everyone was rude, had

a nasty attitude, or did not acknowledge her. Morale was terrible, and everyone seemed resentful and angry.

She approached another nurse and asked, "Yesterday, everything was great—today this place is awful. What happened?"

The other nurse replied, "Honey, yesterday they were recruiting you—today, you're staff."

ODDLY ENOUGH, there is a kernel of truth in this sarcastic joke—often times, nurses find the job and work environment not quite the picture perfect image presented to them when they were being recruited. The question is, can a nurse who is job hunting read the subtle and not so subtle clues that the prospective employ-

Sometimes the job and work environment are not quite the picture perfect image presented during recruitment.

er is telegraphing during the interview process, and use this information to assist him/her in making a more informed decision prior to signing on the proverbial bottom line?

Today there are several avenues to find employment for the typical floor nurse: recruitment fairs, hospital open houses, recruitment during a travel or registry assignment, answering an advertisement, word of mouth recommendation, and of course, a career opportunities publication or website such as *Working Nurse*. Each pathway has its pros and cons, depending on the one that the job hunter is most comfortable using. Here are my thoughts on some of these approaches to finding a good job.

1) The word of mouth recommendation. This option is particularly useful if you have already done a great deal of research and have narrowed down your choices. A recommendation from a trusted friend whose opinion you value can definitely help you make the final decision. On the other hand, it may concern a friend to make such a recommendation. If the job doesn't work out, the relationship may suffer. Remember that what your friend likes or dislikes about a work environment might not closely mirror your own likes and dislikes.

2) Recruitment from a travel or registry assignment is a very effective way to learn what you might be getting yourself into before taking that final step into permanent staff status. I know many nurses who have successfully used this option. The advantage is that you get to know your potential coworkers, and can observe how the team interacts with each other, and with management. When you are a registry or travel nurse, you may feel a sense of pride at an offer to join the permanent team. However, make sure that this really is the fit you are looking for.

So what to do if you are asked to consider a staff position? First, be aware that you might not be able to jump ship; some agencies have a clause in their contract that requires the hospital to pay a buy-out or finder's fee for your contract. If this is the case, make sure to honor it.

Second, make sure that you are given the complete orientation that any new hire would get. Just because you have already worked there, don't assume that you have been fully vetted and made aware of all the policy, procedures and protocols. Third, realize that although you may be giving up a pay rate that appears higher on the front end, when weighed against the

permanence of a paid staff position, with all its related incentives and benefits, it will most likely balance out.

3) The nursing job fair has become quite the event over the past several years, offering the opportunity to apply to numerous hospitals and other healthcare employers at one time. Additionally, the booths are staffed with individuals familiar with the hospital and well supplied with informational brochures, handouts and employment applications.

While a nursing job fair has many advantages, there is, of course, a downside. For example, attendees and exhibitors alike can get overwhelmed by the number of people milling about and this can have a distracting effect. Often times, the exhibitor is from the hospital's recruitment office and may provide a wealth of information. However, it's my personal bias that the recruiter should also be a RN. So be sure that you take in account the environment and all its assorted distractions when you "work" the job fair.

NOW BACK TO THE JOKE that I shared with you at the beginning of my column, about the new hire who finds the job different than presented during the time she/he interviewed. The key is to be astute in evaluating your potential employer. After you get back from the interview, take a moment and have a postmortem with a friend whose opinions you value. Review what was discussed during your interview, what you observed at the facility, and what your advanced research has revealed.

Your best defense is to be an informed job hunter and then jump in with eyes wide open. **WN**



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