

# Level the Playing Field: Partner with Staffing Experts

by Gina Saunders

We constantly hear that corporate dentistry is about the numbers—not the patients. I think this is where private practice has an outstanding advantage over corporate organizations, if practices use their resources effectively. But one of a practice's most valuable resources is time, and locating team members is time-consuming. Hiring staff can take the orthodontist's or the office manager's focus away from patient care, production and the scheduling of new patients.

## Keeping up with corporate

When it comes to recruiting, we have found that the most successful offices partner with staffing companies when they need to locate qualified applicants for their teams. When office managers and/or orthodontists have to write and run ads, review all the résumés, call potential applicants, screen them on the phone, schedule them for an interview, conduct the interview (if the applicant shows up), call on references, do background checks and call the applicant back for an observation day, the dollars and time spent don't take long to add up—and also dollars lost from the missed opportunities with patients.

Patients want to feel that they are special when calling your office for the first time and while they are guests within your practice. Corporate dentistry has internal HR, so their orthodontists and staff can concentrate just on production. However, if your private practice chooses to use an outside expert for recruiting, you can generate more dollars and have the time and energy to pull out the red carpet for valued patients. This is how you can outshine your competitors.

## Going above and beyond

To fully benefit your practice, select an agency that goes above and beyond to find the right personality fit. Having a well-oiled team working together to service the patient reduces conflict and generates income. Having that right mix of skills and personality means the patients will look forward to their appointments—and they'll be talking about your practice to their families, friends and associates. Good vibes travel! But how do you find that fit?

At Desert Dental Staffing, we recommend using a profile system to identify a good personality fit for your environment. We ask you a series of questions in your practice's initial intake interview. This gives us (and you) an idea of what is important to you, how you like to work, what motivates you, and your style of management.

Reliable profile systems have historically proven to be an effective means of identifying the employees who will make successful long-term team members for your specific practice. And by meeting this need, we have been able to form long-lasting relationships with our practices. Our goal for our clients? That all they have to say is, "You know what we need." How great and comforting is that?

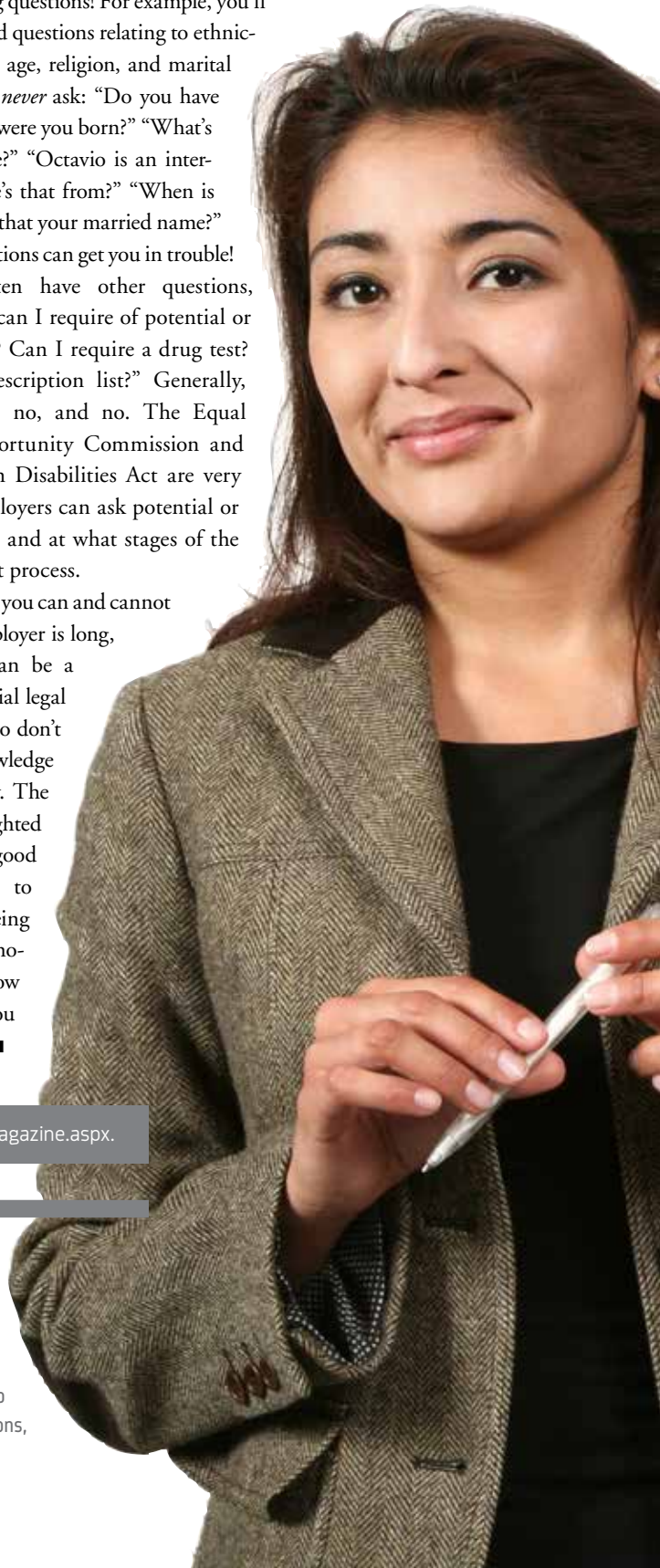
## And taking it a step further

Also, over the years more than a few of you have asked us questions about internal HR issues that come up in the course of hiring, retaining, compensating or terminating employees. These issues are always complicated by the fact that the field of human resources is not just about people. It also requires us, as employers, to understand and follow state and federal employment laws.

For example, let's examine briefly what you can and cannot ask when interviewing new hires—you can set yourself up for a lawsuit just by asking the wrong questions! For example, you'll always want to avoid questions relating to ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, and marital status. You should *never* ask: "Do you have children?" "Where were you born?" "What's your spouse's name?" "Octavio is an interesting name, where's that from?" "When is your birthday?" "Is that your married name?" These types of questions can get you in trouble!

Employers often have other questions, such as, "So what can I require of potential or current employees? Can I require a drug test? Alcohol test? Prescription list?" Generally, the answer is no, no, and no. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the American with Disabilities Act are very strict on what employers can ask potential or current employees, and at what stages of the hiring/employment process.

The list of what you can and cannot do or say as an employer is long, and the process can be a minefield of potential legal trouble to those who don't have a solid knowledge of employment law. The issues we highlighted here are just a few good reasons for you to concentrate on being an expert in orthodontics ... and allow an agency to help you recruit your team. ■



How do you handle staffing challenges? Comment at [Orthotown.com/magazine.aspx](http://Orthotown.com/magazine.aspx).

## Author Bio



**Gina Saunders** has 28 years of experience managing practices, sales and dental staffing. She has a degree in business from Western Michigan University and is a certified DiSC coach. She also has written articles advising practices about staffing. Saunders serves as a program advisor at the Cass School of Dental Assisting, and Phoenix College, both in Phoenix. She helps students design résumés, in addition to refining their presentation, communication and interview skills. If you have questions, call Desert Dental Staffing at (602) 840-4703.