



ONBOARDING

The REAL reason why many healthcare companies
are still short of healthcare staff

Do you want to genuinely solve your talent shortage challenges? If the answer's yes, as much focus needs to be directed at securing that talent, as it does on finding it. To achieve this, you need to strive for a best-in-class onboarding process that is fit for purpose in today's talent market.

We've never known a more challenging time for healthcare staffing and recruitment. Right now, we've got the exodus of the 'baby-boom' generation from the industry, the end of European free movement, the lasting impact of the pandemic, a media frenzy surrounding NHS pay, and the rapidly developing impact of technology and AI. That's a lot to contend with all at once!

And yet, some healthcare businesses are successfully navigating all of these challenges. We've seen a small percentage of businesses, ranging from 1-site services, right through to national 100+ site businesses, operating on a higher plane than the rest. What are these businesses doing differently to the majority? The full truth is that they are doing lots of things differently. But the biggest differentiator is their onboarding process. That's what's driving their success above all else.

What we're saying then, is that the talent availability isn't the issue. With the right investment into marketing, employer branding, and recruitment services (whether that be internal or external), conversations are there to be had. It's securing that talent into the business that is the real challenge.

We hear a lot about the talent shortage within healthcare. What we're saying is "What shortage?" **The businesses that are succeeding aren't having more conversations with target candidates. They are just doing a**

great job of converting those conversations into successful hires.

Narrowing it even further, we can see from our data that it's not necessarily the offer stage that is problematic. Comparing the accepted offers between the most and least successful recruitment function, they aren't all that dissimilar. It's after the offer is accepted that we see a real difference in performance and results. This is the bit that separates the industry more than any other, when looking at a business's ability to secure the talent it needs. Often, healthcare job seekers end up following the path of least resistance. They will likely have more than one offer. If one takes too long or is too labour intensive, they will naturally flow down the other prong of the fork. It's worth asking yourself; Which prong of the fork are you?

We see both great examples and poor examples of the onboarding function. This guide is here to help you understand what best practice looks like in the industry right now. We'll also highlight some of the pitfalls to avoid and challenge the pre-determined belief that this is "just how it's done" in our industry. Its time to mix it up and think differently about your onboarding processes, because they are absolutely crucial.

Let's get cracking!

Documentation

Best practice in the sector right now is this: **Ask ALL interviewees to bring their documentation with them to the interview.** Without fail. Make it clear to your recruiting manager exactly what documents you require for your onboarding checks, and that all interviewees are expected to have them with them at the interview.

Make sure that copies are taken at the very first stage of interviews. This speeds up the process significantly, avoids associated delays, and is much slicker for your target employee too. They save an extra trip, for a start. How long will it be before they can find some spare time again, just to take their documents in? If the interview leads to an accepted offer, you're ready to go with the DBS, right to work and so on.

Whilst looking at your standard administrative onboarding function, make sure that this is the default process. Just as important is that they **don't delay on submitting these checks. Remember, you're in a race.** Don't be in the category of healthcare businesses that are victim to drop-outs, and be left wondering why that person has decided to go elsewhere. You're competing for this talent, and this is a competition that you need to win!

Educate your future employee on the process

The slickest healthcare businesses are providing their future employees with both written and verbal confirmation of exactly what their onboarding process will look

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like. Expectations need to be managed and reassurances need to be made. Remember, it might seem normal to you that a DBS check is taking so long, but for the applicant, they have no idea. They probably won't change jobs all that often. **Avoid any concern or paranoia by pre-booking regular catch-up calls, so your applicant knows exactly what's going on.**

References

References rely on external people, with no incentive of their own to get the job done quickly. So how can you reduce the risk or references checks being a problem?

Flexibility. When was the last time you updated your reference policy, to reflect the current recruitment market? Is your reference policy the right balance of compliance and thoroughness versus ease of use and speed? Do you really need to cover that big a timespan of their career? We're talking risk versus real world practicality. References must be thorough enough. Unfortunately, we see a lot of examples that are much more arduous and result in a lot of candidates being scooped up by employers that have taken a less stringent approach. **Is your reference process the right balance? Or is it out of date and needlessly slowing you down?**

Chase references. Quickly. Regularly. Keep going until you've got them back. Don't let undue politeness be the reason that you lose out on talent. Use every medium available to you. A single email is rarely sufficient. If that's your policy, you are missing a massive trick. 10 years ago, the average inbox got 30 emails per day. That figure is now 180 emails per day. It's no surprise that emails get missed! If you aren't consistently getting references back quickly, you need to do a lot more. Can you set up an email automation that sends regular reminders? You should be regularly calling, texting, WhatsApp'ing and so on.

“ Is your reference process the right balance? Or is it out of date and needlessly slowing you down? ”

Use your applicant to help you obtain references. If you're struggling to get a quick response from referees, there is nothing wrong with asking your soon-to-be employee for help in getting hold of your references. We see this very often. A referee will ignore or fail to spot a reference and it's only when the individual in question contacts them, that the reference comes back. A personal plea goes a long way. When they realise that they are holding a person's career up, directly from that person; that's when they are more compelled to get it returned to you. They often have a prior relationship with that person, so who better to ask than them?

Reference content. Again, dust off your reference form and check that there are no unnecessary questions on there or items that don't add value. A short, easy reference form will come back to you much quicker.

Welcome Packs

Welcome packs are a great way to get people to feel a part of your organisation at the first available opportunity. **If they're imagining themselves at work with you, they're NOT imagining working elsewhere.** Build a welcome pack that helps them build a picture of their time with you. Make it as personal as it is professional.

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What information can you include in there that puts them at ease about their first day? Some information about your induction processes can do a lot to cement people's decision to join your business.

Whether your contract and offer letter are part of this pack, or separate, make sure that these are sent out as soon as possible after you have had a verbal offer accepted. Follow this up regularly to answer any questions they may have and overcome any potential hurdles. Be as

approachable as you can on this and let it be known that you welcome any and all questions.

Book a provisional start date

We know that in many instances it is impossible to confirm a start date until all compliance has come back. Best practice is to book a 'provisional' start date. That gives the candidate a bit more clarity, whilst still understanding that it may change. **A provisional start date also gives you and your internal team a deadline to work to. That can make quite a difference in its own right.**

Invite them to anything you can

Do you have any internal training that you could invite them to, prior to their start date? Are there any company socials that they could be included in? Any and all engagement with your business will only cement their plan to start with you, and guide them away from any other enticing enquiries or offers they might receive. Don't miss an opportunity to make them feel part of your organisation, long before their official start date.

Summary

We said this at the beginning, and will reiterate it now... If you want to genuinely solve your talent shortage challenges, then as much focus needs to be directed at securing that talent, as it does on finding it. To achieve this, **you need to strive for a best-in-class onboarding process that is fit for purpose in today's talent market.** Hopefully this guide has given you some clarity on what best-in-class looks like, and provided some useful insight into how to achieve this.

Written by Simon Berry, Founder and MD of Appoint Healthcare and author of *It's Raining Candidates*.

You can book a **[free video call here](#)** with Simon, if you'd like to discuss your own onboarding processes, or learn more about how you can sharpen up your own talent attraction. It comes with a 'no pitch promise.'

If you'd like to learn more about the services Appoint Healthcare offers, you can **[book a call here](#)**.