

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

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Employees are one of the biggest business investments you can make. They account for one of the largest cost outlays and have the capacity to make or break the success of your business. Having well-trained, happy and loyal staff requires significant investment on the part of management, from recruitment through to when an employee leaves the business.

The recruitment process can be quite expensive by the time you advertise, interview, induct and train new staff. By investing the time in new staff, and maintaining a focus on ongoing training and performance management, the more likely you are to retain staff. QCPP recognises the importance of human resource management with 5 out of the 18 Elements of the QCPP Standard dedicated to this topic.

The right person for the job

Position descriptions are your way of clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of each position in the pharmacy. Typically, you would include the position description in advertising a vacancy so applicants can decide whether this is the job for them.

Asking applicants to submit a statement addressing selection criteria helps to assess the suitability of the person to the position. It gives applicants an opportunity to highlight their skills, experience and qualifications and to express transferrable skills from other areas of practice or life experience.

Never underestimate the importance of conducting a reference check for new employees, as past employers can give you an insight as to the strengths and weaknesses of potential employees. You could ask them to rate or provide comment about the applicant against each selection criteria or you may have some general questions such as overall attitude to work, work ethic, or anything they can add that may assist the selection process. Be careful to 'read between the lines' as referees can sometimes, for whatever reason, be a bit elusive in their comments.

Great expectations

Understanding each other's expectations is a great way to start off a new employer/employee relationship. It allows you to set the scene for the new staff member through your pharmacy vision or mission statement, the way you like to work, the type of customers you have, and most importantly what you expect of them in terms of behaviour, attitude, dress, punctuality, customer service, tasks etc.

An offer of employment must be given to the successful applicant(s). This contains an employment agreement which sets out conditions of employment such as position description, salary, hours of work, leave entitlements, probation periods and other policies and procedures. This is a very important document that formalises the offer of employment.

Your induction checklist is a good way to systematically go through these and any other expectations. Referring to policies and procedures helps the new employee realise that this is the standard expected of all staff. It is unrealistic to expect to work through the whole induction checklist on the first day. Having a timetable for orientation over a couple of weeks would be best so as not to overwhelm them with too much information all at once.



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Know your people

Likewise, new staff should have the opportunity to express their expectations of you as their employer and the job they have accepted. You could find out from this if they have any specific motivations such as an interest in obtaining formal qualifications, whether they are more interested in focusing on customer service tasks, or whether they have an interest in using existing skills such as back office or training and mentoring skills.

Having a good knowledge of individuals experience, interests, personalities and unique talents can help you build a team of motivated and happy employees. For example, someone who is methodical and has excellent attention to detail would be great as a dispensary assistant, someone who is organised and 'just gets things done' would be a fantastic QCPP Coordinator, and someone who is friendly, empathetic and approachable would be a great customer service manager and staff mentor.

Give them the tools

Formal training of pharmacy assistants is required as part of QCPP and of course, pharmacists must maintain their Continuing Professional Development as part of their registration requirements. However, it is often the informal, impromptu training and mentoring opportunities that can have the biggest effect on the learning and development of staff. Often discussing situations as they arise can provide the most meaning or understanding for staff as it is immediate, relevant and specific. The ability to apply this new knowledge can then be reinforced through general discussion of issues/topics at staff meetings or training nights. Even getting staff to role play various situations can be fun and memorable for all.



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Don't let the molehill become a mountain

Probably one of the hardest things to do is to provide effective feedback to staff, however, getting into the habit of giving immediate, constructive and non-judgmental feedback can have enormous benefits in reducing the frequency and number of problems. Your staff will then know where they stand at all times and problems don't get out of hand. The purpose of feedback is to improve the situation or performance. Remember to keep it to the facts and not make it about the person.

The words 'performance review' can strike fear in almost everyone. However, if you make a commitment to providing frequent and informal feedback, then nothing said in these sessions should come as a surprise. It is suggested that you ask the employee to come prepared to performance management sessions having reflected on their own performances and thought about where they could improve, or where they need further development. It should be an opportunity, at least once a year, which provides an opportunity for open and constructive review of achievements and performance and to identify learning and development needs. A record of interview should be completed and signed by all present.

When things go wrong

Hopefully, having chosen the right people, provided them with the tools and support to do their jobs and everyone having a clear understanding of what is expected of them, you will have a happy and productive team.

But are you prepared for tackling staff grievances or misconduct appropriately? The key areas to consider are maintaining each party's privacy, keeping a record of any actions, investigations or interviews, working towards a mutually agreeable solution and accessing professional advice when necessary.

When staff do leave, you have certain obligations to the staff member such as offering them an exit interview and giving them a copy of their training record and a Statement of Service. Don't forget to collect any pharmacy property and consider revision of alarm codes and deletion of email accounts. This is a great opportunity to get feedback, positive and negative, in order to reflect and improve on your business. ■

QCPP RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Element 12: Recruiting Staff

P12A Employing Staff
T12A Position Description
T12B Selection Criteria
T12C Application for Employment
T12D Reference Check
T12E Offer of Employment
T12F Letter to Unsuccessful Applicants

Element 13: Inducting Staff

P13A Inducting Staff
T13A Induction Checklist

Element 14: Managing Staff

P14A Staff Disciplinary Policy
P14C Conducting a Performance Review
P14D Workplace Grievance
T14B Record of Interview

Element 15: Ongoing Staff Training

P15A Staff Training Policy
T15A Training Plan
T15B Training Record

Element 16: Dismissals and Resignations

P7E Improving the Business
P16A Actions When Staff Leave
T7C Incident Register
T7D Incident Report
T16A Staff Counselling Interview
T16B Statement of Service