

PRACTICE PEARLS

Use word of mouth to find great employees

Not that long ago, I found myself needing to fire two employees – one for inappropriate behavior and another for frequent errors and shoddy work. But I still needed to keep my solo medical practice operating. I asked a business recruiter for advice (<http://www.asktheheadhunter.com>), and he said small employers like me rely too much on help-wanted ads and random applicants, which leads to less-than-ideal candidates and longer searches.

Instead, medical practices should hire through trusted referrals. For example, you could attend a business function in your town and ask attendees not for possible job candidates but for possible *referral sources* for good job candidates. If they were trying to fill the position in your office, who would they consult? You could also talk with local bank executives or attorneys as they often have deep contacts in the business community.

This approach will require some time and phone calls, but the extra effort is worth it. Otherwise, you'll end up hiring people for the wrong reason – because they happened to come across your want ad.

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Improve your emotional intelligence

When you encounter stress or conflict, you have an emotional reaction in your brain before you have an intellectual or reasoned reaction. Emotional intelligence (EQ) involves recognizing and understanding emotions in yourself and others and using this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships.

EQ is the foundation for many other skills and accounts for an estimated 58 percent of job performance. It requires the following:

- Self-awareness (recognizing your tendencies and emotional triggers),
- Self-management (adjusting and positively directing your behavior),
- Social awareness (noting other people's feelings and perspectives),
- Relationship management (using all of the above tools to manage your interactions).

A simple technique for practicing EQ is to pause when you feel emotions rising. Quickly take note of what you're feeling, what the other person might be feeling, and what is behind those emotions. For example, ask yourself, "What's really going on here that made each of us react the way we did?" Then *choose* how to respond instead of simply reacting.

Other keys to increasing your EQ include getting enough sleep, taking breaks, and managing your personal stress.

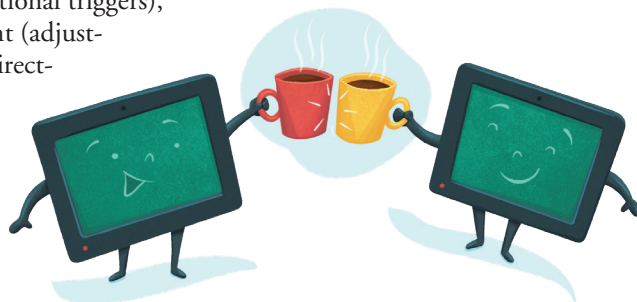
Source: Bradberry T, Greaves J. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. San Diego: TalentSmart; 2009.

Get help with your EHR – over coffee

I have used an electronic health record (EHR) for more than 24 years and have used computers since 1982, but occasionally even I need help with my EHR. I'm sure I'm not alone, as physicians and their staff

still have many friction points with this technology.

My recommendation to colleagues struggling with their EHRs is to find "power users" and learn



from them. A power user is generally not one physician who has all the answers but a group or team that has developed ways to use EHRs to provide more efficient and comprehensive care. Too many physicians feel bogged down with their EHR. Over the years, I have benefited from discussing with other physicians and their staff how they use the EHR. For instance, my colleagues and I have hosted a "coffee klatsch" at our user group conference to discuss ways to use the EHR to deliver care in a more fun and efficient way.

Yes, I said "fun." If you see yourself as a dissatisfied customer of an EHR, find others who actually like using it and see how you can improve your experience. Life is largely perception. Find ways to actually enjoy your EHR and view it as a tool that can help you improve patient care.

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