

Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Residency Recruiting, But Didn't Know Who To Ask by Dianne Devoll Hotvedt and Martyn O. Hotvedt

MARKETING YOUR PROGRAM

Not all medical students who apply to your program should be considered as candidates, even in a time of serious reductions of applicants in certain specialties. Deciding who is well-suited to become part of the overall personality of your institution requires much advance planning.

No doubt your program, as part of an institutional plan, has developed goals and objectives. These should be used as a starting point in the process of seating a new class of residents each year. Initial decisions to make include the tactics you will use to provide an accurate look at who, what, and why: who you are, what your program offers, why it is different and better than other programs, and why applicants should select your program as number one in the Match.

Do not say, "We are the best program around." Instead, demonstrate why you are the right program with which to affiliate. If you can't jump out in front of competitors, you will always be following in the footsteps of another more innovative graduate medical education (GME) program. In today's recruiting market your expertise is assumed. Therefore, you should not waste time selling what is a given. You have a reputation and a stereotypical image that has preceded any marketing you might plan. Either use this image to your advantage or downplay it if it is negative, but DO NOT ignore it. If you have a group of discontented residents at the present time or if there are rumors circulating about the institution, be ready to discuss directly the problems rather than sweep them under the rug.

Mass mailings of brochures, videos, and compact disks, as well as creative Web sites are all standard "look at me" first steps that are highly recommended by the marketing department of most hospitals. If your program chooses to stick with standard methods of advertising, then the product should be informative, honest, and cost effective. In addition, it should NOT be the beginning of a recruitment strategic plan, but rather the final step after all improvements have been made. This promotional piece should be part of the whole institutional effort of marketing and recruitment and not individual department glitz that competes with other residency programs at the same hospital.

The ideal information in any publicity piece should be geared to the interests of your intended audience: applicants, residents already in your residency program, and the faculty and staff of your program. Do not turn the content of this publicity piece, representing what you hold important, over to some group that is not part of the daily happenings of the program. They will use actors, scripts, and slick camera angles to produce something similar to ads you see on television. Residents, attendings, and program coordinators know what applicants are asking, as well as the strong points of your residency and need to be involved in the creation of what ever you decide to do for marketing purposes.

Since the piece developed for mailing is going to be a candid approach to show the program and institution exactly as it is, there are several advance processes that need to take place prior to developing

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