

How to Land Your First Job in Healthcare and Keep It

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Your mom told you that you never get a second chance to make a first impression and she was right especially when it comes to landing a job in this economic climate. Here are a few simple ways to make sure potential employers keep you foremost in their minds when a job opening in healthcare arises:

1. School Requirement = Opportunity

Clinicals and externships may be your only chance to get any hands-on work experience in a healthcare setting. Take these school requirements very seriously—not only for the experience they will provide you, but for the connections you can make. These managers will be able to act as a reference and if you're lucky, they might hire you someday. The impression that you make, whether during an interview or an externship, is a lasting one. Just because a manager doesn't have an opening right away doesn't mean that they won't in a month or two. Also, healthcare office managers are famous for knowing what is going on in other healthcare offices within their system or specialty. The manager that supervises your externship may be best friends with a manager that just lost an employee. Don't you want your manager to think of recommending you first? Make sure your work ethic, skills, and professionalism stand out.

2. Away in a Manger

A professional and clear resume free of errors is crucial. Take advantage of spell check, and ask everyone you know to read it. Often, you've looked over it so many times that you read right over a misspelled word that spell check won't catch. You were a manager at a retail store while you were in school-- not a *manger*! Many times a resume is the first way an employer is introduced to you. Make sure all certifications, externships, clinicals, and other qualifications are clearly stated on your resume. An employer doesn't want to have to read over your resume in detail to know that you are a Certified Medical Assistant. Clearly add this after your name (Jane Smith, CMA), and take it one step further to show where your certifications come from. Also, go into detail about what you did in your clinicals and externships—don't just list the offices and dates. New healthcare graduates should clearly outline their experience.

3. TMI

Keep personal information to a minimum. A potential employer does not need to know that you are recently divorced, that you've just recovered from the swine flu, and that your Facebook profile picture is you with Madonna on her 1985 tour. An employer only needs to know that you have the skills for the job.

4. Shiny Happy People

A warm, enthusiastic personality goes a long way. Employers want happy, positive, and kind employees to add to their team, but be careful not to cross the line. If you flatter an employer too much in an interview, they may think you are fake, and if you talk too much, an employer may think that even though you have good skills, you'll be more interested in office gossip than doing your job.

5. WWW.IHopeIGetThisJob.com

Research the company you are targeting. Ask friends and professors what they know about the office, and look at medical office websites. If working with a professional recruiter or HR, ask for pointers on how a manager likes to handle an interview.

6. Is Flag Day a Paid Holiday?

At the end of most interviews you will be asked if you have any questions. Do not use this time to delve into company vacation policies and health benefits. Instead, ask a more meaningful question like, "What makes someone successful in this office?" This question will not only impress your interviewer, but it will also give you an idea if the company is a good fit for you.

7. Your Name Sounds So Familiar...

Many healthcare managers know each other or know of each other, and they like to share stories. Keep that in mind at ALL times.

Congratulations! You've landed your first healthcare job. You feel like a rock star. You've got the skills, personality, and professionalism that your employer wanted, but any savvy employee knows that landing the job is only the beginning. Now you have to keep the job! A few tips to ensure success:

1. Your Office Hours Are Not 8:07am-4:59pm

Be on time. It sounds so simple, yet everyday good employees get terminated for this very infraction. How embarrassing to lose your shiny new job because you are consistently five minutes late! It doesn't matter that you work late to make it up. It is your responsibility to be on time, and once you've lost a job for tardiness, it makes you less desirable to be hired again.

2. Gold Stars

Show initiative! Employers love this. If you finish your work early, ask for more to do. You'll look like the superstar you are. Pitching in where needed is in *everyone's* job description.

3. Have I Told You About the Time...

You were smart and kept the personal information to a minimum in the interview. Now that you've got the job, the same rules apply and even more so. Stay away from office drama. You are there to work and work only.

4. Can You Help Me With My Boxes?

Don't move in. A photo, nice pens, and a plant are fine if you have a desk or work area, but don't bring everything from your home into your work area.

5. Mom, Can We Have Pizza for Dinner?

If at all possible, keep your cell phone off and personal calls to a minimum. If your cell phone must be on, have it on vibrate or silent mode and return calls only on breaks or at

lunch. Train your friends and family to know that calling you during work hours is only for emergencies. Texting is also a growing concern in business settings. Texting while driving can wreck your car, and texting while working can wreck your job.

6. Training Day

Many new employees complain that they get limited training when they begin a job. Unfortunately, in today's fast paced medical offices this is quite possibly true. Take notes, ask smart questions, and ask for feedback early on. If your manager doesn't officially match you up with a seasoned employee as a mentor, take notice of who stands out as an exemplary employee and model their behavior. You can learn an enormous amount of valuable information in the first two weeks of a new job just by keeping quiet and observing.

7. Big Brother is Watching

No internet surfing—checking emails, Facebook, shopping sites, and job boards are not for work hours, and many employers can easily track your every move on the computer. Do you really want to tell your next employer that you were terminated in your last job because you were updating your status on Facebook?

It is a competitive market right now. Hiring officials want the best possible clinical and clerical staff for their medical offices. With these easy tips, you are well on your way to landing the healthcare job of your dreams and keeping it!