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# Technology – No Matter What We Do We Can't Escape It
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# Technology – No Matter What We Do We Can't Escape It

By Niels Andersen, President & CEO, KAMedData.com, Inc
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Technology and its continuous advancement will always be with us. The difficulty comes in when we are trying to decide what and how much of it we need.

In the future, perhaps we will have machines that can read our thoughts and will automatically begin to analyze and implement our ideas without us having to worry about those irritating details. They are working on this technology though, called Neural Networks or artificial intelligence and will eventually enable computers to learn and think for themselves. This of course can be good and bad.

Significant control mechanisms will have to be incorporated into the software so as not to be the creators of our own nemesis. Until that day comes, here are some tools available to us that can help.

The use of technology allowed me to start writing this piece while sitting at the beach on a Sunday afternoon and put the finishing touches to it while on a plane home. In this business it is important to be able to be mobile, yet have the tools you need to be efficient and effective available to you anytime and anywhere you need them.

**What Do We Really Need To Become As Efficient And Happy As We Can Be?**

There are several things we would like and need; some are more realistic and controllable than others. On the realistic and controllable side of the equation we have the availability of new technology such as notebook computers, cellular telephones, pagers, and the ability to send or retrieve data via fax/modem anytime. For some, this means changing the way we work and attack projects.

Change can be difficult, particularly if we lack sufficient data to see how the change will impact us. Our imagination usually runs to extremes. "I could never learn this stuff, I'm not a techy person..." It seems easier to accept change if we remember that these technologies are created in an effort to make life easier and the drivers for the development of these tools is good old American capitalism and the opportunity for the developers to make money. Besides, as consumers we won't buy if we don't see any value or benefit to using their products.

**Using Technology To Enhance Your Career And Value**

The use of technology should also tie in with career security and continued value to your employer. In an article called "Managing Your Career" in the September 1995 issue of the Physician Recruiter we discussed the skill sets people need to obtain in order to at least partially control their own destiny and enhance or maintain value to their constituency/employer. If there are tools out there that can help you improve, embrace and use them. Below we discuss some of the tools that may be of value to you as a medical staff planner and physician recruiter.

**Hardware, What Do We Need**

Most have a desk top computer, which is sufficient for some people. However, due to the hectic work schedule associated with being in the physician recruitment industry, notebook computers may serve your needs better, particularly if you are on the road often or if you take much of your work home at night and on weekends.

It is important to remember to get a computer with adequate RAM (Random Access Memory), internal hard drive capacity, and processor speed. With today's large application programs we recommend having at least 8 megabytes of RAM, preferably 16-32 megabytes. Internal hard drive capacity should be 500

2

megabytes or more and the processor speed should be at least 100 megahertz. If you get a slower machine, you will probably find that you waste 2/3 of your time waiting for the machine to process data. External storage devices are now reaching reasonable prices and will soon become needed additions. Adding more storage provides you a bit more flexibility, particularly if you run some of the larger application programs to develop ads or create complex spread sheets. One of the most popular external storage devices is the Zip Drive; it stores 100 megabytes on CD cassettes that only cost $14.95 each. The Zip Drive itself retails for approximately $200 and is available through most catalogues and larger computer retailers. This device is designed to be portable. Take it home or with you on a trip. CD-Rom players are also becoming important to have. Now many of the most powerful application programs are available in this format. The minimum needed speed today is 4X; faster devices are available but are not really required with the types of programs available today.

**Using The Right Software Is As Important As Choosing The Right Hardware**

Several types of application programs are used within the recruitment arena for such things as desktop publishing, spreadsheets, flowcharting, word processing, and graphics.

The recruiter/staff planner may be responsible for all marketing related to recruitment including copy writing, media buying, ad development, and direct mail procurement. Listed below are some application programs useful for marketing:

- PageMaker for ad and brochure layout.

- Photoshop to edit and create photos for the ads and brochures.

- Freehand to create fancy designs.

Management reports and candidate tracking are usually vital components of your job. Reporting to management what you are doing and keeping track of it obviously keeps them on track with your progress. Reporting should also be used as a tool for you to keep them aware of the complexity and value of the work you do. The most useful management report generating programs are Microsoft Excel and Lotus 1-2-3. In the area of database management, Access and FileMakerPro Pro are extremely powerful tools you can use to create relational database reports and forms such as Professional Job Applications. Don't worry, these programs are fairly user friendly.

Contact management. Many of us use either the Franklin or Daytimer manual planners. There are several computer contact management programs available that are well respected. Perhaps the most popular is Act by Symantec. It is easy to use yet fairly comprehensive. Buy only what you will actually use; there are other programs available with more bells and whistles, but if you never use them why spend the extra money.

There are pros and cons to buying large expensive databases. We will not discuss the details in this article except to identify one consideration when buying a huge database and getting the most use from it. In many cases the recruitment department is relatively small and simply doesn't t have the labor resources to do the telemarketing and direct mail in-house so they end up subbing these services out.

Other areas in which the use of technology can be of value to us in physician recruitment:

- Reports and documentation educating and training management about physician recruitment time management.

- Financial analysis and budgeting.

- Physician compensation financial modeling.

**Staying In Touch Is A Must**

Communication is critical. If you have a notebook computer, you should also have Ethernet and/or fax modem with 14.4 or 28.8 capabilities allowing you to get e-mail and send/receive faxes while on the road. Hooking up can be done at airports (if they have business traveler centers), in your hotel room, or via

your cellular phone. We have all been in a situation where we can't get hold of the office and even if we did they may not have been able to help anyway. Some of the conventions we attend can be quite lengthy and we sometimes have to attend more than one convention in one trip. We should be able to stay in touch with the office and the candidates we are trying to close.

## Cellular Communications, Who Can Live Without A Cellular Phone Today?

Cellular phones can now automatically find you anywhere. With Cellular One and other services you generally don't have to have any special roaming numbers; use the phone the same way you would if you were at home and anyone calling dials the same number used at home. In an emergency, a cellular phone can be used to fax and send a revised contract to the candidate immediately.

## The Information Highway and Recruitment

The Internet is swiftly becoming a recognized tool for recruitment. Using the Net gives candidates more control. They can inquire about an opportunity without having to make any commitments and they can take the next step when or if they are ready. Even if the physician is not the person surfing the Net, the exposure could be to the spouse, friend, or family member. Don't forget, the trick in advertising is reach and frequency. According to Scott Solice, Director of Information Systems at Sacred Heart Health Systems MSO in Pensacola, Florida, "Major Internet service industry leaders estimate that by the year 2000, there will be over 50 million people using the Internet and its 10 million plus World Wide Web (WWW) sites on a regular basis." It will become the primary method of communication. Solice continues, "Even now, the Internet's pervasive influence is impressive."

But he believes the coming decade will prove to be even more profound. "As with any endeavor, business leaders will need a clear, concise plan if their company is to survive the proving grounds of the Internet and realize a business value from its use. It's relatively easy to distinguish the companies that have not given their presence some thoughtful planning; theirs are the Web pages filled with context that is of little use beyond the pretty pictures and a toll-free number." You have to pull them in with intrigue. This is an opportunity to show candidates your stuff but it also has to have substance.

"Advances in communication technologies have given us the high speed networks required to send the massive amounts of data we commonly summon into our homes and offices. Just two or three years ago an Internet messagetext was the message.

Today, with the click of a button, we may retrieve a 3-D color image, annotated with a linked audio file, from a server in Europe in less than a minute", Solice stated. We are advancing so fast that if we choose not to participate, even for a moment, we lose our competitive advantage.

## Other Uses Of The Internet

Another cutting edge physician recruiter is Stacey Griggs, Manager of Physician Recruitment at the Medical Center of Delaware. He states that he has been able to set up five interviews at a total cost of less than $5,000. According to Griggs "you can buy an Internet database and upload or download candidate C.V. s at will. Projob Network & Online Opportunities are two services currently available." He is using America-on-Line and they are looking at setting up their own server.

Home Web Page. Many organizations are considering having their own home web page. This resource can be used for several purposes, not just physician recruitment. The marketing and physician education departments can use it to disseminate a variety of information that can aid in retention efforts as well.

The bottom line is to balance the use of all of these continually changing tools and to be efficient and productive. Embrace change and move forward with daring alacrity.