Making the Right Hires
And Helping Them Succeed

Carol Wyatt

Have you ever had the opportunity to speak to biomed students and have them ask you, “What can I do to prepare myself to work in a hospital environment?” As you think about their question, you realize the little things that are common and routine to us can be a source of anxiety for a new hire. What elevators should I use? Can I go into a patient’s room? What if the patient talks to me or, worse, asks for help? Do I have to talk to the nurses, doctors, or other techs? What if I break something? Just tell those eager biomed students what you would expect from them in those situations.

As the hiring manager, you hold the key to successfully acclimating a new customer service-oriented biomedical equipment technician to your team and your organization. Biomeds are no longer just repair techs. They are ambassadors of the biomed department and must be able to interact with the directors, managers, and even the C-Suite. The biomedical field is a customer service field with a technical skill set requirement.

Interviewing
A manager’s job begins with the hiring process and when you start reviewing resumes. Look for indicators that someone may already have good customer service experience. Food service experience speaks volumes for customer service skills. A waiter or waitress has about an hour to convince customers to give them money. The better the customer service skills, the more money they can get. Another good service field is retail sales. A customer service associate has 15 minutes or less to convince you to buy something. This shows you that they are used to working with people who are demanding a service. We want biomeds that are able to make a connection with the department and become part of the team by showcasing their skill sets.

An inherent trait of a good biomed is the desire to help others. Look for internships and volunteer work on the resume. It shows they actively seek out ways to help others. Whether an applicant volunteered to work with kids, older folks, or dogs and cats, it shows a desire to help.

Once you’ve narrowed down the list of possible candidates to those who show promise as a customer service-oriented biomedical equipment technician, you are ready for the interviews to begin. Typically, that starts with a telephone interview. Listen for more than the answers to questions. Listen for how the questions are answered. Are they clear and concise? What’s the tone and enthusiasm? Listen for the smile. I’ve spoken to many managers within my organization and the most common request of the biomed tech is the ability to connect to the department’s team, communicate, and resolve the issue. Biomed skills are only a portion of a technician job.

After the phone interviews, you’ve narrowed down the list of candidates to those you wish to meet in person. This is your opportunity to

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Biomed are no longer just repair techs. They are ambassadors of the biomed department and must be able to interact with the directors, managers, and even the C-Suite.
determine if the candidate has the biomedical skill set and the customer service behaviors needed to be a successful member of your team. During the in-person interview, listen to how candidates answer the questions. Watch their body language. Are they truly listening to your questions? Do they have a welcoming look about them? What you see during the interview when the candidate is under stress is what the customer will see when the tech is in a stressful situation.

Before a New Hire Starts Work
Once you’ve made your decision and the candidate has accepted your offer of employment, help your new biomed tech before he or she officially joins the team. The trick to feeling comfortable in your surroundings is familiarity. Send a welcome letter, e-mail, or both, introducing your team and telling the candidate a little about the department and each technician. Include information about where they can park and where to meet you on their first day. Follow up with a phone call. Send the new biomed tech maps of the facility. If the first day is spent in orientation, arrange to meet them for lunch. Make the new biomed tech feel like a key member of the team before ever setting foot in the biomed shop.

The First Day
When your new biomed tech arrives to start work, review his or her assignments and have a tool kit ready, as well as instructions on where and how to get a badge, a beeper, e-mail access, set voice mail, etc. Be sure the new tech’s desk is stocked with basic supplies. Have a cheat sheet for the new tech with the team phone numbers, the fax number, and the facility’s address. It can be overwhelming for a new biomed—even before going out on that first assignment. A “Welcome to Biomed” banner in the shop is a great touch. Make the new hire feel as welcome as possible. Explain your biomed program. Share your expectations, including those dealing with preventive maintenance and repair service. This way you can work out any issues in the beginning.

Getting to Know the Staff
Your new biomed tech is finally on campus and there’s plenty of work for him or her to do. Give the new tech a few days to become familiar with the processes, policies, and procedures. Take him or her on a thorough tour of the facility. Introduce the new tech to the managers of the departments for which he or she will be responsible. Eram Samuels, RN, clinical manager at The Heart Hospital Baylor Plano, recommends that the new employee attend staff meetings. “The new biomed tech can listen to staff concerns and get an understanding of their point of view,” says Samuels.

Have the new tech exchange business cards with the managers or at least have the new tech write down the manager’s name, department, phone number and office location. If the manager doesn’t have time to talk at that time, set up an appointment for the near future. In those meetings with clinical managers, the biomed manager should lead the meeting, but allow the new tech to participate. This is your opportunity to demonstrate how easy it is to talk to managers. Ask the managers what they expect from the biomed tech. You will already know what they expect, but it’s always good for the new tech to hear it. “We expect all biomeds techs to bring value to the department,” says Sue Matson, RN, a nurse manager at The Heart Hospital.

Getting to Know the Routine
Teach your new hire the e-mail system used by the organization. Take the time to set up distribution lists and share commonly used vendor contacts. As a manager, you are arming the new tech with as many resources as possible to be successful and feel at ease.
For the first few days, make rounds with the new biomed tech. Show him or her where defective equipment is left for pickup and how the nurses mark defective equipment. Encourage the new biomed tech to participate in conversations with unit secretaries, charge nurses, and supervisors by finding a common interest. Ask if anyone has seen the latest blockbuster movie that just came out. You want the new biomed tech to share experiences with others.

**Clinical In-Services**

Work with the operating room (OR) personnel to allow the new biomed tech in the next OR orientation. Moving around an OR during a surgery is very stressful. A new biomed tech wants to resolve any reported issues, but can be afraid to move. OR orientation will at least give the new tech an idea of what to do and how to move within the OR suites. It is okay to attend more than one OR orientation.

Consider other orientations. Donna Roberts, MS, MT, ASCP, manager of Baylor Regional Medical Center Lab, says: “An overview of lab is helpful to new technicians. They should at least know what areas of the labs there are and what they are called, such as chemistry and hematology. The new biomed should know what lab equipment the biomed tech can repair and what equipment the vendor should repair.” Such orientations build a sense of comfort between the new hire and the department staff.

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Working in a Patient’s Room

Working in a room with a patient can be stressful. We always want the patient to be safe and the tech to be safe. Explain what all the signs on the patient’s door mean. Tell a new hire when to wear gloves, a mask, and a gown.

Explain that it’s okay to talk to the patient and that if a patient needs assistance, ask a nurse. Coordinate with the department manager for the new tech to shadow a nurse for a couple of hours to get a feel for what they do. Gustavo Ortiz, BSN, CCRN, CNRN, and Todd Bailey, RN, nurse manager of the intensive care unit at Baylor Regional Medical Center Plano, both agree that shadowing a nurse will help a new biomed tech understand the sense of urgency in such settings. “It is good to have clear communication on who does what,” Bailey adds.

Little things can make a big difference. Be glad to see the new tech and smile. A smile and a little understanding can turn a big problem into a minor inconvenience. Manage up the team, the department, the facility, and the organization. Positive thoughts and statements breed more positive thoughts and statements. Show that you believe in your team and their skills. If you demonstrate a positive attitude, the new biomed tech will carry that positive attitude to the floors.

The more your new biomed tech knows about the environment, the better equipped he or she is to deal with the environment and changes in it. Providing your new team member with a positive environment and the resources to resolve issues will make him or her feel comfortable and confident, and make it much easier to provide outstanding customer service.

**Tips to Help Your New Hire**

- Reach out to your new team member even before the first day of work with an e-mail or phone call. Make the new hire feel welcome.
- Accompany your new biomed on his or her initial assignments, and introduce key clinical managers.
- Set up formal orientations for your new employee for areas such as the operating room or labs.
- Encourage “relationship-building” with clinicians. Getting to know staff in other departments goes a long way in resolving any problems down the road.
- Make sure your new hire knows that his or her opinions are valued. New team members sometimes have the best ideas, bringing a fresh set of eyes to routines.