

TALENT TERRITORY

How to Lose a Candidate in 10 Days

In veterinary medicine's highly competitive job market, speed wins.

BY STACY PURSELL, CPC, CERS

Compensation, culture, leadership, and career growth opportunities influence hiring success. But none of them matter if an organization moves too slowly to secure a candidate. Today's veterinary employment market is highly competitive. Demand for veterinarians continues to exceed supply in many areas, giving strong candidates more options than ever before. As a result, employers can no longer assume that qualified professionals will remain available while lengthy hiring processes unfold. In many cases, the best candidates are off the market within 10 days.

At any given time, there are more than 10,000 open veterinarian and veterinary technician positions. Stress and burnout continue to drive professionals out of clinical practice, further tightening the talent pool. Looking ahead, the situation is unlikely to improve quickly. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for veterinarians is projected to grow by 10% between 2024 and 2034, creating an average of 3,000 openings each year, with nearly 1,000 of those representing entirely new positions. In other words, employer demand continues to rise faster than the available supply of qualified professionals.

Unfortunately, many veterinary practices still follow recruiting processes designed for a different labor market. Multiple interview rounds, scheduling delays, prolonged discussions, and



slow offers often cause organizations to lose outstanding candidates to faster-moving competitors.

The reality is simple: Speed has become a competitive advantage in veterinary recruiting.

Candidate Drop-Off

Many of the strongest candidates disappear long before an offer is made. Candidate drop-off occurs when professionals lose interest in a position or withdraw from the hiring process entirely. Often, the reason is not compensation, culture, or job responsibilities. Instead, it's a lack of momentum.

Top candidates rarely evaluate only one opportunity. They often speak with multiple employers at the same time. If one organization takes several weeks to schedule interviews and make decisions while another moves efficiently, candidates naturally gravitate toward the employer that demonstrates greater urgency and interest.

Even highly engaged candidates can become discouraged when communication slows or timelines become unclear. Long gaps between interviews, delayed feedback, and uncertainty about next steps often create the impression that the organization is disorganized or uninterested.

Interview Bottlenecks

One of the most common causes of hiring delays is the interview process itself. Many practices unintentionally create bottlenecks by requiring multiple interview rounds, involving too many decision-makers, or struggling to coordinate schedules. While thorough evaluation is important, every additional step extends the timeline and increases the risk of losing candidates.

The strongest candidates are typically active in multiple interview processes. While one employer is arranging a second or third interview, another may be preparing an offer.

Employers should periodically review their hiring process and ask whether every step is truly necessary.

Does each interview provide meaningful information? Are too many people involved in the decision? Could feedback be gathered more efficiently?

The goal is not to eliminate due diligence but to remove unnecessary delays. A streamlined interview process improves the candidate experience and hiring outcomes. For example, we recently had a practice that wanted the candidate to come twice — one interview with the practice manager and another with the lead veterinarian. Our recommendation was to combine the interviews into one.

Delayed Decisions

Candidates evaluate employers just as carefully as employers evaluate candidates. When an organization struggles to make decisions after interviews, candidates notice. Extended deliberation can create the impression that leadership lacks alignment or confidence. Even if that perception is inaccurate, it can influence how candidates view the opportunity.

By contrast, employers that move decisively communicate professionalism, organization, and enthusiasm. Candidates appreciate timely feedback and clear direction. They want to know where they stand and whether the organization is genuinely interested in bringing them aboard.

A slow decision-making process can unintentionally weaken an employer's brand. In some cases, candidates begin questioning whether future decisions inside the organization will be handled with the same level of delay.

The hiring process often serves as a preview of what it's like to work for an employer. Organizations should ensure that preview reflects positively on their culture and leadership.

Slow Offer Timing

Some employers believe that the difficult part of recruiting is over once they decide whom they want to hire. In

reality, one of the most critical stages occurs between making the decision and presenting the offer.

Top candidates remain active in the marketplace until they formally accept a position. During that time, competing employers may still be interviewing, making offers, and accelerating their own hiring processes. Every day that passes without an offer creates additional risk.

Employers should prepare compensation parameters, approval processes, and offer details before they reach the final stages of hiring. Waiting until after a candidate has been selected often introduces delays that could have been avoided.

A prompt offer communicates confidence and enthusiasm. It reinforces the message that the organization values the candidate and is eager to move forward.

Lack of Preparation

Some hiring managers worry that moving quickly will increase the likelihood of making a poor hiring decision. However, speed and quality are not opposing goals. The most successful employers maintain high hiring standards while making decisions efficiently. The difference is preparation.

Organizations that consistently hire well establish clear criteria before recruiting begins. They define the qualifications, experience, and personal attributes required for success in the role. They determine who will participate in interviews and establish realistic timelines for decision-making. When these elements are in place, employers can act confidently when they identify a strong candidate.

Speed alone won't guarantee hiring success. Employers must offer competitive compensation, positive cultures, professional development opportunities, and strong leadership. However, when comparable opportunities exist, the employer that moves first often gains the advantage.

Ensure your practice's hiring process is efficient to win the competition for top talent. **TVB**



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FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE HIRING SPEED

- 1. Establish clear hiring timelines:** Everyone involved in the process should understand expectations for reviewing applications, conducting interviews, and making decisions.
- 2. Streamline interviews:** Limit interview rounds to those that provide meaningful value and involve only essential decision-makers.
- 3. Communicate consistently:** Keep candidates informed throughout the process, even when a final decision has not been made.
- 4. Prepare offers in advance:** Define compensation ranges, benefits, and approval requirements before reaching the final hiring stage.
- 5. Trust your process:** When a candidate meets your criteria and aligns with your culture, avoid delaying action while searching for a hypothetical perfect applicant.