Flourishing with your physician private practice doesn’t happen by accident. Practices that need to increase their medical and professional staffs need a strategy to identify what kind of people they need and where to find them, according to AMA senior advisers Kathleen Blake, MD, MPH, and J. James Rohack, MD.

And the recruitment effort doesn’t stop there. Prospective physician colleagues and others need to be recruited, they say, through demonstration of an organizational culture and environment that meets their future career needs.

Drs. Blake and Rohack discussed tactics for effective hiring during an AMA Private Practice Simple Solutions webinar. AMA Private Practice Simple Solutions offerings are free, open-access rapid learning cycles designed to provide opportunities to implement actionable changes that can immediately increase efficiency in private practices.

The webinar address four key topics, illustrated by the physician advisers’ own practices and experience:

- Why physician recruits should join your practice.
- How to identify creative ways to connect with or locate potential interviewees.
- Understand what physician recruits are looking for in a practice.
- How to counter recruitment competition.
Recruitment could take months

Dr. Rohack, a cardiologist and former president of the AMA, told participants that his Texas practice grew from 19 physicians to 150 doctors and other nonphysician clinicians, giving him broad experience in recruiting physicians as well as other health professionals. The process is long and can take months.

“The first thing you need to do is understand why you need someone to join the practice,” said Dr. Rohack, who chairs the AMA Advisory Committee on Professional Satisfaction and Practice Sustainability.

“Is it someone you are replacing? Do you want to expand your hours?” Will the position be filled by a physician or an advanced practice professional, he asked. And if it is a physician, what kind of doctor and at what stage of their career? When you look at the individual physician, know who you are looking for, Dr. Rohack said.

Are you looking for a new recruit, just finishing a residency or fellowship o? Or are you looking for a seasoned physician who has already been in practice?

Nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other nonphysician clinicians pose a different challenge, he said. Physician practice leaders need to be cognizant of state laws and regulations to determine how many such professionals can by supervised by a single doctor.

It takes astute clinical judgment as well as a commitment to collaboration and solving challenging problems to succeed in independent settings that are often fluid, and the AMA offers the resources and support physicians need to both start and sustain success in private practice. That includes the “AMA STEPS Forward® Private Practice Playbook,” which offers guidance on staffing, recruitment and retention.

Using your relationships to recruit

Once you have identified the type of person your practice needs, where will you find the recruits?

“This is where the relationships that you and your colleagues have developed come in—medical school alumni associations, residency programs—become really important,” Dr. Blake said. “Professional societies are also a prime way to recruit, as well as AMA resources … and medical journals.”
Geography is also a factor, noted Dr. Blake, who practiced cardiology at the physician-owned New Mexico Heart Institute from 1988–2011 and served on its board of directors and as president.

“Think about whether or not the area to which you are recruiting qualifies for a loan-repayment program,” she said, noting that international medical graduates and others may be drawn to certain areas by the requirement of their programs, which could be a recruiting advantage.

Learn about the JAMA Career Center recruiting options for you and gain access to passive and active physician job seekers throughout the entire JAMA Network™.

Selling your practice culture

Once you have established the needs of your practice, you have to get ready to pitch the positive attributes of your practice and its culture to the prospects.

“You need an elevator pitch … within a three-minute segment, you need to be able to state why you love your practice and why that person should join you, said Dr. Rohack, who is an emeritus staff at Baylor Scott & White Health, where he was the chief health policy officer, senior staff cardiologist, senior vice president and founding director of the Scott & White Center for Healthcare Policy.

Compensation is also an important factor, and that’s about more than just dollars and cents, Dr. Rohack added. You need to highlight time off to spend with your family and other positives of value in a clear, direct way. Since much of recruitment is now done virtually, the positives should be listed in a slide deck or other means that can be easily shared electronically.

Next, come the negatives, which also have to be addressed, he said.

“You should look on Google and Yelp, where the recruit is likely to look for their research of your practice,” Dr. Rohack said. “If you do have some negative feedback, you should proactively address that with the recruit.”

Above all, “a relationship is being established between the recruit and the practice,” Dr. Blake said. The new recruit will need to understand why the practice needs them and how the established physicians in the practice will help them build their own practice.

Find out more about the AMA Private Practice Physicians Section, which seeks to preserve the freedom, independence and integrity of private practice.