Ryan Lillis, Director of Organizational Development for EMA, shared the pre-employment tools EMA uses to make sure new employees at every level of the organization are a great fit right from the start.

EMA uses a web-based applicant tracking system from Healthcare Source. Open positions are posted online and applicants for all positions must apply online. There are many advantages to an online applicant tracking system:

- An individual applying for positions multiple times is easily identified.
- In a multi-site organization positions and applicants can be tracked enterprise-wide.
- At all levels of aging services, an increasing number of positions require the use of some sort of electronic systems. This ensures that all applicants are technology-friendly.
- Walk-in applicants can complete the online application at the facility, just as now frequently happens at big box retailers.

In addition to the applicant tracking module, EMA also uses a Healthcare Source online assessment tool. The applicant not only provides basic information about skills, work history and background, but each applicant also completes a survey that takes 20-30 minutes to complete. This tested and validated tool measures potential employees on indices of likely success in job performance, in service excellence, and in retention. It also assesses nine elements of service and values:

- Work ethic and attendance
- Energy
- Teamwork
- Customer focus
- Compassion
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Multi-tasking
- Valuing diversity
- Openness to learning

The basic assessment assumes an elementary level of literacy. There are different assessments for leadership level staff. The system has built in redundancy and flags concerns regarding truthfulness and consistency of answers.

Each behavioral element is scored on a one to ten scale and a multi-page report is attached to the applicant's record. This allows EMA to identify the top candidates for a position. The system also generates a list of behavioral-based interviewing questions targeted to the applicant's survey results. The Human Resources department initially screens and meets with candidates and further customizes the interview questions to EMA's specific values, guiding principles and mission. In the next stage the hiring manager interviews the candidate and adds questions that are more specific to the position.

All hiring managers are trained in behavior-based interviewing and use open-ended questions often framed by asking the candidate to "tell me about a time when…" Managers are also coached to model a person-centered approach. They recognize that an interview is a first impression on both sides and presents the opportunity to get a relationship off on the right foot.

EMA finds this system to be working well. They have been tracking the correlation between the applicant survey results and subsequent performance evaluation and are demonstrating the value of the tool.

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