

2020 Physician Interview Experience Survey

By Tony Stajduhar, President, Jackson Physician Search



Mastering the on-site interview is the enduring challenge in physician recruitment.

The first interview is a make or break moment for both the candidate and the hiring organization. More than 200 physicians responded to the 2020 Physician Interview Experience survey.

Keep reading for insight on how to improve your interview process and win more candidates.

Introduction

The enduring challenge in the physician recruitment and hiring process is to master the on-site interview. The first interview will continue to be the make or break moment in the hiring process for both the candidate and the hiring organization.

To help provide clarity on how today's physicians feel about the interview process and the elements comprising an exceptional interview experience, Jackson Physician Search received completed survey responses from more than 200 physicians. The survey group represented a mixture of practicing physicians and 2020 and 2021 residents who had interviewed for a position in the previous 18 months. Physicians were asked to answer questions in regards to their interview experience corresponding with their current position.

The survey confirmed many elements of the interview process that have become standard industry practice. But the physicians' responses also open a window into how they feel about interviewing and the important aspects of the interview that helped them decide whether or not they want to immediately accept a position.

Their insights provide valuable guidance in how to deliver the best-in-class interview experience that results in the physician deciding to accept your position – ideally – *on their way home from the first interview with you.*

What you may find surprising is that their feelings of excitement and alignment with your organization – and a well-planned community tour – are the factors that tip the scales toward that best-in-class result.

This survey demonstrates the vital role your interview team plays in establishing cultural fit and an overall outstanding interview experience to influence a candidate's decision. The results will help you fine-tune your interview process and ensure you are landing the candidates who are best suited for your organization.

Executive Summary

Most organizations understand the high costs of conducting multiple interviews with a single candidate. Interviewing expenses and loss of revenue during a prolonged vacancy can add up to over one million dollars per physician. But it appears that few deliver the best-in-class interview experience that will improve their chances that the candidate will decide to accept the offer on the way home from the first interview.

According to our survey:

- Only 27% of candidates decided to accept the position on the way home after just one on-site interview.
- On the other end of the spectrum another 23% never left an interview feeling confident, even though they ultimately may have accepted the job.
- For the remaining 50%, it took a bit of time after the first interview to accept. Some even required scheduling a second or third interview to win them over to the point where they decided to accept.

Moving that large, undecided group toward accepting your offer after the first interview requires investing in a rigorous recruitment process and effective interview techniques.

The salient aspects of the interview experience for candidates who decided to accept on the way home from the first interview reflects the fulfillment of their needs at many levels: informational, alignment of values and emotional well-being.

Of those who decided to accept on the way home:

- 89% said all their questions were answered at the interview
- 61% received a written offer within the week
- 80% felt excited
- 82% felt welcomed
- 2% or fewer felt confused, anxious, or stressed
- These physicians also ranked their alignment with the organization's mission and values at 9.2, with 10 being perfectly aligned

By contrast, a good number of those who were undecided after the first interview reported feeling excited (63%) and welcomed (76%). But, a concerning percentage left the interview with negative emotions:

- 39% felt anxious
- 23% felt stressed
- 23% felt confused

Physicians need enough information, as well as positive feelings, to support their decision to accept on the way home from their first interview with you. Even if the candidates reporting negative emotions took the job, it's easy to imagine that these feelings could linger and create challenges in the future.

Power of the First Impression

The survey results reinforced the power of the first impression. The majority (69%) of all respondents had accepted their most recent job after just one interview. Additional survey data indicates that the second or third interviews are not nearly as impactful as the first interview.

Multiple interviews do not necessarily increase the chances that the candidate will feel confident enough to decide to accept the position. But, multiple interviews do drive up your cost per hire, prolonging your time-to-fill and negatively impacting your interview-to-hire ratio.

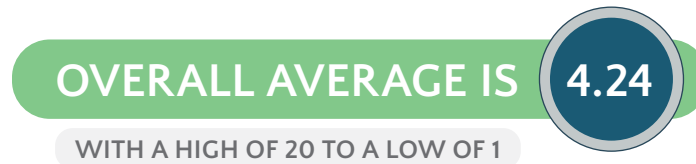
As the survey showed, it is far more likely that the candidate will decide on the way home from the first interview (76%) than on the second, "third or more" interviews (12% for each).

You will have better outcomes when you invest in a process that creates the first-time WOW experience for the right candidate.

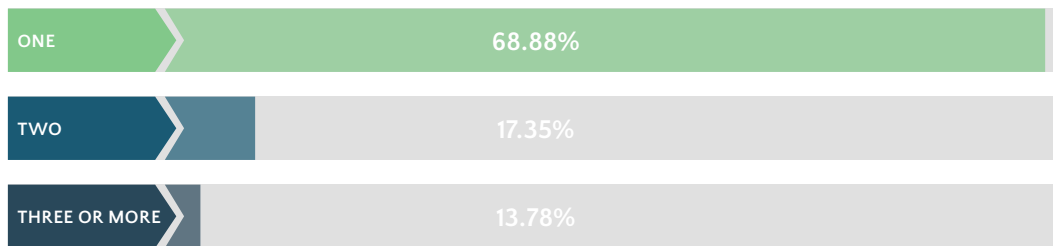
Survey Results

The over-arching premise of the survey was to reflect the point of view of physicians about the elements of the interview experience, and the factors that influence their decision about accepting a position. Let's review.

Question: How many interviews did you have with different employers before you accepted your current role?



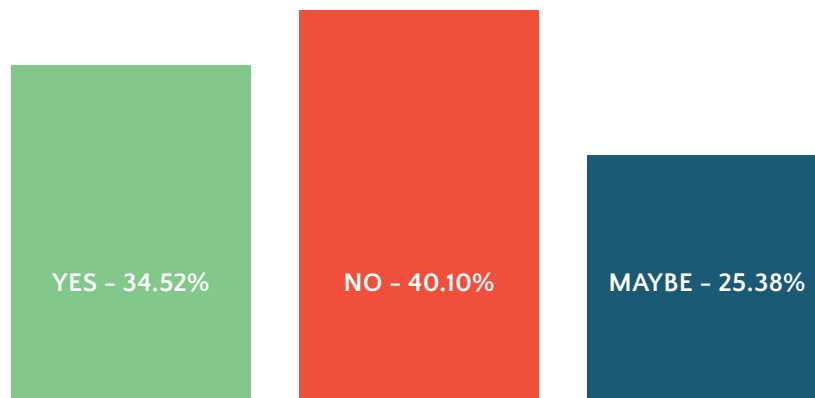
Question: How many on-site interviews did you have with your current employer?



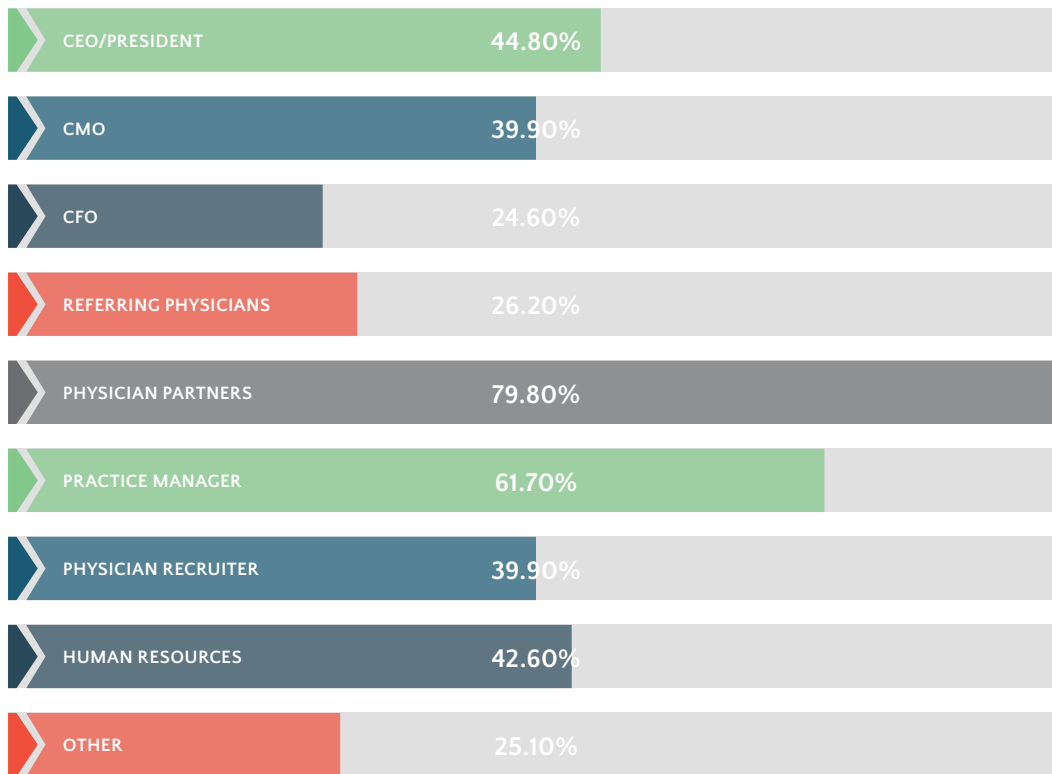
When physicians were asked how many on-site interviews they had with their current employer, the majority (69%) of those respondents said they had a single on-site interview. But only 27% of all respondents decided to accept the position on the way home from the first interview.

Conversely, candidates who were undecided also seemed to be unable to settle on the right opportunity and interviewed with an average of 5.25 other employers. Those who were ready to say yes averaged 2.68 interviews with other employers.

Question: As you were on the way home, had you already made the decision to accept this position?

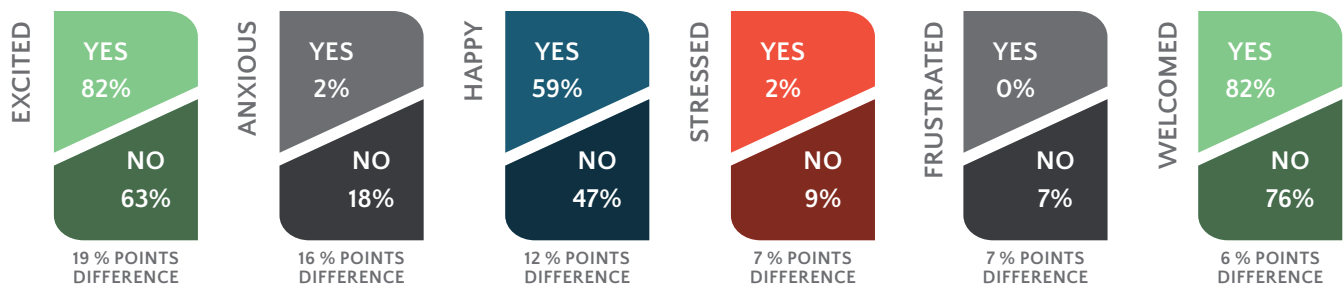


Question: Who was included in your interview?



When asked about the individuals who were included in the interview process, it is clear that the engagement of leadership is important. The physician partners and practice manager were most frequently mentioned, followed by the chief executive officer and chief medical officer. In the category of “other,” nurses and advanced practitioners were mentioned in approximately half of the free text responses. Including members of the team that will be working with them to provide patient care is an important aspect of helping candidates envision their future day-to-day practice with your organization.

Question: At the conclusion of your interview, how would you describe your feelings toward your prospective employer?

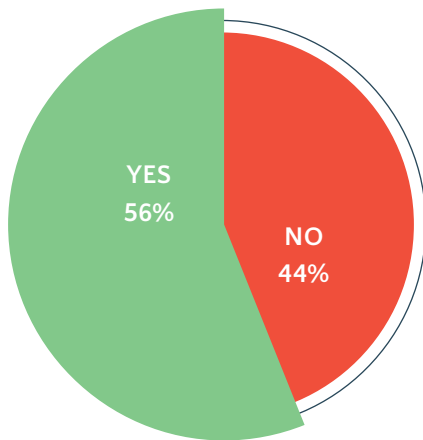


Physicians were asked to report how they felt after the interview. Across the board, the emotion that contributed to a positive interview experience was how welcomed a physician candidate felt after the interview process. One can infer that when the interview team ensures that a candidate is comfortable, welcome, and has the full attention of those doing the interview, they will be more likely to respond to an offer in a positive manner.

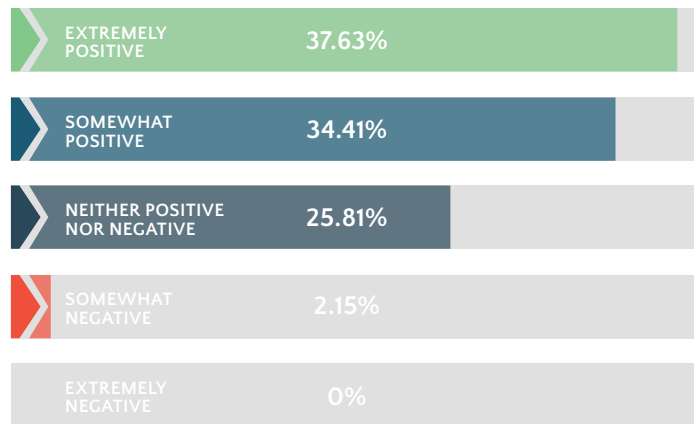
Of those respondents who quickly decided they wanted the position, 82% described their feelings after the interview as “Excited.”

Another telling descriptor of how a candidate was feeling – and how that contributed to their immediate decision to accept a position – was excitement. 82% of candidates who had decided they wanted to accept a position while on they way home felt excited after the interview, compared with 63% of those who did not. In contrast, respondents who did not immediately make up their mind reported being anxious, doubtful, or frustrated after the interview.

Question: Was a community tour part of your on-site visit?

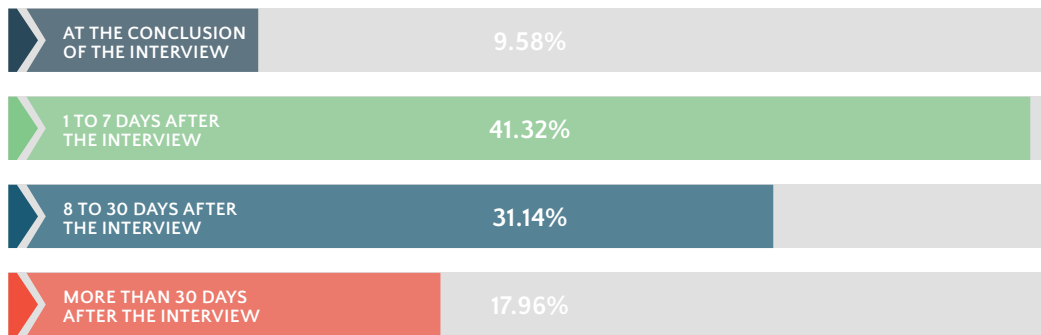


If yes, did the community tour positively influence your decision to accept the position?



A community tour was included in just 56% of interviews. However, of those physicians who decided they wanted to accept the position on the way home from their first interview, 82% indicated that the community tour had an extremely positive or somewhat positive influence on their decision. In fact, even candidates who didn't decide right away responded favorably to the community tour. Nearly three-quarters of all respondents (72%) said that the community tour was an extremely or somewhat positive influence on their decision. Those numbers confirm that a well-organized community tour can be a critical part of sealing the deal with the desired candidate.

Question: When did you receive a written offer of employment?



In today’s high-demand environment, healthcare administrators are sometimes learning hard lessons about how critical it is to maintain momentum when interviewing physician candidates. While 10% of candidates received a written offer at the conclusion of the interview, another 41% of all candidates received a written offer within seven days. Of those who decided to accept on the way home, 61% received a written offer within seven days. These results, coupled with many of the narrative comments, make it clear that you can differentiate your organization and make a positive influence on a candidate’s decision when you are prepared to deliver an offer promptly after a comprehensive, well-organized interview.

“The organization of the interview was a major factor in my decision. They were relaxed and organized and that says a lot about the organization as a whole. Other interviews that were more disorganized, I was less inclined to join.”

Question: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not aligned and 10 is perfectly aligned, how closely aligned did you feel with the mission and values of the organization?



As physicians have more choices in practice opportunities, they are more often inclined to seek out organizations that are culturally aligned with their values. This is borne out in the responses from candidates who decided that they wanted the position while on their way home from their first or subsequent interviews. When asked to rate their personal alignment with the mission and values of the organization on a scale of 1 to 10, these respondents cited their alignment with organizational values at 9 or above.

Recommendations

The essential takeaways from this survey highlight strategies you can employ to improve your interview and hiring process almost immediately.

With physician recruitment requiring 6–9 months to source and interview candidates, and up to another 12 months for the physician to start, consolidating all aspects of a comprehensive interview into a single visit is the best way to reduce the length of a vacancy. This means including all “A-Players” in the interview, organizing a facility tour, and arranging a personalized community tour with key constituents, even if that means the interview takes more than one day.

Put Your “A-Players” on the Interview Team

The comments made by the candidates about the factors that influenced them to accept a position further confirm that “fit” plays a role in a successful offer.

“The people I met, who I will be working with were so kind and welcoming. I feel very excited about working with them.”

Candidates want to feel welcomed and excited about the opportunity, so having an interview team that is engaged and excited about being part of your organization is crucial for a successful outcome. Everyone on the interview team should be able to describe and demonstrate the organization’s values and help the candidates envision how they will fit into the environment.

Ensure that the interview team includes leaders who embody the mission and values of the organization. Not only does it give them a chance to share their vision for the organization, but their presence shows the physician that leadership places a high priority on physician recruitment and retention.

A Refined Interview Process

Physicians are attracted to organizations that have well-planned, efficiently delivered recruiting and hiring processes. Interview participants who appear distracted, or who show up late or not at all, represent a red flag to candidates. Most physicians like to have a structure that allows them to keep moving forward and are easily frustrated by the appearance of wasted time and energy.

The first in-person interview you conduct is your best opportunity to demonstrate what it will be like to work there. Keeping the process moving forward by quickly producing an offer of employment plays a role in ensuring that your offer is accepted before the candidate receives competing offers.

“There was a collegiality among the partners. There was a very positive team dynamic and a vision for me as a long-term member of the team.”

Value of a Community Tour

With only 56% of the physicians reporting that a community tour was included in their interview, it means you have a clear opportunity to differentiate your opportunity with a red-carpet community tour. It is key to engendering as much excitement about the opportunity for the significant other and/or family as you do for the candidate.

“The community was very welcoming. I was attracted to the quality of life, family opportunities, and fellowship.”

Community tours that are tailored to appeal to the candidate’s family members can be the difference between a successful recruit and the one that got away. Learning as much as possible about a candidate’s background, his or her family’s situation, interests and lifestyle can all factor into an engaging community tour. This is an area where an outstanding recruiter can help an organization develop a clear picture about what may or may not be important to a candidate.

When a candidate is coming in for a site visit with his or her significant other, it is equally important to have an organized agenda for this person, while the candidate is at the facility interviewing. It is important to understand what the spouse or partner may be looking for in a career, as well as having a well-prepared list of desirable neighborhoods and schools, favorite restaurants, and community activities for any children. The community tour should demonstrate that the whole family is important to the organization.

“I felt that the environment was more family-oriented than other places I interviewed.”

Alignment with Values and Mission

Highlight your organizational values and mission. Healthcare administrators need to clearly communicate the culture of their organization and mission or risk spending more time filling turnover vacancies.

“All things being equal between the offers I received, the major factor in my acceptance was the commitment of the organization to patient care and staff care. My fellow caregivers displayed innovation and a can-do attitude.”

Overwhelmingly, physicians responding to this survey emphasized that they want to work for an organization that is aligned with their own personal mission and value system. Organizations that make an effort to base their hiring decisions on culture and fit may have better retention than those that are just trying to get someone in the door to fill a vacancy.

Conclusion

In summary, based on survey data collected, a best-in-class recruitment process should include the following:

- A single, comprehensive on-site interview that is customized for the candidate and any family members. Don't shy away from scheduling a two or even three-day interview. You're more likely to win over the candidate in a single interview experience than you would be if you scheduled multiple interviews.
- Include all key players in the interview process from senior leadership who can sell the vision to peers who will make the candidate feel welcome to community partners who can ease the transition for the physician's family.
- One goal of the interview process is to engender feelings of collegiality, excitement, and a sense of being welcome, as well as reducing any feelings of anxiety, frustration or doubt. Include stakeholders in your interview process with high emotional intelligence who can pick up on these emotions. Also, solicit feedback from candidates by inviting them to complete a post-interview survey, so your team can practice continuous improvement.
- Everyone in the interview, especially senior leaders, must be able to clearly communicate the shared values and mission of your organization to ensure the candidate recognizes his or her level of alignment.
- Tailor the community tour to the candidate and family's personal needs, hobbies and desires. Introduce real estate, banking, educational, religious and other leaders in your community and schedule time for the candidate and family to imagine living in your community. Reduce the anxiety that comes with being the "new people in town."
- Deliver an offer within a week of the interview – if not the same day or the following. Any longer, and you risk losing the candidate.

For more information about how your organization can use the results of this survey to improve your recruitment and hiring process, contact Jackson Physician Search today. Our team is made up of healthcare industry professionals who have spent decades working and recruiting for healthcare organizations. Visit www.jacksonphysiciansearch.com today and learn how we can make a difference for you.

Jackson Physician Search

Jackson Physician Search is an established industry leader in physician recruitment and pioneered the recruitment methodologies standard in the industry today. The firm specializes in the permanent recruitment of physicians, physician leaders and advanced practice providers for hospitals, health systems, academic medical centers and medical groups across the United States. Headquartered in Alpharetta, Ga., the company is recognized for its track record of results built on client trust and transparency of processes and fees. Jackson Physician Search is part of the Jackson Healthcare® family of companies.

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