



Decisions, decisions! E-portfolio as an effective hiring assessment tool

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Rachel has a daunting task on her to-do list before making rounds with the medical residents and conducting a lunch and learn for RN staff members on her busy ICU: filtering through 25 résumés for one open RN position that's been vacant for 6 weeks. Even after being part of the management team for 5 years, hiring decisions haven't evolved into an easier process. Time is of the essence and Rachel is committed to making the best hire to round out

the current highly competent, motivated, and committed nursing workforce. So, where to begin?

Reviewing the résumés, Rachel goes through her established criteria list. Graduate of an accredited, reputable nursing program? Check. Previous work experience? Check. ICU experience? Check. From the 25 résumés, Rachel narrows the search to five potential hires. By all appearances (from

what one can tell from a one-page résumé), each nurse is qualified on some level, but what Rachel really wants to know relates to more abstract knowledge: Who's the individual as a person? Will he or she be a team player? How can she pick the candidate who's most likely to have professional goals and values congruent with the mission of the unit and the hospital?

Website loading

With the changing landscape of healthcare, there's no question that managers are under pressure to hire highly qualified nurses possessing a broad level of knowledge, skills, and the right

attitude needed to thrive in the current stressful and complex work environment. In order to ensure patients receive quality care and safe delivery of services, nurse hires must be adept at clinical reasoning and critical thinking, with the ability to efficiently navigate multidimensional patient care situations in coordination with members of an interprofessional team. They must also possess effective interpersonal verbal and written communication skills and be technologically savvy. It's challenging for nurse managers to assess the proficiency of a novice nurse or even a nurse with several years of experience, necessitating the need for additional tools in the prehire period to assist with selection between multiple qualified candidates.

Hiring procedures and philosophies have to evolve to incorporate new technologies in an effort to get to know potential nurse hires and for new hires to become acquainted with unit culture. Additionally, expectations and criteria need to be communicated effectively and articulately to meet and then exceed expectations once hired. Selection of nurse hires has historically consisted of application completion and an interview with interested unit managers. In this process, there has been little consideration or solicitation of artifacts that might shed light on a potential hire's behavioral characteristics, personality, judgment, congruency of stated and implied values or professional values, and beliefs related to fitting into a departmental culture.

Electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) are a way for a potential nurse hire to showcase talents and skills, and draw attention to his or her uniqueness for those responsible for hiring. These digital collections of student work document specific achievements, competencies, and learning outcomes that are gathered together to show a person's learning journey over time, demonstrating his or her abilities.¹⁻³ This enables you to look beyond the résumés and get acquainted on a more personal level with your potential hires. E-portfolios can be



an effective adjunctive tool in nurse hiring practices, and function as a valuable mechanism that maximizes the potential of hiring qualified candidates who are a good fit for a nursing unit.

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E-portfolios have multiple potential positive outcomes, including supporting individuals through a critical reflective approach to competency development, supporting professional collaboration, and providing a structure for planning career progression.⁴ While in nursing school, an e-portfolio encourages application and integration of knowledge, helps students recognize performance gaps, fosters student development, and promotes a student's responsibility for learning.⁵ The student continually reflects on clinical and academic experiences to cultivate meaning regarding his or her development into the nursing role. Artifacts—documents placed in the e-portfolio—are collected throughout the education experience, giving an individual a foundation on which to build as his or her career advances. Evidence has supported that professional development and assessment may also be aided by this structure.⁶

Faculty members determine the purpose of the e-portfolio and subsequently develop guidelines, which can be part of a Capstone course or, ideally, incorporated throughout the curriculum. By scaffolding artifacts that will ultimately be included in the final product, the student is allowed time to reflect, select, and arrange the e-portfolio in a meaningful way. The student can begin the process by selecting an e-portfolio platform for which numerous quality programs are available. Faculty may want to do a preliminary search and narrow the field for students. Stu-

dents should be encouraged to start a folder in which documents can be easily stored throughout semesters and retrieved when it's time to arrange the final e-portfolio. This action is particularly important if reflection on clinical and academic learning experiences throughout the curriculum is required.

Research shows e-portfolios serve four major purposes: (1) to facilitate reflection on learning in a course(s), (2) to showcase career skills, (3) to aid in program review and assessment, and (4) to showcase professional standards.⁷ Reflection is one of the most important aspects of e-portfolio use because it can facilitate

skills to potential employers, as well as acquainting hiring managers with some of the technical skills they need to create, maintain, and update websites.^{9,10} Because employers around the country often seek employees who are critical thinkers, problem solvers, team players, good communicators, and accountable for outcome-based adaptation of nursing curricula, e-portfolios have been used for advancement in clinical ladder programs to measure salary incentives and promotions.¹¹

The e-portfolio is still in its early stage of development; however, you can use specific information to

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self-evaluation and development of future goals. When students participate in the self-reflection process, they're more likely to take charge of their own lifelong learning.² Research has shown that metacognitive skills, such as reflection, increase the degree to which learners transfer what they've learned to new settings and events.⁸

Open a new browser

The e-portfolio provides easy access for internship and employment searches, which assists with meeting the needs of management. Including the e-portfolio URL on business cards, a résumé, or a cover letter becomes a point of distinction for students and often a competitive advantage. For many employers, a student-developed website clearly demonstrates web writing skills.⁹ E-portfolios have helped students present their writing and design

prescreen candidates or you may include the e-portfolio as a factor in the final phase of the selection process to obtain a deeper and more complete level of information (learning reflections) that clearly demonstrates a job applicant's characteristics and potential for career development.¹² The multidimensionality of e-portfolios provides the nurse manager with another tool in the prehire period beyond the résumé, application, and interview. For healthcare institutions concerned about performance potential in the hiring process, there's a golden opportunity and much research potential to determine the effectiveness of e-portfolio use in the prehire period.

An important implication is how and when the e-portfolio is utilized in the hiring process and by whom, such as the human resources department, administration, and/or

management. Training and development considerations include ensuring familiarity with navigating through e-portfolio tabs, cost, weighted values in comparison with résumés, references, interview scoring, and time constraints.

In our opening scenario, the use of e-portfolios would have assisted Rachel by providing her with additional personalized data to discern the qualities of the potential hires beyond credentials and more delineated to the job fit in her particular department. For instance, Rachel could ascertain a candidate's view of him- or herself as having evolved into a professional identity, rather than defining and portraying him- or herself as a perpetual student after graduation. Additionally, the e-portfolio provides insight into clubs, memberships, activities, interests, and professional and personal values. For instance, a candidate could state in the interview that he or she is interested in and passionate about working with children, and Rachel can see first-hand evidence of what learning opportunities that the applicant has engaged in that support his or her pediatric interest.

The search is on!

As technology advances, healthcare organizations need to partner with academic institutions to communicate what characteristics distinguish the uniqueness of nurse hires, and update approaches to hiring, such as the relevance of a résumé in today's quest for nurses who articulate and demonstrate skill transference from the classroom to clinical practice. The e-portfolio is just one tool that can be utilized by a nurse applicant to showcase accomplishments, qualifications, and why he or she is the right fit for the job. **NM**

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