

# Job Incentives

By Tom Schaffner



**What will they do to hire you?**

**W**hat would it take for you to change jobs? For some people, the decision is simple: more money. For others, making a career decision of that magnitude takes a little more convincing.

With the radiology job market in great need of radiologic technologists (RTs), hospitals and other medical facilities find themselves competing for the best talent in the pool. Recruiters and other staffing companies are called upon to seek out qualified applicants to fill the many vacancies available throughout the radiology industry.

As the competition to fill these voids grows, bonus incentives have become all too commonplace in the hiring process.

### **Bonuses and Beyond**

The first and most routine incentive in the recruitment process is the sign-on bonus, says Larry Stewart, president of the Permanent Search Group of CompHealth, a staffing firm in Norwalk, Conn. He says a bonus can range anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000, depending on geographic location and the urgency to fill the position.

"The interesting thing is that the bonus can be paid in different ways," Stewart says. "Generally, we've seen it paid as a lump sum in the beginning of the hire or

over a period of the time." When paid in increments, the sign-on bonus acts as a retention tool as well, he adds.

At Rhode Island Medical Imaging (RIMI), in East Providence, Director of Human Resources Lynn Flynn offers a \$2,500 sign-on bonus to all technologists who commit to at least 20 hours per week, regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time. "We pay the bonus over a one-year period: \$500 upon hire, \$1,000 at six months and \$1,000 at one year," Flynn says. "This makes their first year pretty lucrative." She adds that a referral bonus is also paid if the hire is recommended by an employee.

Flynn says some companies may offer a longevity bonus — a predetermined amount of money for each year of service, beginning at five years of employment. This bonus is usually paid on the employee's anniversary date of hire.

A survey by Texas-based TimeLine Recruiting in Frisco reveals that for hiring opportunities reviewed for RTs in 2002, 87 percent offered signing bonuses, an 82 percent increase from 2001. Bonus amounts ranged from \$1,500 to as high as \$10,000. The average bonus was around \$4,500 with a two-year commitment.

Mike Kohrs, president of TimeLine Recruiting, notes that while salary is an

obvious determining factor, there are other incentives that can attract a perspective employee to a facility.

"Everyone can come up with the same money," Kohrs says. "[Salary] doesn't really separate opportunities any more. Nowadays, when people make the change, they're not seeing huge increases in their annual revenue or income based on their hourly wage." He says the real advantages are with the other incentives being offered, such as sign-on bonuses, more flexible scheduling, better call rotations and better technology in the facility.

Kohrs says that if a person is going to make a change in their career, it's probably not going to be for a few thousand dollars; rather it would be for a difference in quality of life. "If they can go from a rotation where they are on call one in five instead of one in three or no call at all, that improves their quality of life and might be worth relocating for," he says.

### **Continuing Education**

According to TimeLine Recruiting, 92 percent of the opportunities surveyed offer continuing medical education (CME), while 65 percent offer a tuition reimbursement program.

## **RT Gets Warm Reception in Chillicothe**

**I**t's no shocking revelation to say that a majority of successful incentive packages are about more than a matter of who offers the most dollars. If it were that simple, recruiters would be out of a job and human resources managers would be little more than negotiators.

People want to be treated with respect. They want to be part of a community and feel a sense of purpose, and the organizations that understand this simple tenet will always have the edge when it comes to attracting new talent into their organization. That holds true for radiologic technologists or any profession.

One placement involving TimeLine Recruiting was for a medical facility in Chillicothe, Mo., a community of about 7,500 people. The hospital there had been using temporary personnel, but the overall cost was one-and-a-half times greater than a full-time technologist salary would have been.

This hospital understood that a long-term personnel investment would require someone who was willing to make a commitment not just to the hospital but to the community, and they pulled out all the stops to demonstrate to one particular candidate how serious they were about holding up their end of that commitment.

We worked with both the hospital and the candidate ahead of time to eliminate the possibility of surprises — that's rarely a good word in this industry — and the hospital pulled out all the stops. Through our initial consultations, the hospital realized it would need to restructure its entire departmental compensation structure in order to be competitive in salary and benefits.

After putting together an attractive compensation and professional development package, including cross-training in disciplines such as computed tomography, they flew the candidate up to check things out. They spent an entire day with the candidate in both the hospital and surrounding community and showed a great deal of respect for the individual. Once the candidate and hospital came to see there was a great fit, the hospital paid a \$3,500 signing bonus, relocation costs and also worked to find the spouse employment in the area.

With a vision for the long term, this hospital understood the actual cost was an investment in the future, and the candidate wanted to be a part of that future.

— *Michael Frank, TimeLine Recruiting*

# RT Annual Compensation

Region	2001 Mean	2002 Low	2002 High	2002 Mean	Mean Change
East	\$46,125	\$37,880	\$57,080	\$48,675	5.5%
Midwest	\$41,052	\$31,681	\$54,324	\$41,284	0.6%
South	\$47,843	\$37,651	\$66,865	\$49,193	2.8%
West	\$50,245	\$39,960	\$60,160	\$51,749	3.0%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>\$48,246</b>	<b>\$37,960</b>	<b>\$60,523</b>	<b>\$50,561</b>	<b>4.8%</b>

The fluctuation in salaries from high to low is attributed to a number of variables including: years of experience, number of modalities, geographic area, size of community. (Note: These salaries may differ from those presented by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics as these numbers reflect opportunities that are actively recruiting. The bureau's numbers are based on compensation for everyone who is employed.)

In the Cape Fear Valley Health System in Fayetteville, N.C., Administrative Director Joyce McColl, BHS, RT(R), has had success filling technologist vacancies during the staffing shortage. "A lot of it has been through the opportunities we give to technologists to advance their education," says McColl, who supervises a staff of 143 radiologic professionals, of which approximately 65 are technologists.

At Cape Fear, RTs are incentivized to advance their skills in the modality of their choice (i.e., ultrasound, cardiovascular, bone densitometry, mammography, nuclear medicine, CT or MRI). Employees and recruits receive reimbursement for tuition, books, supplies and an innovative weekend work program. However, after completing training, Cape Fear does require RTs to fulfill work commitment.

While studying to advance, the RT may work 40 hours on weekends, either from Friday to Sunday or from Saturday to Monday. They receive pay and benefits for 40 hours and attend classes during the week. The hospital benefits by cultivating its own specialists while maintaining great weekend coverage. The other technologists work a Monday through Friday shift with very little weekend rotation.

In addition to CME, Stewart says that many facilities will further entice prospective employees with tuition reimbursement and student loan repayments spread out over a set period of time (for example, over a three-year period). Although common in many places, he notes that sign-on bonuses and CME opportunities are usually greater in rural areas.

## Rural Benefits

When dealing with job opportunities in rural areas, facilities tend to be more aggressive in terms of compensation and more flexible in terms of benefits and wage adjustments.

Kohrs says that a hospital in an urban or suburban setting can compete for local talent, but a rural community almost exclusively recruits on a national level. Incentives, such as sign-on bonuses and cross-training, fair well in this scenario, due to the more remote locations involved.

"Right now, cross-training in other modalities is a big issue," Kohrs says. "If you can bring in technologists who are only specialized in one modality and offer them

the opportunity to learn other modalities, they will be more valuable in the future. And from a candidate's perspective, they can demand a higher wage later."

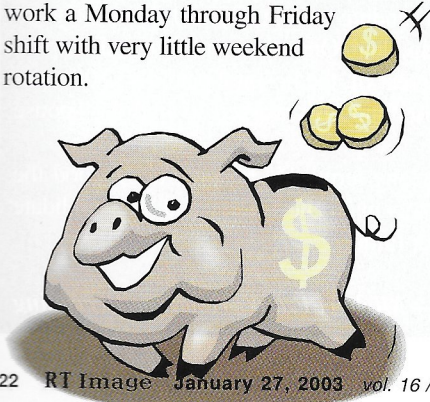
Incentives change depending on the region of the country, says Flynn. "In Kentucky, a candidate may be offered a car allowance, whereas in New York City, that person could be offered a subway pass." Other facilities may offer much more.

Stewart's firm recently placed a technologist in a West Virginia medical facility with a \$5,000 sign-on bonus (payable in thirds), a full relocation package with no limit, up to a year's temporary housing, two weeks CME and loan repayment for the full amount over three years of employment.

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## Other Benefits

There are many other creative ways to build an incentive program. McColl says that one of the most popular incentives is schedule flexibility, or schedule variation. "[Schedule variation can be tailored to] match the individual's lifestyle," she says, "giving the person opportunities to continue his or her education, yet still practice in their modality while attending school. It also makes for a



very strong retention tool. Employees are committed to the medical center after they are given this opportunity.”

Other common incentives include extra vacation days, relocation packages and housing options (such as a temporary housing allowance or mortgage payments for a set period of time). As in most cases, the housing options are more common in rural settings. Kohrs has seen cases where health, disability and life insurance, as well as retirement programs have been added to entice candidates to join a particular facility.

In some cases, more extreme incentives are proposed, like discounted season tickets to professional sporting events or full coverage of childcare costs.

### Temporary Staffing

Another option for someone looking to change jobs is the increasingly viable travel technologist position. Some staffing agencies deal solely with technologists who are willing to relocate for a period of time to fill a vacancy within a hospital or medical facility. On average, the salary is higher, there is the option to travel and there is more flexibility with the type and length of assignments.

Some temporary staffing companies like Starmed Staffing Group, Andover, Mass., will cover an employee's travel costs, housing accommodations, meals and health insurance for the length of the assignment. Long-time travelers with Starmed are even eligible to enroll in their 401(k) plan, since the person is an employee of Starmed, not the hospital or facility they are working for at the time.

Starmed also features additional incentive programs like an all-expense

paid trip to the Bahamas for employees who work multiple assignments within the company.

Douglas M. Orciani, director of sales for the radiology and therapy divisions at Starmed, says that these perks, however, are not for everyone.

“There's a large commitment involved with a traveling scenario,” he says, “If you have a husband, family or significant other, sometimes they might travel with you; other times, you might leave them behind for three or four months. Having to move every few months and get acquainted with all new coworkers is a big lifestyle change.”

### Little Choice

Stewart says the hospitals and facilities that his firm represents are very accommodat-

ing when it comes to hiring the right candidate. “They realize that they have to go that extra mile to get the [person] they're looking for,” he says. “The whole marketplace is one where there is a supply and demand and both parties know it. Both parties work well together.”

Stewart says the situation is not one in which the candidate is necessarily going to hold out for the highest offer. “It's a hire-friendly environment,” he says.

While the radiology staffing shortage remains above 15 percent, those with the hiring power continue to work on their incentive plans. As many administrators and human resource directors are now realizing, the only way to survive is to offer some types of incentives.

— Tom Schaffner is the editor of RT Image. Comments on this article are encouraged and can be directed to [tschaffner@valleyforgepress.com](mailto:tschaffner@valleyforgepress.com).



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