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OPA Staffing - providing Skilled Medical Staff to Nursing Facilities, Assisted Living Facilities, Prisons and Mental and Behavioral Health Facilities



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"It is vitally important to us that we build deep human connection, because that is the only way you are successful in any business." Stephen Deason

CEOCFO: Mr. Deason, the tagline on your site is "extraordinary medical staffing." What does that mean for OPA Staffing?

Mr. Deason: As you know, we are in the middle of a rather difficult time in history, a rather difficult season. One of the things that we focus on is providing excellent medical staff, people who will serve in skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, prisons and mental and behavioral health facilities. Therefore, we staff CNAs, med techs, LPNs, RNs, and phlebotomists, into really difficult situations, where they are often called upon to provide services to some of the most disadvantaged people in the population.

CEOCFO: Was that a deliberate choice to work with those communities? How did that come about for OPA?

Mr. Deason: I am a person in long term recovery. People often ask me "Recovery from what," and I tell them, "Lots of things." I do not mean to be dismissive by that. I just mean that many of us have significant trauma and have used different substances or behavioral ways of handling that. It could be anything from overeating to gambling, purchasing goods and so on. I try to set that aside and say, "I am a person in long term recovery and there are many other people in the world who are also in long term recovery." One of the things that you learn as a human from the scars that we gain as we get older, is that there is a lot of value in that learning.

As an organization, we have a foundation and we try to philanthropically help people who have become homeless, who have been institutionalized, and we work to help them get back on their feet. We try to employ them internally in our office, not at the facilities. However, we try to employ them in the office doing office tasks such as mailing

letters, checking references, or doing phone calls for us, until they get back on their feet. Then we can employ them as recruiters or staffers or credentialers. Therefore, we try to meet them where they are and help them. The recovery community often says that, "If you do not get into recovery, you are going to end up in jail, institutions or death," and so we try to serve those markets, because those are very difficult places.

CEOFCO: How do you balance quality and keep your standards high, when there is a desperate need for staff at many of the organizations?

Mr. Deason: We have a very open conversation with the facilities. Many times, we are able to do a really thorough job of interviewing people and making sure they are a good fit for the facility, understanding what the person's needs are, understanding what the facilities' needs are, doing behavioral assessments, and figuring out if that person is a match.

Other times, especially during this pandemic, an entire nursing staff will go home, sick with COVID. We have had 5 or 6 facilities in the last 9 months where every single human being at the facility has gotten sick with COVID at one time! At that point I sometimes get a call from an executive director that just says, "We have 150 people in beds, and the bedpans need to be changed, sheets need to be changed, people need to be helped to walk," and so on.

I often ask the question, "Is this a throw-me-everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach," and we can also serve those clients. We have been able to do that quite successfully and just help them through that 2- or 3-week period, when they need a bridge. We talk to the client every day to determine if our people are working out, are they a fit for the culture, and sometimes the answer is "no." Therefore, we move those people to a place where they are a better fit for the culture.

CEOFCO: How do you assess attitude, personality, that right fit? What might you do that less discerning organizations do not recognize as important?

Mr. Deason: Much of it has to do with two things. First of all, our recruiting staff is well trained in human behavior, so we spend a lot of time with them. Our Director of Human Resources is actually a Chaplain as well, so he has a really deep knowledge of how to help people through difficult spots and spends a lot of time with our team, training them on understanding what to look for and what not to do.

The second aspect of it is to remember that we look for people who have "lived experience." Therefore, that really provides us with a tremendous advantage when recruiting, because we have the ability to listen at a level that might be a little bit deeper than other organizations who serve our space.

CEOFCO: Do clients understand the difference? Are they turning to you because of the depth of your approach or are they sometimes surprised to find out what you can bring to the table at OPA?

Mr. Deason: I think they are surprised. We do not lead with that. It is a competitive advantage for us. For instance, an executive director from

one of our client facilities, called me one day and said, "I have never seen a staffing company this involved in helping us make sure that we have the right people. I have never seen a CEO be as involved as you are." She called me at 4:30am in the morning and we ended up chatting on a Sunday. I think that permeates throughout our entire organization, but I think the important point to our clients is that they get the benefit of the output.

CEOCFO: *How do you approach both potential clients and potential workers? How do you reach out?*

Mr. Deason: We do a 10-week sales process to do lead generation activities. That 10-week process involves 3 main outreaches; email, phone and then we actually use 'snail mail' at three stages in that process. That generates the business development lead part of that our sales funnel.

The second stage, once we get in touch with somebody and they are interested or need our services, is that we generate a call with one of our account managers and they spend some time trying to understand the needs. If we move forward, we try to get the recruiting team involved prior to the contract signing, depending on how urgent the need is for the client. We want to understand what we are getting into and what they client's needs are, so that we can start to make sure that the right staff are available as quickly as possible.

CEOCFO: *How are you attracting the staff? How are you attracting potential workers?*

Mr. Deason: We use the standard ways that other people do, Indeed, Zip Recruiter and so on, but then we also do a lot of social media connections. Therefore, we are on Facebook and Instagram. We have a social media team that handles that aspect of things. We do a pretty good referral program. I think that out of the 119 people that went out and worked for us last week, 16 of them were referrals made within the last month.

CEOCFO: *What is your geographic range today?*

Mr. Deason: We are headquartered in Georgia, we are in South Carolina, Alabama and Mississippi.

CEOCFO: *Do you see expansion further to other states?*

Mr. Deason: Florida has a relatively complex licensing process, and we are currently going through that, and Tennessee is very similar, so we will expand one state north and one state south, and then most likely into North Carolina.

CEOCFO: *Why is now the time for expansion?*

Mr. Deason: There is always a need for medical professionals, and there is particularly the need for our type of medical staffing now, during the pandemic! Very few companies do what we do well. Very few companies have a focus on PRN per diem staffing. We are just finding that there is always someone who is in an urgent state. Maybe they have had a lot of internal employee turnover, they need our services for a week or a month, or sometimes for three or four while they get their operations where they need to be to support the patients, that are really the focus for everybody.

CEOCFO: *How do you help your staff, workers, nurses acclimate quickly? What is the key to jumping in and getting it done? How do you help? How do you train your staff?*

Mr. Deason: These are licensed medical professionals, that is all that we work with. They are licensed by the state to do their jobs, and so they are all professionals, and they are all excellent at what they do. Our goal is to give them flexibility around their life, and what we ask in return is that they bring a willingness to work and a real curiosity, because they already have, or should have, a love for the patient.

What we offer is the ability for them to experience different facilities, experience different work environments, find places that they really enjoy working and really just have an amazing, sometimes short term, experience, and sometimes we have people who have been with us for years.

CEOCFO: *How do you help a facility understand what they might need to do with a temporary employee that is different than what they might do with their full-time regular staff?*

Mr. Deason: That is a great question, because I was just on the phone this morning with the Executive Director of one of our facilities and what we do not want to do is end in a co-employment situation, so what we talk to them about is that we are going to send you the staff and once the staff gets out there, it is your job to ensure that they have a good experience, because we want that person to come back as long as you need them. This is a very inverted labor market in this season of the United States' life cycle and the medical labor market has been inverted for a long time. There is much more need than there are people to fill that need.

This ties-back to your earlier question of why expand now. It is going to continue to increase because the Baby Boomer population is going to continue to retire and continue to need more and more services. We see a big social movement to people receiving assisted care at home, which further disperses the base of people who are already very limited, who are able to provide that care in an appropriate manner. My co-founder and I are both technology executives by training, and so we have spent a lot of time building systems that support our registrants, what we call our folks, our staff who go out in the field. We spend a lot of time building the systems to make sure that they have a good experience when they are out there.

CEOCFO: *We came upon OPA as you are going to be at an upcoming conference. How do you stand out? What do you do so people are the conference pay attention?*

Mr. Deason: We just bring our authentic selves. Our staff spent over one million minutes last month on the phones. It is vitally important to us that we build deep human connection, because that is the only way you are successful in any business. This is a business that has many transactions in it. When we go to a conference our goal is to get out, mingle, get involved with folks, talk with them, understand where they are, meet them where they are and see if there is some synergy. I hate using that term but see if there is some synergy.

CEOCFO: *Why choose OPA Staffing?*

Mr. Deason: If you are a staff member, someone who is a medical professional, we offer well over 100 facilities that you can choose from, an amazing array of shifts and times that you can work and a wonderful pay scale that hits your bank account quickly. If you are a client, we have almost 1,000 people who can fulfill your needs on very short order. If you are a potential internal employee, we do all of this in order to serve a social mission, and that is to help people who have been marginalized get back on their feet and do something meaningful with their lives.

CEOCFO: *Do potential customers like the fact that you have a purpose? Is it meaningful, or is it just a nice plus?*

Mr. Deason: We follow the Warby Parker model. Warby Parker is a social enterprise that makes glasses, and what they discovered was the fact that they give away a pair of glasses into third world countries does not matter at all to their customers, but it matters very much to their internal employees and their internal employees' attitudes matter to their customers.

Our social mission helps us attract and retain a better internal staff and that internal staff's attitude has a positive impact secondary effect on our customer base. Therefore, we do not think there is a direct connection that our social mission matters to our customers, but it does matter to our internal people, and so matters to our customers.

