

WHITE PAPER

# HOW PHYSICIANS RESPOND TO ONLINE JOB POSTINGS



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This white paper summarizes the results of a study conducted by MedPanel, an independent market research firm, for NEJM CareerCenter. Fielded in June 2016, the study sought to identify which attributes of an online job posting are most likely to elicit a response from jobseekers. The study participants were not aware that the study was sponsored by NEJM CareerCenter.

## WHY THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

Online job postings are a critical tactic in sourcing physicians in today's competitive talent marketplace. And while it is clear that most physician employers use this marketing tool to find qualified candidates, there is little guidance available on how to make online job postings more effective.

Online job postings are advertisements whose primary purpose is to encourage a candidate to respond to an employer's solicitation. In order to learn what attributes of an **online** job posting physicians are most likely to respond to, NEJM CareerCenter contracted with MedPanel to conduct a blind independent study.

## HOW THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

The study consisted of two sections: (1) a conjoint exercise (a statistical technique to determine how people value different attributes of a product or service) and (2) a short survey to gauge jobseekers' rankings of the value of job posting elements. In particular, NEJM CareerCenter sought to gain insight into the following:

- The attributes of an online job posting that are most likely to elicit a response
- The effect that "tone" — or words that evoke positive emotions — has on a jobseeker's decision to respond to a posting
- Which visual online text presentations appeals most to physicians
- Assessing how salary affects the likelihood of a physician to respond to a job advertisement

A total of 359 physicians consisting of United States-based residents/fellows, primary care physicians, specialists, and physician leaders completed this study.



## THE CONJOINT SECTION

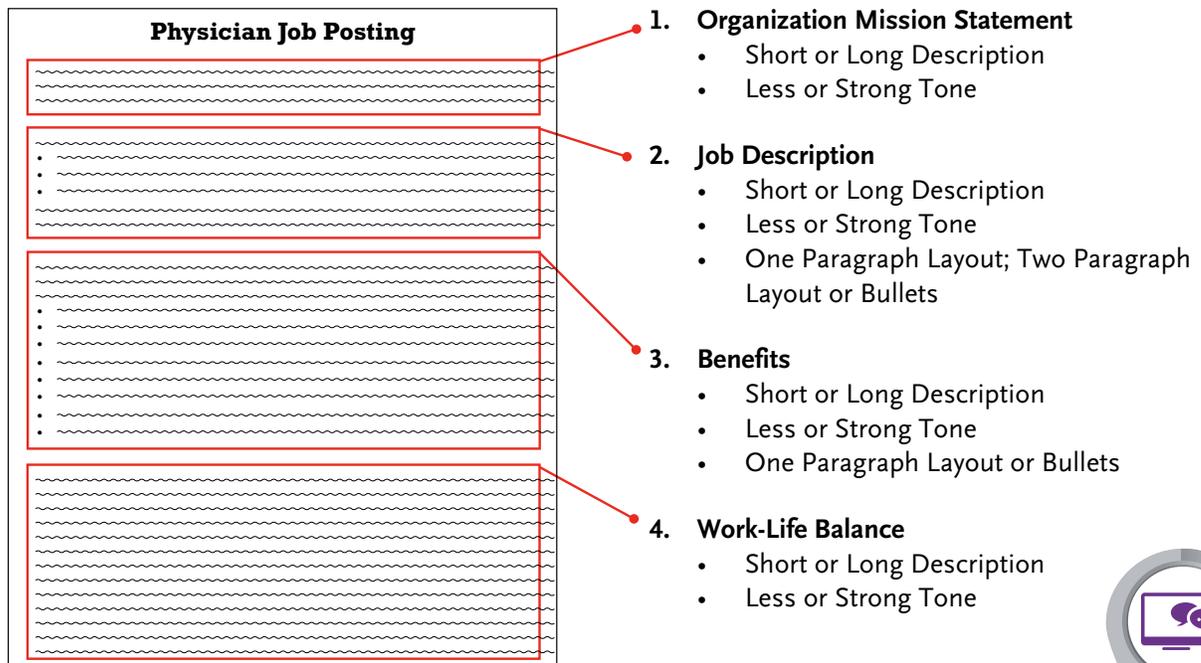
During the conjoint exercise, respondents were shown two jobs on a web page at a time and asked to choose their preferred job posting. Each job posting had a mix of attributes including short/long text, less or strong tone, paragraphs, and/or bulleted text. A total of 112 different combinations were shown and researchers were able to determine the most preferred combinations.

Research on job postings confirms that “location” and “salary” are the two most important factors for physicians when applying for a job. Given the number of variables, it was not possible to test location and salary along with other attributes, so study participants were asked to assume the job was located in an area desirable to them. Additionally, conjoint study participants were not asked to respond to specific salary ranges in order to reduce the number of variables.

**NOTE:** In the “Survey” portion of the study, questions around salary were asked of participants.

## ANATOMY OF A JOB POSTING

Every job posting shown to respondents consisted of four common attributes: Organization Mission Statement, Job Description, Benefits, and Work-Life Balance. Each of the four attributes contained combinations of attributes:



## A DEEPER LOOK INTO EACH ATTRIBUTE OF A JOB POSTING

### 1. ORGANIZATION MISSION STATEMENT

Jobseekers preferred more information and less tone (adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns) in describing an organization's mission.

#### *Most Preferred Example of "Organization Mission Statement"*

Mercy Hospital is committed to providing first-class compassionate health care using the latest advances in technology and treatment options.

### 2. JOB DESCRIPTION

Jobseekers preferred more information, bulleted text, and less tone (adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns) in online job descriptions.

#### *Most Preferred Example of "Job Description"*

The position involves working with:

- Groups that are affiliated with Mercy Hospital
- The hospital's employed physicians
- The organization's private-practice providers

The primary focus of the organization is on quality outcomes, manageable panel size, and full coordination of care.

### 3. BENEFITS

Jobseekers preferred more information, strong "tone" (adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns), as well as bulleted text.

#### *Most Preferred Example of "Benefits"*

We are proud to offer you a competitive benefits package that includes:

- A **generous** loan repayment program
- A **substantial** hiring bonus
- An **all-inclusive** package to help you relocate
- Short and long term disability insurance
- **Significant** time off to complete CME and allowance for paid programs
- **Top-rated** malpractice insurance coverage
- An **excellent** 401(k) retirement and savings plan



#### 4. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Jobseekers preferred more information and strong “tone,” including adjectives, adverbs and pronouns.

##### ***Most Preferred Example of “Work-Life Balance”***

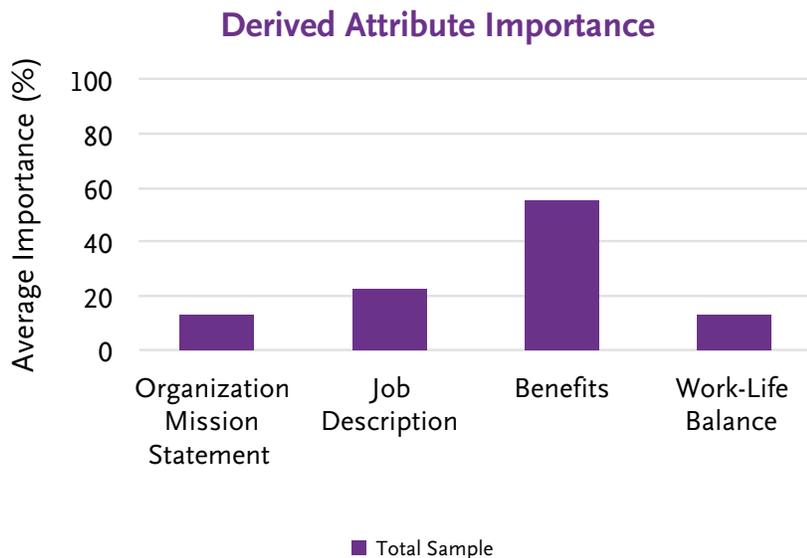
We embrace a healthy work-life balance that includes family-friendly hours, a modest call schedule, conveniently located on-site child care and state-of-the-art fitness centers at all major facilities, automotive and pet insurance, a progressive wellness center, and consumer product and service discounts for our organization’s employees.

### KEY FINDINGS FROM CONJOINT SECTION

#### **Benefits are the most important attribute**

Among all physicians surveyed, the benefits portion of a job posting was deemed the single most important attribute in this study.

Adding more detail about benefits can improve the likelihood that a physician will respond to an advertisement. While the job description ranked second most important, the organizational mission statement and work-life balance sections ranked very closely at the least important of the four attributes.

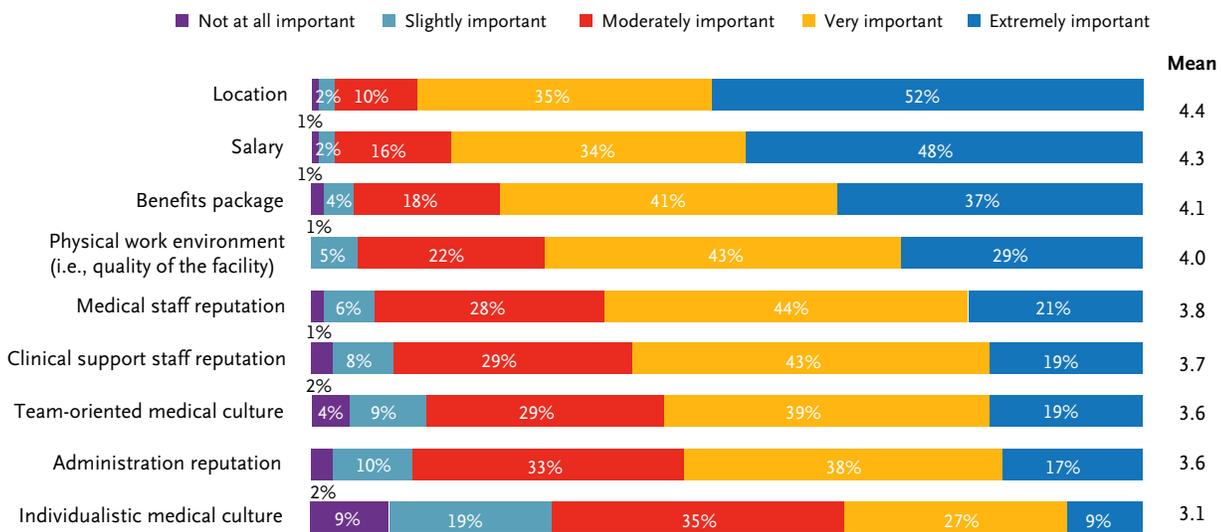


## KEY FINDINGS FROM SURVEY SECTION

### Location and salary remain the most important

As seen in past surveys, job location, job salary, and benefits package are the three most important attributes in the decision to apply for a job. The top three attributes are the same among all the groups of physicians: residents and fellows, physicians in practice, and physician leaders. Please note that in the conjoint portion of the study, participants were not asked to respond to specific locations or salaries.

### Job Attribute Importance — Total Sample



### Salary expectation impact

When asked how likely physicians were to apply for a job based on the salary information provided in a job description, the results mirrored prior studies. Potential job applicants are most likely to apply for a job with a higher-than-expected salary. Having no salary listed or a salary lower than expected hurts the likelihood of getting a physician to apply for a job. **It is slightly better to list no salary at all** than risk listing a salary that is lower than expected.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Jobseekers “scan” information quickly; where possible, use bulleted text and paragraph breaks to improve “scanability.”
- Jobseekers want as much information as possible but do NOT prefer strong “tone” or emotional words to “sell” the mission.
- Jobseekers want as much information as possible in the job description, and they prefer less “tone” or words to overly “sell” the job description. They also prefer that the job description be easily scanned using bulleted text instead of long paragraphs of words.
- “Benefits” was one of two sections in which jobseekers preferred stronger “tone,” including personal pronouns and adjectives in the descriptions. This result suggests that benefits are extremely important to this group and more emotional, evocative text will improve jobseekers’ likelihood to respond. Additionally, they preferred lengthy descriptions and the use of bullets for easy scanning.
- Jobseekers believe that work-life balance is important, and they are open to the use of stronger emotional terms to accentuate this job attribute. They also prefer more information, not less, when describing work-life balance.

## ABOUT NEJM CAREERCENTER

NEJM CareerCenter provides unique physician recruitment solutions. Our advanced technology targets passive physician jobseekers by specialty while they are reading trusted and valued content from the *New England Journal of Medicine* and NEJM Journal Watch online. We also reach physicians through a number of our opt-in clinical content emails and on our NEJMCareerCenter.org site.

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