

6 Proactive Measures to Recruit and Retain Engaged Nurses

BY DAVID WILKINS



Increasing demand for health care services and the clinicians that provide them is putting tremendous pressure on hospitals and other health care organizations. Add to that the increase in competition from the more than 11,800 urgent care and retail facilities drawing from the same talent pool and you have a set of circumstances that can be challenging for the health care talent acquisition teams.

In today's market, where a third of hospitals have an RN vacancy rate of more than 10 percent¹ and 500,000 open positions go unfilled every month,² health care talent management professionals are re-evaluating their recruitment and retention strategies as well as their corporate culture to identify actionable strategies to attract engaged, qualified candidates, and minimize turnover.

Employee turnover is a costly reality in any field and retaining top talent in health care is particularly challenging. Turnover not only has a significant impact on patient satisfaction and

treatment outcomes, it also comes at a high price. It is estimated that every percentage point increase in nurse turnover costs an average hospital about \$300,000 annually.³

Consider some of the following proactive measures to recruit and retain engaged nurses who love their job:

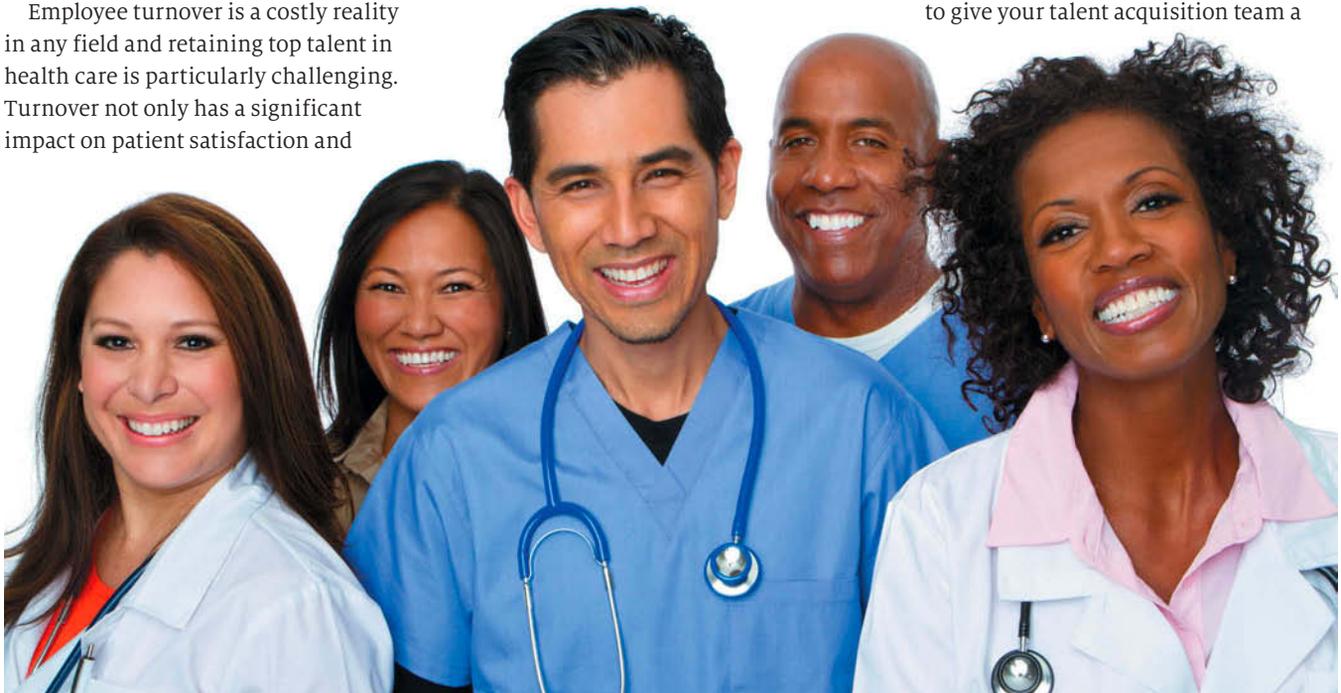
1 Create a strong culture

Creating and promoting a strong workplace culture is one of the most important factors when considering your recruitment and retention strategy. Employees want to know they're in a supportive environment where their voices will be heard and their input will be valued. For example, if a nurse offers a solution to a workplace problem, he/she should be rewarded for that level of strategic thinking.

Baptist Health, a faith-based organization, initiated a unique program called HR on Wheels. HR executives go to the clinical floors at different shifts on a mobile cart filled with brochures and other important flyers. They liaise with nurses and give them a chance to speak to an HR representative in person to discuss the benefits and opportunities the hospital provides.

Consider creating day-in-the-life videos with current employees talking about collaboration and teamwork. Bring a collaborative approach to interviewing and involve peers in the process. This will illustrate to candidates that employees' opinions matter within the organization.

Employment brand is another vital piece of a strong culture. Reevaluate your recruitment marketing strategies to give your talent acquisition team a



STATE OF NURSING TALENT 2017 [and Beyond]

Nursing TODAY



of hospitals have an RN vacancy rate of more than 10%²



82 days on average to fill an experienced nurse vacancy³

Nursing TOMORROW

1.05 million more nurses needed by 2022⁴

Over 500,000 experienced RNs will retire by then⁵

10 states will account for half that job growth

Texas, California, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Illinois, Michigan, and Massachusetts⁶



Nursing Retention a PRIORITY?



RN TURNOVER
costs a hospital **\$5.2M TO \$8.1M A YEAR**⁸

COMBAT TURNOVER WITH

- Strong onboarding strategy
- Positive working environment
- Career development

Learn how our **talent management solutions** can help your organization at www.healthcaresource.com

¹ The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
² Compdata Surveys

³ "2016 National Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report," NSI Nursing Solutions
⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics

⁵ American Nursing Association
⁶ American Nursing Association

⁷ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
⁸ "2016 National Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report," NSI Nursing Solutions

competitive edge in getting the word about your brand (and culture) out to attract the right candidates.

2 Use behavioral-based assessments

Behavioral assessment science is still not well understood by many talent professionals, resulting in significant underutilization of this proven retention strategy. Using biodata and surveyed historical behaviors, top-tier assessment tools can score applicants' predisposition toward retention.

Houston Methodist has found that among RN populations, the retention rate for those who did not take an assessment was 16.67 percent. For those who did take an assessment, it was 9.37 percent, a difference of 43.8 percent. In other words, if you are not using assessments today and you were to be able to achieve similar results to Houston Methodist, you could decrease your turnover rates by more than 40 percent just by implementing a health care-specific behavioral assessment tool with a validated prediction index.⁴

3 Promote departmental reputation

For many, the most important factor in choosing where to work is departmental reputation. Are patient outcomes good? Are team members patient-focused, competent and collaborative?

When hiring for a particular role or department, highlight awards and other accolades that validate a commitment to quality. Be on the lookout for regional workplace awards and enter to win them to affirm that your organization is a great place to work. Share patient stories on your career site and in communications to potential employees to provide anecdotal proof of the impact your nurses have on care.

4 Offer training and career advancement

Training, leadership development and advancement are crucial as they collectively prove that employees can grow within the organization rather than having to leave to gain more skills and advance.

Nurses will think twice about leaving a hospital if they believe they have a

strong future with the organization. This is particularly important for millennial nurses just starting out on their journey. Offer educational opportunities for nursing staff to learn about making the transition from RN to BSN or other areas of interest. Showcase opportunities for learning and advancement, particularly any tuition assistance or reimbursements for certifications and nursing conferences. Be sure to note how certification and master's degrees' impact wages and salaries.

Further, a strong talent development and succession strategy can take significant pressure off the recruiting team. If you can grow critical talent and new leaders from within, recruiters can focus more on hiring for potential and fit than on finding the perfect, one in a million candidate. Hiring and then growing more junior candidates will decrease costs, increase the available talent pool, decrease time-to-fill and improve the overall efficiency of the overall talent management function.

5 Offer wellness programs and encourage self-care

Nurses often put their patients' and coworkers' needs ahead of their own. Their selflessness can cause a great deal of stress in their personal lives. A study conducted by Health Affairs found that nurses who work more than 12 hours in a single shift and 40 hours in a week are more prone to turnover and job dissatisfaction. Numerous other studies have also found a relationship between overtime and worker's compensation claims, and between overtime and accidents. In fact, at 12 hours, the accident rate doubles.⁵

Another challenge health care workers face is the rise in acuity and the reduction in the average length of stay. Nurses in particular are now treating a higher percentage of acute patients each day who turn over more quickly, bringing in a new batch of highly acute, challenging patients.

The combination of overtime, staffing gaps, increased reliance on contract staff, and a higher percentage of more highly acute patients means that nurses

and other health care professionals are managing very high levels of stress both physically and mentally. Providing wellness programs can forestall burnout and signal a culture of caring that will not only reduce attrition but attract high quality talent as well.

6 Recognize and reward high performers

Something as simple as nurse leaders taking time to demonstrate appreciation for their staff's efforts go a long way. Nurses, like other professionals, want to feel appreciated for the work they're doing. Receiving acknowledgements and accolades for dedication and achievements can motivate nurses to go the extra mile by providing exceptional patient care.

Many hospitals like to use service awards like Nurse of the Month/Year to show their appreciation for dedication and loyalty. Temple St. Luke's Hospital has a retention bonus program where they reward their loyal staff on an annual basis. They also offer a Pay as You Go Nursing Educational Assistance program. In this program, individuals who are accepted into either a bachelor or associate of nursing program will have their educational expenses pre-paid. In addition, employees are paid for the time they are taking classes.

By taking strategic steps to create a nurse-friendly culture, offer opportunities for career advancement, establish a flexible environment, and recognize and reward engaged nurses for their hard work and loyalty, organizations can take the upper hand in the war for health care talent.

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Sources:

- 1 2016 National Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing Report.
- 2 Lean Human Capital data/research.
- 3 The National Prescription for Nurse Engagement.
- 4 The Journey Toward Unparalleled Employee Engagement at Houston Methodist.
- 5 The Effect of Work Hours on Adverse Events and Errors in Health Care.