

HealthTech

Nurse Leader

December 2023 Volume 1 Issue 2

Nursing Retention and Recruitment vs. Recruitment and Retention

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You cannot pick up a nursing journal or open an online healthcare news article without seeing something about the crises related to staffing in general & nurse staffing specifically. Nursing shortages have been a reoccurring theme over the decades, but this shortage really is different. Why is it different? One reason is because there are so many more opportunities for the 4+ million RNs in the workforce today. Registered nurses (RNs) at the bedside in hospitals is only one opportunity; nurses are in demand in ambulatory care, in long term care, in public health, in home care, in private equity ventures, in telehealth / virtual nursing, and there is a growing number of RNs becoming entrepreneurs.

This combination creates a growing demand for nursing professionals, a demand that shows no signs of abating. As the world's population ages and healthcare systems continue to evolve, nurses remain the backbone of patient care. Consequently, healthcare institutions are facing an ongoing challenge of recruiting and retaining skilled nursing staff. The added opportunities for RNs create the need to understand that the strategies of the past will not be as effective in the future. Focusing on recruitment strategies as a means to hire more RNs is short sighted.

Healthy Practice Environments

Nurses today are looking for healthy practice environments. What does a healthy practice environment look like? The American Nurses Association has provided some key concepts through their work outlined in the Nurses Bill of Rights. The ANA's Nurses Bill of Rights is a document that outlines the rights and responsibilities of nurses in their professional practice found at <https://www.nursing-world.org/practice-policy/work-environment/>. It aims to promote a safe and supportive practice environment for nurses and acknowledges their contributions to patient care and the healthcare system. **Here are some key principles that are typically included in the ANA's Nurses Bill of Rights:**

1. Nurses have the right to practice in a manner that fulfills their obligations to society and to those who receive nursing care.
2. Nurses have the right to practice in environments that allow them to act in accordance with professional standards and legally authorized scopes of practice.
3. Nurses have the right to a work environment that supports and facilitates ethical practice, in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements.
4. Nurses have the right to freely and openly advocate for themselves and their patients, without fear of retribution.
5. Nurses have the right to fair compensation for their work, consistent with their knowledge, experience, and professional responsibilities.
6. Nurses have the right to a work environment that is safe for themselves and for their patients.
7. Nurses have the right to negotiate the conditions of their employment, either as individuals or collectively, in all practice settings.

How do you know how your practice environment stacks up against these Bill of Rights? It's easy – ASK! Start by working on your retention and ensuring that you have a practice environment where RNs are not only happy to practice in but are also eager to tell their friends and colleagues about it.

What are the right questions to ask? There is a process called Stay Interviews to assist in asking the right questions. In the quest to reduce nurse turnover rates and ensure the highest quality of patient care, organizations are increasingly turning to innovative approaches like Stay Interviews. We will explore the concept of Stay Interviews and their role in nursing retention, drawing insights from relevant resources.

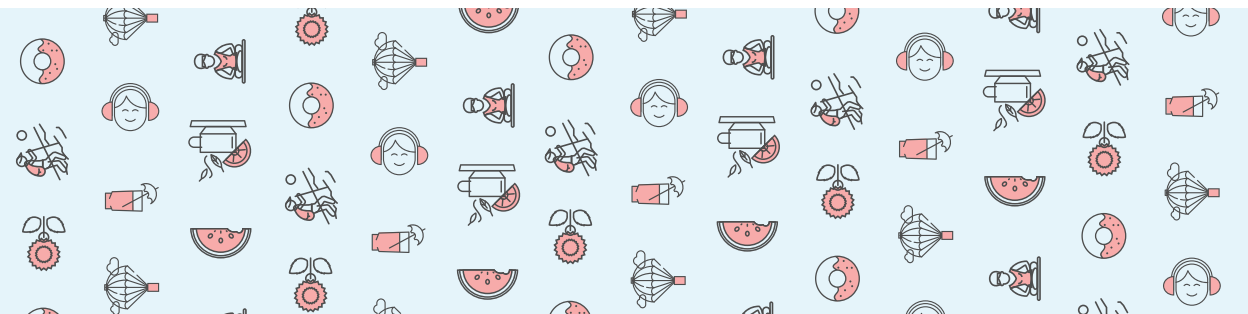
The Importance of Nursing Retention

Retaining nursing professionals are critical for healthcare organizations for various reasons:

- 1. Patient Care Quality:** Nurses are fundamental to patient care, and their expertise and dedication significantly impact patient outcomes. High nurse turnover rates can disrupt continuity of care and diminish the quality of patient experiences.
- 2. Cost Savings:** The recruitment and onboarding process is expensive, and high turnover rates result in substantial costs for healthcare institutions. Reducing nurse turnover can lead to cost savings.
- 3. Workforce Shortages:** Many regions are facing nursing shortages, and high turnover exacerbates these shortages. Healthcare institutions need to retain their skilled nursing staff to meet patient needs.

The Concept of Stay Interviews

Stay Interviews are a proactive approach to retaining nursing staff. They are distinct from exit interviews, which are conducted when employees are leaving the organization. Instead, Stay Interviews aim to understand the motivations and concerns of current employees to improve their job satisfaction and engagement. These interviews allow organizations to identify and address issues before they become significant problems, thereby reducing turnover rates.



Resources to Guide Stay Interviews

1. "Why They Stay and Why They Leave: Stay Interviews" (Journal of Nursing Administration)

The article titled "Why They Stay and Why They Leave: Stay Interviews" published in the Journal of Nursing Administration emphasizes the importance of conducting Stay Interviews to understand the factors influencing nurse retention. It provides insights into the motivations of nurses who choose to remain in their positions, highlighting aspects such as professional development opportunities, work-life balance, and supportive management. The resource underscores the significance of incorporating Stay Interviews as a retention strategy.

2. "Conducting Stay Interviews" (Emerging RN Leader)

The Emerging RN Leader website offers valuable guidance on conducting Stay Interviews. The resource provides practical tips and questions to ask during these interviews. It emphasizes the role of Stay Interviews in strengthening nurse-manager relationships, identifying areas for improvement, and ultimately enhancing job satisfaction among nursing staff.

3. "Stay Interview Toolkit" (University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health)

The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's Stay Interview Toolkit is a comprehensive resource that outlines the process of conducting Stay Interviews. It offers templates, sample questions, and guidelines for healthcare organizations looking to implement Stay Interviews effectively. The toolkit is a practical resource for healthcare leaders aiming to retain their nursing workforce.

The Benefits of Stay Interviews in Nursing Retention

Stay Interviews offer several benefits for nursing retention:

1. **Increased Job Satisfaction:** By addressing nurses' concerns and recognizing their contributions, Stay Interviews boost job satisfaction and overall happiness in the workplace.
2. **Identification of Retention Strategies:** Through Stay Interviews, healthcare organizations can identify areas for improvement and develop targeted retention strategies. This may include offering career advancement opportunities, flexible work schedules, or additional training and support.
3. **Enhanced Nurse-Manager Relationships:** Stay Interviews provide a platform for open communication between nurses and their supervisors. Stronger relationships with managers can foster a sense of belonging and trust, reducing turnover.
4. **Cost Savings:** Reduced turnover rates mean decreased recruitment and training costs, contributing to significant cost savings for healthcare institutions.

Exemplars:

There are two exemplars that we will highlight related to Stay Interviews and incorporating nurses in the development of the solution. The two organizations are very different, but their need to be innovative in creating healthy practice environments is the same.

The first organizational example is the Stay Interview process utilized by Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, a large academic medical center in New Hampshire. Their journey consisted of:

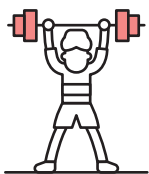
1. Defining their current state
2. Gathering the evidence related to Stay Interviews
3. Determined what was within their control
4. Outlining how they could be proactive
5. Incorporating the importance of stakeholders

Once these elements were well understood, the next step was creating a Stay Interview committee comprised of both RN staff and managers. As a group, they developed consensus on why a Stay Interview is important and the following points were agreed upon:

1. We want to have forthright, unreserved, authentic conversations.
2. We want the ability to provide feedback on day-to-day operations.
3. We want to praise the positive.
4. We had and will have frank discussion together with honesty and integrity.

The next step the committee completed was the development of the question to ask in the Stay Interview:

1. What do you like the most about working here?
2. If you could change something about your job, what would it be?
3. When was the last time you thought about leaving our team? What prompted it?
4. Why do you stay here?
5. What can be done to make your experience at work better for you?



The second exemplar is an innovative staffing solution for the labor and delivery (L&D) services for Platte County Memorial Hospital, a small critical access hospital in Wheatland, Wyoming. Like many rural hospitals, staffing L&D is often difficult as volumes are low and unpredictable. It is also no secret that specialized nurses such as L&D nurses, often do not want to float to other departments and required floating decreases job satisfaction and in turn decreases retention.

Prior to solving this L&D staffing dilemma, the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) was contracting with specialty travel nurses to cover this work. The use of travel nurses is not only expensive, but it can also decrease the satisfaction of permanent staff. At the 2023 Wyoming Nurses Association Annual Summit, the CNO shared the journey their team embarked upon to eliminate travel nurses and develop an innovative staffing solution.

The CNO consulted with the permanent L&D RNs to develop an innovative staffing model. As colleagues, together they designed their practice model that consists of:

1. The L&D services being covered by three full-time L&D RNs
2. The employment status of these RNs was changed to exempt, they receive a have full-time salary with accompanying benefits
3. They identified weekly schedules for nurse A, nurse B, and nurse C
 - Nurse A is the first nurse to come in to conduct all scheduled events such as non-stress tests; to answer any calls from patients; and is the first to be called in for any assessments, evaluations, and management of laboring patients 24/7 for the week.
 - Nurse B is on back up and is called in by Nurse A as needed to assist with any assessments, evaluations, and management of laboring patients 24/7.
 - Nurse C is off for the week.
 - Each week the schedule of Nurse A, Nurse B, and Nurse C rotates.

These L&D RNs do not float to other areas, they work within their specialty which improves their job satisfaction, and they collaborate as a team to ensure the patients are safely managed with the highest quality of care.

Recruitment

As we conclude this newsletter on retention and recruitment, let's spend a bit of time on recruitment. In the past there have been monetary incentives for signing on with an organization. However, sign-on bonuses may not provide an adequate return on investment if the new hire is joining an unhealthy practice environment and in fact may lead to more turnover. When it comes to bonuses, let's compare and contrast sign-on bonuses and recruitment bonuses. Sign-on bonuses for registered nurses (RNs) and recruitment bonuses for existing staff who assist in recruiting new hires serve different purposes and have distinct characteristics.

Here's a comparison and contrast of the two:

Sign-On Bonuses for RNs

Purpose:

Recruitment: Sign-on bonuses for RNs are primarily used to attract new nurses to join a healthcare facility. They serve as an incentive for nurses to accept a job offer.

Recipient:

New Hires: Sign-on bonuses are offered to newly hired nurses, whether they are experienced or recent graduates.

Timing:

Paid to New Hires: Sign-on bonuses are typically paid to the new nurse upon accepting the job offer and often upon the completion of a specific period (e.g., after a few months of employment).

Retention:

Focus on Recruitment: Sign-on bonuses are mainly designed to attract new talent and may not have a strong focus on retaining nurses in the long term.

Recruitment Bonuses for Existing Staff

Purpose:

Recruitment Assistance: Recruitment bonuses for existing staff are designed to encourage current employees to help recruit new hires. They serve as an incentive for employees to refer potential candidates to the organization.

Recipient:

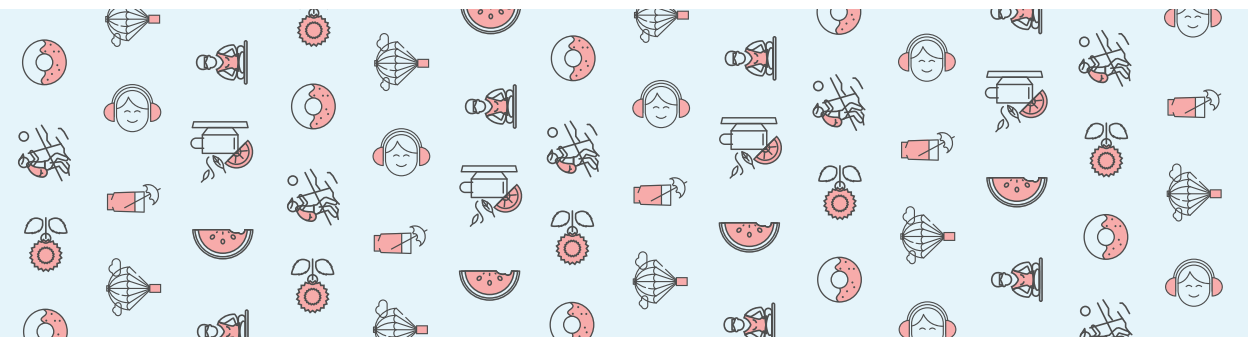
Current Employees: These bonuses are given to existing staff who refer qualified candidates, thus involving the current workforce in the recruitment process.

Timing:

Paid Upon Success: Recruitment bonuses for existing staff are typically paid after the referred candidate is hired and has completed a specified period of employment.

Retention:

Indirect Retention Benefit: While the primary goal of recruitment bonuses for existing staff is to assist in recruitment, there is an indirect retention benefit. Current employees who are involved in the hiring process may feel a greater sense of ownership and connection to the organization.



Comparison and Contrast

Purpose: Sign-on bonuses focus on attracting new nurses, while recruitment bonuses for existing staff aim to involve current employees in the recruitment process.

Recipient: Sign-on bonuses are given to new hires, while recruitment bonuses go to current employees who refer candidates.

Timing: Sign-on bonuses are paid to new hires upon acceptance or after a set period, while recruitment bonuses for existing staff are paid after the referred candidate is hired and completes a specific period.

Retention: Sign-on bonuses may have a limited impact on retention, focusing primarily on recruitment. Recruitment bonuses indirectly benefit retention by engaging current employees in the hiring process.

In summary, sign-on bonuses and recruitment bonuses for existing staff serve different roles in the recruitment and retention of nurses. Sign-on bonuses are for attracting new talent, while recruitment bonuses involve current employees in the hiring process and indirectly contribute to retention through employee engagement.

Conclusion

In the face of ongoing nursing shortages and the need for high-quality patient care, healthcare organizations must prioritize retention and recruitment strategies. Stay Interviews offer a proactive approach to understanding and addressing nurses' needs and concerns, ultimately contributing to a satisfied and engaged nursing workforce. By including the current staff in the solutions and tapping into the innovation of all stakeholders, healthcare institutions can harness the power of creating a healthy practice environment. Healthy practice environments attract professional nurses enhancing retention and recruitment, ultimately improving patient care and organizational performance.



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