

2017 Guide

McKnight's

Professional Development

SUPPLEMENT TO

McKnight's
Long-Term Care News & Senior Living

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A background image showing the silhouettes of several business professionals in a cityscape. The figures are in various poses, some holding documents or laptops, set against a bright, hazy sky with a city skyline. The overall color palette is light blue and white.

Are you being paid enough?

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Opportunity

A classic spin on a lifelong wish for Roger.

All his life, Roger Baker has had a passion for classic cars. Despite his dementia, he continues, at age 86, to connect with his love of cars. As a boy, health issues prevented him from pursuing his dream career as an auto mechanic. But Roger didn't spin wheels, instead, he went on to become an author, lecturer, and storyteller. Wherever he traveled, Roger's love of classic cars traveled with him and his wish to see, first-hand, how they are built.

SCA, the maker of TENA® incontinence and skin care products is committed to enriching the lives of seniors. We enthusiastically partnered with Wish of A Lifetime to make Roger's wish, fire on all cylinders. At a classic car shop in Houston, his dream came true to get an inside look at a classic car being rebuilt. Wish of A Lifetime is a non-profit that fulfills the lifelong wishes of senior citizens like Roger. He inspires us all to dream big, and never let age be a roadblock.

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Together we make a difference

NEW HORIZONS

Supply-side economics

Heightened demand and fewer applicants present a major staffing challenge for senior living operators

By John Hall

Senior living and long-term care owners and operators have long weathered storms — from fixing aging infrastructures, navigating behemoth government rules and regulations, and finding ways to stay open in the face of declining reimbursement. But nothing threatens their survival more than “the people problem.”

The problem is, there simply aren't enough of them, and it's likely to get worse.

Rich demand, poor supply

An oft-quoted statistic from the Bureau of Labor Statistic bears repeating: At least 2.5 million more workers will be needed by 2030 to provide care and services to the aging United States population. Over the next 10 years, the most robust growth will be in home health at 60%, with a 30% increase seen in residential care facilities and 20% in nursing care facilities. As recently as January, there were nearly 22,000 unfilled jobs in senior living and nursing facilities of all kinds, according to OnShift, an industry workforce solutions company.

The job supply has been swelling predictably and painfully for years. In a 2015 Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care report, University of California-San Francisco researchers noted a substantial uptick started and sustained itself years *before* the Great Recession in 2009. Per annum growth rates of more than 24%



By any measure, qualified workers are hard to find in this sector.

will ensure that in just five years, long-term care employment will surpass all other U.S. sectors. As reported recently by the *New York Times*, the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute predicts the nation's direct-care workforce will be “5 million strong [and] the largest occupation in the United States.”

Yet the most vexing problem remains: ensuring an adequate supply of trained workers.

The supply-demand problem isn't lost on companies such as OnShift. “Demand for workers will continue to outstrip supply in a strengthening economy,” says Executive Vice President Peter Corless. “Although there will continue to be length-of-stay pressure in skilled nursing, job expansion in other areas of post-acute and the broader economy will continue to provide demand-side pressure on post-acute employment.”

No surprise the issue frus-

trates hiring managers today. When workforce solutions and hiring software provider Vikus surveyed approximately 250 senior care providers in October 2016, it found 76% said hiring had become even more challenging than the year before.

“Many providers reported seeing fewer applicants for open positions due to the high demand for healthcare services and the abundance of job opportunities available in healthcare as well as other industries,” says Martha Abercrombie, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, the firm's vice president of strategy.

High-demand positions

It's no secret that health aides, physical therapists and registered nurses are among the most in-demand openings today, says Abercrombie.

Argentum, the nation's largest senior living association, has

forecast that more than 460,000 certified nursing assistants and home health aides, and approximately 25,600 registered nurses will be needed by the next decade. Smaller numbers, yet no less pressing, will be required in areas such as food service, personal care, building maintenance and administrative support positions.

If you're not an owner or operator in one of the 15 states that host 70% of the country's senior living communities (including California, Florida and Texas), the pickings could get slim.

That awful 'T' word

Turnover. It is giving operators and owners heartburn on an epic scale. According to the University of California report, median turnover in skilled nursing facilities was 44% in 2012, and median CNA turnover within these facilities was 52%. It's worse today.

There are many reasons. As Corless observes, “Often, employees leave because they don't feel valued, they're not recognized for their work or they feel they don't have a voice within their organization.”

According to the University of California research report, the number of workers leaving long-term care jobs has consistently outpaced all other fields, whereas the number of workers staying consistently has been lower. Moreover, the numbers of workers leaving residential care communities is far outpacing those in skilled nursing facilities.

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Observers say providers who pay attention to where their workers are coming from and going to may have a better handle on future recruitment efforts. A huge source of frustration for providers is less in finding them than in keeping them. As Rosanne Zabka, director of reports for Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service predicts, “With millennials, we will not see the long-term tenure in positions as seen previously.”

Wage pressures

One major culprit for high turnover today is mounting wage pressure. Corless says he believes there will be upward pressure on wage rates in both skilled nursing and assisted living. “In geographic areas where there is an increase in minimum wage, all providers will be impacted,” he says. “In areas of high demand and low supply, an operator’s ability to give raises will be impacted differently depending on a range of issues, including private versus government payments, length of accounts receivable, the time it takes to receive patient Medicaid certification and quality mix. Providers will have to be very skilled at how they manage these areas and how they use non-economic incentives to retain employees.”

Whatever the case, few providers will deny they wish they could pay lower-skilled workers higher rates. And it’s having deleterious societal effect. According to PHI, poor wages cause one in four home care workers to live in poverty, compared with one in 10 U.S. workers overall. “Nursing assistants are more than three times as likely to be injured on the job than



Photo: Todd Wamrock/Digital Vision/Thinkstock

One effective strategy: Offer additional training beyond what’s required.

“Many providers reported seeing fewer applicants for open positions.”

Martha Abercrombie, Vikus

the average U.S. worker,” the group notes, adding poor job quality is forcing 52% of nursing assistants to leave their positions each year, and 50,000 nursing assistant slots nationwide cannot be filled.

Getting strategic

Not surprisingly yet ironically, as University of California researchers have found, facilities and communities that pay the most and are heavy on staffing tend to experience the least turnover. Such conditions bring less pressure, better working hours and lower rates of injury.

For the vast majority of providers that aren’t in that enviable position, myriad solutions exist.

Vikus’ Abercrombie urges providers to approach staffing “in a very strategic manner” going forward. “Providers are moving away from a reactionary approach to staffing management to a more proactive approach by focusing their energy on areas in which they have control,” she says, while

offering the following examples:

- Attract non-traditional caregivers from non-traditional places.
- Talk about job experiences when advertising the position rather than the same old list of job duties.
- Involve more than one person in the interview process to add another point of view and make the best selection decision possible.
- Offer additional training beyond the required inservices to enable clinical staff to practice at the top of their licenses. Each caregiver needs to be practicing at the peak of his or her game.
- Advertise shorter shifts — for instance — four hours rather than eight, to attract staff, primarily nurses, who may be interested only in working a few hours each day due to child care demands. This also may be appealing to more seasoned workers because of the physical demands of the role. ■

OUTSIDE-THE-BOX RECRUITMENT

There’s no substitute for well-conceived recruitment strategies in light of the staffing drain that afflicts senior living and post-acute care. That hasn’t stopped many from trying innovative, “outside the box” approaches.

“One recruitment strategy, especially for RN talent, may be to offer tuition loan repayment after a specified amount of tenure,” says Martha Abercrombie, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, vice president of strategy for Vikus. “That could be a key differentiator for providers trying to attract recent graduates. For many years, we’ve offered tuition assistance; however, the concept of tuition loan repayment assistance is still relatively new. So many students are coming out of college in debt, up six percent from 2015.”

Peter Corless, executive vice president at OnShift, adds these novel ideas: “One provider pays for their directors of nursing to receive home ‘maid’ services twice a month in recognition of their long hours. Another provider sends a welcome letter with a gift to new hires who have accepted a position but not yet started to inform them how excited they are to have him or her join the team.”

Senior Living Communities, a large continuing care community operator in the Southeast and Midwest, recently hired a “vice president of talent management” to improve employee relations and serve as an employee advocate, Corless notes.

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Pay daze

Administrators now average more than \$100,000 a year, while DONs take home more than \$90,000

By Liza Berger

The skilled nursing field is showing signs of robust health. For the first time since the recession hit eight years ago, it is offering strong pay increases across the board — from certified nursing assistants up through administrators and directors of nursing.

At first glance, the numbers in the largest annual survey of long-term care professionals tell a slightly different story. Among all facilities that participated in the survey, the average for administrators rose by a modest 2% — to \$102,003 from \$100,000 in 2015. Assistant administrators' salaries slipped 1.92%, to \$67,890 from \$69,222.

The national average salary for directors of nursing, meanwhile, increased by a stronger 3.82%, to \$90,003, in 2016.

This is according to the 2016-17 *Nursing Home Salary & Benefits Report* from Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service. The organization's 39th annual industry analysis, published in cooperation with LeadingAge and supported by the American Health Care Association, surveyed approximately 9,500 nursing homes across the United States. There were 2,076 participants, resulting in a response rate of 21.73%.

Although the information derived from the total number of facilities responding offers worthwhile data, a more telling portrait can be seen through facilities that participated in both of the most recent surveys ("same participating facilities").



Employees are seeing the best pay hikes in nearly a decade.

By this metric, administrators' salaries expanded by a more robust 3.78%, to \$112,743 in 2016, from \$108,635 a year earlier. Assistant administrators' pay grew by 1.8%, to \$87,485. Directors of nursing experienced a 2.73% salary boost to \$93,072 this year, up from \$90,603 in 2015.

"Across the board, increases represent a bigger average increase since 2008," says Matt Leach, senior consultant with Armonk, NY-based Total Compensation Solutions.

Several factors contributed to the rises in salary among administrators and other executives, Leach and other industry observers maintain. For one, competition has risen to a feverish pitch in the sector.

"Long-term care facilities used to be able to get away with paying lower wages and using smaller increases," Leach notes. "Now we're seeing a lot

more competition from places like hospitals, which are paying many of these jobs at a higher level."

Heated arena

Colleen Chapp, senior vice president of Interim Leadership Services at senior-level recruitment firm B.E. Smith, agrees that seasoned executives are a hot commodity.

"Experience is in high demand as a growing number of leaders exit the workforce or change their career path to interim leadership," she says. "Care providers are increasing salaries as a recruitment tool as well as a retention strategy."

Bernie Reifkind, founder, president and CEO of Premier Search Inc., a nationwide executive recruitment firm, can attest to the bargaining power of a capable administrator in the regulation-heavy and census-driven long-term care industry.

"If there is an administrator who understands the regulations and has had strong survey results and is capable of increasing census, that person is commanding a high salary," he notes.

Similarly, an administrator who can run an organization with a higher level of services is desired.

"These long-term care facilities are running the gamut on services," Leach adds. "One thing they are adding is a memory care unit, which adds a higher level of technical service to the operation. When an administrator can run a company with a memory care unit, we're seeing more pay for the administrator."

Besides administrators, chief financial officers experienced a particularly high salary increase from 2015 to 2016. Their average pay rose 3.37% to \$124,568 in 2016, up from \$120,506 last year. Industry observers understand all too well why this position generated such an increase and commands a salary second only to the executive director.

"The CFO increases are outpacing every job within the organization, on average, except maybe the CEO," Leach says.

His colleague, Paul Gavejian, managing director of Total Compensation Solutions, insists the CFO position has risen to a new level of prominence.

"It's almost like it's the right hand of the CEO," Gavejian says. "[CFOs] work in tandem in order to run the company. We are seeing a lot of CFOs being

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appointed to boards of directors along with the CEO. That's a sign that boards of directors are relying on CFOs almost as much as CEOs."

The generous salary improvement indicates that organizations recognize CFOs' value, he adds.

"There's a compliance issue associated with the finance of the organization, but there's also a governance issue with the organization," Gavejian says. "Because they're more involved in those two facets in running a company — compliance and governance — that explains their rise in prominence."

When a facility meets or exceeds expectations, the CFO benefits, Rosanne Zabka, director of reports with HCS, notes. "If a facility does well, you increase the salary of the CFO for a job well done," she says.

Year of the worker

Although executives fared well from 2015 to 2016, another important story of the past year was the rise in rates among lower-level employees, such as registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and certified nurse aides.

The rate for staff nurses (among same participating LTC facilities) averaged \$27.19 an hour, which represents a 2.86% increase from 2015. The increase marks continued rate growth for this position, whose



Survey results show that employees are generally paid better than ever.

“Care providers are increasing salaries as a recruitment tool as well as a retention strategy.”

Colleen Chapp, B.E. Smith

rate rose by 2.27% in 2015 and 1.27% in 2014. Meanwhile, the hourly rate for LPNs rose this year by 2.32%, to \$21.40 an hour. CNAs' average pay grew in 2016 by 3.23% to \$12.28 an hour.

Two benchmarks of success among all positions are planned and actual percentage increases. In terms of planned percent increases, including zero in the average computation, the average national increase for LPNs

was 2.35%, whereas CNAs recorded an average planned increase of 2.4%.

"CNAs and LPNs had the largest planned percent increases for the second year in a row," she says. "This is good. They are the ones doing all the work."

"This is the first year that we have seen good planned percent increases. You used to see four percent planned increases. This year, we saw some 4s and a 7 or

an 8," she adds.

Employers claim that the higher increases to nurses and aides represented one-time, larger gains and they plan to return to more modest increases going forward.

"It's phenomenal to see these numbers again," Zabka says.

Actual percent increases also were high for RNs, LPNs and CNAs.

"The important thing [to interpret from this] is it's not the management that got the top increase," Zabka says. "Here you're seeing the worker level — the RN and LPN — getting the higher increase."

Anthony Perry, the president of Executive Search Solutions, has taken note of this upward shift in pay among critical line staff, including CNAs, LPNs and RNs, over the past year.

"We're seeing salaries move up there and companies using it to attract workers" along with other incentives such as tuition reimbursement and sign-on bonuses, he says.

B.E. Smith's Chapp has observed a similar development.

"Organizations are utilizing hikes as a way to retain staff, even if only in a part-time role, or to recruit new RNs," she says.

Perry attributes the rise in nurse pay to several factors, including an improving economy as well as heightened demand for nurses. ■

Recent salaries and increases (all skilled nursing facilities, by percentage)

Title	2012	+%	2013	+%	2014	+%	2015	+%	2016	+%
Administrator*	94,785	1.92	95,200	0.43	95,178	(0.0002)	100,000	5	102,003	2.00
Asst. Admin.*	65,000	3.17	65,300	0.46	71,050	8.8	69,222	-2.6	67,890	-1.92
DON	82,186	1.18	82,500	0.38	85,000	3.0	86,692	2	90,003	3.82
Asst. DON	65,000	2.46	66,425	2.19	66,560	0.2	67,320	1.1	68,640	1.96

*(Health Services)

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Divided we stand?

Workforce issues in long-term care often revolve around distrust and misunderstanding. The key is to find common ground.

By John Andrews

The “Help Wanted” sign that is perpetually in the window at many long-term care facilities isn’t going anywhere soon. In fact, it might as well be etched into the glass, because the job vacancies will only continue to grow with the need brought on by a rapidly swelling senior population.

The work environment in eldercare facilities is stressful enough without the high turnover within the employee — and management — ranks. Therefore, it is imperative that provider organizations find a way to not only satisfy their constant need for new employees, but to create an atmosphere that makes everyone comfortable.

Representatives from both the management and labor sides realize this need and are searching for solutions that ben-

efit everyone. But to be able to do that, each side needs to seek empathy with the other, they say.

For instance, direct care staff need to improve their understanding of how reimbursement works and how it relates to administration finances, says Theresa Sanderson, administrator at West Hartford Health & Rehabilitation and secretary/treasurer of the American College of Health Care Administrators.

“They believe the facility owners are making a lot of money and they do not see much increase in their salary — this is simply not true,” she says. “We spend a lot of time in this facility educating staff about Medicare, Medicaid, ACOs, bundled payments and dwindling private-pay sources.”

The notorious revolving door for long-term care workers isn’t limited just to staff — manager

turnover is a problem, too. In fact, Sanderson sees it as the biggest obstacle in workforce stability at her facility, a union shop.

“Turnover in management leads to strained relationships between direct-care staff, who have a low turnover in a union home, and management,” she says. “When the direct-care staff see multiple administrators and directors of nursing each year, it makes each replacement’s job more difficult. The staff ‘wait it out’ because they know if you set a new policy, in a couple of months that leadership team turns over and a new team with new policies take effect. If we could solve the problem of administrators and DONs changing jobs so frequently, I believe it would lead to trust and teamwork in providing highest level of care.”

The key to forging a strong

management-employee bond is trust, Sanderson says.

“Trust takes time, and trust leads to retention,” she says. “My success is directly related to the trusting relationship I have with my department-head team members, some of whom I have worked with for 20 years at two different facilities.”

Design a ladder

From the labor perspective, there needs to be a distinct career path for entry-level workers to follow, says Laphonza Butler, international union vice president with Service Employees International Union, whose Local 2015 in Los Angeles represents 325,000 long-term care workers.

“The long-term care industry doesn’t have an established career ladder, a professions-within-professions system in the scope of practice that would tell a young worker interested in providing care that you can get in at the bottom and work your way to something else,” she says.

Thinking innovatively with regard to how jobs and services are provided, as well as where they are deployed, could help establish solid career paths while also boosting the provider organization’s role in the health-care continuum, Butler says. For instance, offering mental health training for caregivers working with dementia residents, hiring in-house respiratory therapists and offering in-home services for seniors not only offer workers more opportunities, it also strengthens the provider’s position in the post-acute care model, she notes.

Recognizing the evolution going on in long-term care and with healthcare in general can serve as a guide to determining

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how to shape the organization's workforce into an asset that helps it succeed going forward.

"The changing environment tells me that we in the long-term care space need to unify around a shared vision to protect and promote shared values around jobs and careers we want to create," she says. "It is also a benefit to the system in terms of cost savings. Our local chapter received an \$11.5 million Medicare/Medicaid grant, and by training and integrating home care workers into the care team, it resulted in a 50 percent reduction in hospital stays and 40 percent decline in ER usage."

'Raise the floor'

Growing and stabilizing the workforce requires paying competitive wages while also providing health coverage and consistent shifts with full-time hours, the Paraprofessional Health Institute concludes in its 2016 report, "Raise the Floor: Quality Nursing Home Care Depends on Quality Jobs."

"It is time to 'raise the floor' for nursing assistants," the PHI report states. "Additionally, to stem the cycle of turnover, workers need better training, support and opportunities for professional growth. To raise the floor for nursing assistants and ensure quality care for all nursing home residents, this paper calls for new public investment, along with greater accountability, to ensure that funding is directed to the needs of frontline workers rather than administrative overhead and nursing home profits."

More than 600,000 nursing assistants provide personal care, assistance with daily activities and clinical support for 1.4



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Mentoring programs are an effective way to encourage professional growth.

million nursing home residents nationwide. Yet PHI contends that the median hourly wage of \$11.87 per hour and annual median income of \$19,000 are too low.

According to PHI research, nursing homes are expected to create an estimated 59,000 new nursing assistant jobs from 2014 to 2024. The rapidly growing population of older adults will drive demand even higher — by 2050, the population of adults over the age of 65, who comprise 85% of the nursing home resident population, is projected to nearly double, from 47.8 million to 88 million.

"The poor quality of nursing assistant jobs makes it difficult for nursing homes to attract and retain enough workers to meet demand," says report author Karen Kahn. "Changing demographics could exacerbate these staffing challenges."

Emphasize mentoring

The best way to build continuity, ensure compliance and encourage professional growth is through establishing a mentor-

ing program, Butler says. Setting up new hires to shadow veterans throughout daily routines ensures that the correct procedures and protocols are effectively communicated, she says, and gives the protégés valuable hands-on experience.

"New workers need to build mentoring relationships so they have someone to grow with," Butler says. "You can have as much classroom training as you want, but there are everyday situations that classes don't prepare you for. Without a mentor, they have no one to talk to about it."

Because nursing assistant jobs require little education, experience or training, it is an accessible occupation for workers who encounter educational or language barriers when seeking employment. Mentoring also helps new workers feel more a part of the team while giving them security, dignity and confidence — essential elements for nursing assistants, who are predominantly young women in most places.

"We've helped implement

mentoring programs and have seen a noticeable reduction in turnover," says Susan Misorski, national director of coaching and consulting services at PHI.

"Most turnover occurs within the first 90 days, so if we can keep them beyond that, they will most likely still be there at the one-year mark."

Once new workers surpass the 90-day mark, they need help developing their own critical thinking and problem-solving skills. PHI works with supervisors to help them nurture these workers on this front.

Giving these workers the proper guidance and encouragement for training and education truly can help them grow professionally, engendering loyalty to the organization and increasing stability in the workforce, Butler says.

"It says a lot for the kind of vision we want for the future," she says. ■

UNION GROWTH IN LTC?

The Service Employees International Union, which represents service workers in both the public and private sectors, has seen its long-term care membership grow, notes Laphonza Butler, international union vice president with SEIU, whose Local 2015 in Los Angeles represents 325,000 long-term care workers.

"Some folks might find that surprising," she says, "but in California and around the country, the aging population is creating a greater demand for workers in acute care, long-term care and home care. Our biggest membership increase is in long-term care."

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Digital dividends

Tech advancements pave way for better labor management, skills training

By Julie E. Williamson

Senior living and long-term care communities have an ever-growing array of computer-based solutions at their disposal to help streamline their day-to-day functions, meet regulatory requirements and boost employee competencies. Labor management software solutions and online training applications are two such examples paying big dividends for operators that embrace them.

With labor accounting for 60% to 70% of a provider's operating budget, it stands to reason that more are exploring ways to ditch inefficient paper-based processes. Climbing wages and high employee turnover further compound their need to address staffing and labor management strategies, according to Jim Rubadue, chief customer officer at OnShift. "Long-term care and

senior living organizations can experience a multitude of benefits from staff scheduling and labor management software, including controlling labor costs, improving productivity and engagement, and increasing quality of care," he says.

Cost-effective compliance

Operators relying on manual labor management processes may struggle to comply with stringent and ever-evolving regulatory requirements. The Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards Act, which regulates how employees are classified and paid, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' payroll-based journal reporting requirements both can spell trouble for operators that lack a dedicated compliance officer or human resources expert to stay on top of the many requirements.

"A big area of concern is

ensuring employees understand how to classify and track exempt or non-exempt employees so they are paid based on their job duties," says Jaime Lizotte, HR solutions manager at ComplyRight. Aside from knowing whether a job should be classified as a salaried position or one paid hourly and entitled to overtime, operators must ensure they stay abreast of salary threshold increases, which could force a reclassification.

"If a business is found guilty of misclassifying an employee, it will have to pay back wages — and that can be double the cost if a lawyer comes in [on behalf of the employee]," Lizotte explains. And because the Department of Labor is making it easier than ever for employees to review job classifications and payment requirements, operators increasingly are at risk.

Operators also must pay close attention to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services requirements to ensure employees are legally hireable in the U.S. — a task easily addressed with certain computer-based labor management solutions that walk users through these requirements and simplify electronic filing of required forms. Rules for discarding and disposing employee information also must be diligently followed.

Today's automated labor management solutions can promote consistent staffing, track agency use and provide reassurance that the right people are at the right place at the right time. Managers easily can be alerted about potential understaffing situations, so they can make adjustments and avoid risk, according to Rubadue. "Extensive automation also eliminates complexities and reduces time spent on scheduling, from days and hours to just minutes," he says, adding that organizations can create schedules quickly with reusable master schedules. "Call-offs, which often occur multiple times each day, can be filled quickly by notifying staff via text, email, automated phone call or mobile push notification. Best fit replacements can be selected and changes can be updated in an instant," he says.

Labor management solutions increasingly have become cost effective, even for the smallest operators. Web-based applications can be adopted a la carte — in some cases, for less than \$30 a month per user — allowing operators with varying budgets to address their greatest labor-related pain points. Software as a service, or SaaS, solutions also require no large

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upfront investment; however, for the greatest benefits, Rubadue says operators should be certain their software providers fully understand their key workforce challenges before committing to a purchase. “The issues we face in long-term post-acute care and senior living are different from other industries, and ‘one size fits all’ doesn’t work.”

Learning on online learning

Experts agree that a skilled workforce is one of the best ways to minimize labor woes and improve quality and satisfaction. With tech-demanding millennials now flooding the workforce, it’s understandable that more senior housing operators are embracing online training solutions and mobile learning applications.

“The [senior housing] sector is facing significant challenges with staffing. I believe if we want to recruit, retain and maintain millennials — who aren’t just comfortable with technology, but often cannot function without it — organizations need to think about their tech capabilities and how to apply it in various ways, including learning,” says Majd Alwan, Ph.D., executive director of the LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies.

More providers are heeding that advice, offering corporate-wide and skills-specific e-learning for all community employees. Five years ago, Silverado Senior Living developed its own online training for all associates, from frontline caregivers and dietary staff to transportation personnel and receptionists. The online training began with dementia-specific content (there are currently 15 dementia-related courses). New hires participate in nine dementia training videos and are quizzed on the content. All employees, regardless of title and tenure, also must participate in ongoing education by taking one new dementia-specific e-learning course each month.

“The issues we face in long-term post-acute care and senior living are different from other industries and ‘one size fits all’ doesn’t work.”

**Jim Rubadue
OnShift**



Photo: grivalds/Stock/Thinkstock

New tech tools are helping managers and staff do their jobs more effectively.

“Caregiver trainings mostly focus on specific skills, such as how to toilet a resident or change a brief,” says Sue Kruse, RN, BS, Silverado’s senior director of Education. Kruse, who writes the online training content, says the courses can include videos to demonstrate proper technique, such as safe resident transfers. Each e-learning course features a 20-question post-test that requires an 80% pass rate.

“We used to do paper in-services, but time is a factor, and not everyone who was delivering the in-services loved to train. We wanted the same message delivered to everyone and

in the same way. Our e-learning courses provide that.” Mobile learning applications also can facilitate continuing education by putting bite-sized training modules directly in the hands of employees via free apps accessible from Apple and Android mobile devices. “Soft skills and technical or clinical skills can be addressed in different modules,” says Saul Garlick, founder & CEO of Unleesh. “What we’re seeing is a shift away from expensive, archaic training models and toward more effective, [budget-friendly] solutions that can help employees quickly learn what they need and when they need it,” he notes. ■

ANALYTICS UNEARTH BIG BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

If cash is king then data is queen, reminds Majd Alwan, Ph.D., senior vice president of technology and executive director of the LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies — and the amount of valuable data that can be culled from today’s sophisticated health IT solutions is growing at a rapid pace.

“The more you know, the more you can improve. We’re seeing a lot more operators using their data for analytics, so they

can predict and plan for both the short and long term,” he says. Currently, the most commonly used analytics are based on standardized data, such as those coming from MDS and OASIS; however, some users are digging deeper, tapping data from electronic health records, labor management solutions, clinical decision support systems and more. The result? They can benchmark their communities, drill down to root causes of avoidable hospitalizations, improve

care coordination and integration, monitor census changes, identify patterns that can prompt quality improvement initiatives, and reduce risks.

“Many solutions out there can meet these needs, but [the majority of operators] aren’t using these advanced functionalities to their fullest,” he adds. “I’m calling for super user organizations who are using these solutions well to train others to use these data to improve quality outcomes.”

CORE COMPETENCIES

Recruiting, hiring and retention not impossible

By John Hall

Today's senior living and long-term care hiring managers need to go far beyond the usual background checks and job history queries when vetting potential candidates.

For one, senior living has long had a "PR" problem, and great care needs to be given to emphasize the positives of working with seniors. Unlike hospital work glamorized on television shows these days, the jobs of caregivers in assisting living communities and nursing homes can be seen as dreary and depressing.

Millennials, by far the biggest segment of the labor pool today, don't exactly think the same or subscribe to the same conventions as those who came before, says Peter Corless, executive vice president at OnShift. And so, recruitment efforts that play up the meaningful work of caring for elders can go far in attracting talent. Other enticements include flexible schedules, lots of regular feedback and rewards and life balance options.

One proven and highly effective technique is peer interviewing, in which candidates are queried by non-management staff in the community or facility. "In my experience, when a caregiver left the company, we often heard another caregiver say, 'I knew they wouldn't last,'" Corless adds. "When we dug into it, we learned that peers could uncover information that supervisors or managers weren't able to during the hiring process.

"Train a key employee in the multi-incumbent positions how to interview," he continues. "Have the employee in a related position tour and interview applicants. An applicant is much more likely to open up to a peer about their work ethic, reliability or the real reason why they left their prior position. The key employee can also provide the applicant with



Photo: Creatas Images/Creatas/Thinkstock

Hiring professionals agree: Millennials present new hiring challenges.

a realistic understanding about what it's like to work at the center. This can help the employer vet for the right fit."

In addition, Corless suggests using the screener technique, in which applicants initially and briefly are interviewed to quickly weed out those who obviously are not a good fit.

The bottom line

As providers devise various schemes for keeping their staff happy and grounded, they can take solace in the fact that to millennials, money isn't everything.

"Interestingly enough, the millennials are the generation that actually listened when their parents said a job isn't about money but something that makes them happy and fulfilled," observes Rosanne Zabka, director of reports for Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service.

Indeed. "Employers will have to pay more attention to the non-economic opportunities to show employees how much they value them, in order to retain them," says Corless, who offers these strategies:

- Focus on employee engagement.
- Provide career ladders.
- Implement a regular recognition and reward program.

- Millennials crave constant two-way feedback, so provide opportunities for both on a regular basis. ■

THREE THINGS TO AVOID DURING AN INTERVIEW

Some tips on what not to do during an interview, from Peter Corless, executive vice president at OnShift:

- *Paint an unrealistic picture of the job.* More applicants may accept the position, but it increases the likelihood that they will become disillusioned when the job doesn't live up to the hype. A realistic job preview may result in fewer applicants accepting the position, but those who do know what they are getting into and are more likely to stay. Have applicants watch an in-depth "day in the life" video so they get a true understanding of what the job entails.
- *Talk excessively.* Interviewers need to spend more time listening to answers rather than listening for just the answer they want to hear.
- *Delay interviews.* Many operators establish a process through which walk-in candidates are interviewed immediately rather than scheduling a time for the person to come back.

CORE COMPETENCIES



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How do you keep them motivated?

By John Hall

Millennials today are the biggest part of the American workforce. And they are high touch, high maintenance. This group craves feedback and rewards, and cherishes life and work balance as well as flexibility in their work schedules and time off. They're also very socially aware, are almost surgically attached to their mobile devices and desire fulfilling work.

So how do you keep them motivated, and thus, less likely to leave?

"Millennials will seek organizations that are involved in community and global outreach," observes Rosanne Zabka, director of reports for Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service. "The organizations that attract millennials will be ones that positively impact the world, environment or social issues." It's no stretch, then, to consider that having a positive impact on seniors' lives would be a prime motivator, observers say.

Understanding today's workforce

Those owner/operators who weren't born between 1980 and 2000 are either gnashing their teeth over this

**One key:
Strengthen
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demographic or working furiously to understand and cater to them. The latter likely is the best approach.

Most of them often place meaningful work even above things such as pay. And there's the rub. How do providers decide what's "meaningful"?

"According to research from Intelligence Group, 64% of millennials say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place," says Peter Corless, executive vice president at OnShift. Senior care is all about meaningful work. This means that an organization's brand is more important now than ever before.

Corless advises providers to closely watch Glassdoor reviews, freshen websites and focus on other social communications to highlight the benefits of working at their organization and the sense of purpose employees experience. Other advice: Dump the conventional employee satisfaction survey and adopt online or in-person methods called "pulse feedback." Provide as much personal time and scheduling flexibility as possible, and make it easy by giving transparency and utility to your scheduling online or through mobile device apps.

Ongoing motivators

Today's workers also are motivated by having the ability to seek career paths, and some could walk away from a nursing home or assisted living position that means starting and ending their jobs as an aide.

Providing ongoing professional development opportunities in the form of training and education enhances the value they place in the work they do, so provide copious amounts of both. Certification and continuing education credits also are great ways to prove self-worth.

Other effective motivation ideas, according to Corless:

- Support work-life balance with convenient and flexible scheduling.
- Provide a highly social environment.
- Leverage technology such as mobile apps across operations so employees have the proper tools to do their jobs while spending less time on administrative or manual time-consuming tasks. ■

WHAT'S BEHIND SUCCESSFUL MOTIVATION?

- 1.** *Engaged leadership*, says Peter Corless, executive vice president at OnShift: "It starts at the top. If management cares and demonstrates it in all their actions, staff, residents and visitors will all know."
- 2.** *Occasionally dispensing of title and position*. Working side-by-side with new employees is a huge motivator. Administrators and executive directors and department heads should roll up their sleeves and spend time with the 3-11 and 11-7 shifts. It speaks volumes.
- 3.** *Regular reward systems*. Tangible rewards such as providing additional time off for a job well done are effective. And recognizing employees in front of their peers sends a continuous message that you value their work.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Failure to communicate?

Confusion over expectations can fuel misunderstandings. But clarity often is elusive.

By John Andrews

Nothing inhibits communication like a lack of clarity in expectations, policies and procedures. When staff members aren't sure about what directives mean, if performance standards are ambiguous or no clear guidance exists for employees to follow, then it is likely that communications will break down.

Moreover, a lack of communication can lead to chaos within the workforce in the form of rumors, resentment and confusion. So establishing clear measures for everyone to follow can help ameliorate the various sources of workplace friction, says Robert Lane, vice chairman of the American College of Health Care Administrators.

Poor communication can cause a cascading series of dysfunctional episodes within the management-employee dynamic, Lane says.

For instance, if employees have no clear direction, he says, it can lead to "not understanding how what they do impacts the rest of the operation or helps fulfill the mission." A lack of guidance can be perceived as a negative attitude, leading to harsh disciplinary measures by management or perceived favoritism by an employee who is passed over for a promotion.

In the beginning ...

It starts with the hiring process. Lane recommends finding recruits with a positive attitude and strong work ethic — employees who are more receptive to learning are less likely to be lost about what is expected of them. Likewise, front line supervisors and department heads must be equipped with appropriate coaching skills "instead of leaving it to them to



Managers must be clear about what is expected — otherwise, confusion may creep in.

make it up," he says.

Because nine in 10 nursing assistants are women under age 45 and 20% were born outside the United States, language and culture can be a challenge. That is no excuse for poor communications, however, Lane says, adding that management should prioritize "cultural competency" in their organizations.

A key mistake organizations make, Lane says, is treating everyone the same.

"They are not the same," he says. "Some are exceptional performers, some are marginal. Enlist the help of the exceptional ones to recruit others with similar attributes and to help the marginal performers improve."

Having a say

Another critical misstep is not including staff in decisions that affect them, Lane says. "Having a say is critical to building buy-in for leadership decisions and creating an inclusive culture."

Ultimately, front line supervisors are accountable for carrying out the facility's mission, vision and values in daily supervision and conveying that message to workers.

"It's one thing for the administrator or director of nursing to give lip service to something; it's completely different when you see the words and actions matching up throughout the community," Lane says. ■

BRIDGING THE LANGUAGE GAP

The long-term care/senior living industry draws a lot of workers for whom English is a second language. Some have mastered it, but for others, communicating clearly can be more difficult. How big of an issue is the language barrier, and what can management do to help the situation?

There are no easy answers, concedes Laphonza Butler, international vice president for the Service Employees International Union.

"Some workers may be proficient enough in English to pass an entry exam or interview, but when a supervisor gives instructions, it might be an obstacle," she says. "Having supervisors who are multilingual is definitely an advantage, but so is employees having a strong relationship with the people they care for. Bonding can help overcome language and cultural differences."

CORE COMPETENCIES



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Conquering conflict

Education and understanding help managers weather staff-related storms

By Julie E. Williamson

Virtually all senior housing operators experience conflict. If not properly addressed, the problem can lead to staff turnover, absences, eroded teamwork and even lawsuits. Worse, when destructive conflict goes unchecked, it can harm resident care and satisfaction.

Mitigating those risks requires managers to know the difference between healthy and destructive conflict and to be trained to facilitate effective communication and create a positive working environment, despite employee differences.

“Conflict can be defined as differences in viewpoints, and that doesn’t have to be a bad thing,” says Kiran Dintyala, M.D., MPH, a physician in Palm Springs, CA, and a stress management and conflict resolution expert. “Conflict can be healthy and lead to even better relationships and outcomes if managers and employees are given the right [tools] to address it in a productive way.”

Managers must know the difference between healthy and destructive conflict.

Training gains

A proactive approach to conflict resolution hinges on proactive, formal training for all managers and employees.

“Focus not just on individual competencies, but skills to coach, facilitate and mentor others during difficult conversations,” recommends Nate Regier, Ph.D., an author and expert in conflict communication.

For United Hebrew of New Rochelle, a seniors housing and care community in New Rochelle, NY, a cultural change model called the WOW Initiative has garnered higher levels of employee satisfaction and teamwork, reduced turnover and improved resident outcomes.

“We work with our staff to help them understand they have multiple times a day to ‘wow’ their colleagues and our residents — even when things get sticky with a colleague,” notes Rita Mabli, president and CEO of United Hebrew of New Rochelle. Through the initiative, staff

are trained on emotional intelligence, which is based on a foundation of self-awareness and self-regulation, Mabli explains.

“This helps in situations when personalities collide,” she says.

Managers play a key role in the process, helping their teams understand their emotional triggers and recognize they are in full control of how they react to conflict or stressful situations. If things get heated, employees are encouraged to adopt the community’s “SOS” approach: Stop, Oxygenate (breathe) and Start asking questions, the latter of which Mabli says helps employees dial down the emotion by gaining a better understanding of their colleague’s perspective on the situation at hand.

“We also focus on the team’s common purpose and desired outcome, which is happy residents and ‘wow’ moments,” she adds. Also, team members are trained to listen deeply to pinpoint what their colleagues may know that could help resolve an issue that is causing concern. ■

5 TIPS FOR MANAGING HOSTILE FAMILIES

Even the best providers sometimes will face emotional or hostile resident family members. Physician and stress management expert Kiran Dintyala, M.D., MPH, shares five tips for de-escalating a tense situation.

1. Do not overreact.
2. Excuse yourself from the room momentarily to think about the situation with a clear mind — away from the emotion.
3. Ask for a colleague’s opinion and how best to address the situation.
4. Calmly communicate with the family member. Ask him or her to explain why he or she is upset. Listen intently and try to understand this person’s perspective.
5. If the situation remains hostile, ask a supervisor to intervene.



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How Our Company Services the Industry

It's the Guardian local touch that makes the difference. Guardian helps improve resident care by providing customized medication plans, Medicare Part D guidance, ongoing education for staff, and multiple eMAR interfaces. Billing, dispensing

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Date founded: 2004

Presence: Guardian Pharmacy Services is based out of Atlanta, GA and currently has 29 pharmacy locations that serve nearly 90,000 patients across 20 states.

and other pharmacy services are local, not consolidated. And our unique business model helps drive success.

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Date founded: 1990

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Company Profile

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Our Philosophy

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- **We listen** to our customers, learn from our customers and innovate with our customers.
- **We share** what we learn, by developing and enhancing our products as well as exchanging best practices.
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FastFacts



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Date founded: 2009

Presence: Focused exclusively on post-acute care and senior living, OnShift serves thousands of communities nationwide

How Our Company Services the Industry

OnShift's entire business is dedicated to post-acute care and senior living. We actively support the industry through deep partnerships with industry associations and the open sharing of staffing best practices. We take what we learn to not only improve our products and services, but to also help move the industry forward by addressing issues like turnover, wage pressures and the fierce competition for talent.

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Our Philosophy

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Presence: Headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, PharMerica delivers over 40 million prescriptions a year to nursing facility customers nationwide, operates approximately 120 institutional and specialty infusion pharmacies in 45 states that serve over 300,000 licensed beds, and has approximately 6,000 employees nationwide.

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