



HOW TO OVERCOME STAFF VACANCY CHALLENGES AT YOUR SENIOR CARE ORGANIZATION

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Imagine a scenario in which your dietary staff experiences 300% turnover annually. Your recruiter is constantly struggling to fill the most basic of positions, as well as the hard-to-fill roles providing frontline care to residents.

For many skilled nursing providers, it's more reality than HR nightmare. Long-term care companies are grappling with low unemployment, competition from inside and outside the industry, and tight margins that often limit pay and benefits — all while facing increasing quality pressures.

“With the heat of the economy, things that used to be easy are no longer easy,” said David Wilkins, chief strategy officer at HealthcareSource. “Time to fill is increasing, even for entry-level positions that don't necessarily require a highly specialized skill set. If you don't have an existing relationship with candidates in that pool, it's going to take you even longer. And we know that impacts quality of care and the residents' daily experience. That's unequivocal in the data.”

Getting the right candidates in the door quickly isn't impossible. With a targeted approach and the right tools, senior care organizations can tackle staff vacancies and reduce turnover to improve clinical, operational and financial outcomes.

HealthcareSource offers hiring technology that helps providers build brand recognition, engage with potential candidates and steer them through the application and interview process with science-based insights that deliver the candidate who best fits an open role.

Those solutions shouldn't be reserved for finding therapists and licensed nursing staff, said Martha Abercrombie, product marketing strategist for HealthcareSource.

A Source & CRM (Candidate Relationship Management) solution, for example, can help recruiters build a pipeline of potential certified nursing aides. A lack of CNAs not only requires operators to pay more for overtime or agency staff, but shortages can increase the workload of licensed nurses, preventing them from providing higher levels of care.

But even CNAs are increasingly difficult to recruit and retain, as they may find higher-paid positions outside healthcare.

EFFICIENCY EDICT

“The struggle is often who's going to show up to the interview and who's going to stick with the organization,” Abercrombie said. “When it comes to candidates, providers need volume. But they also need quality. It's about efficiency.”

If you have just one recruiter for an entire building — or your single human resources employee is also the business manager — time-saving tools are essential.

Watermark Retirement Communities just completed its first full year using HealthcareSource tools across 57 locations encompassing more than 6,000 employees.

Some Watermark buildings share recruiters. Overall, hiring is a constant challenge. That's especially true in pockets of Texas where locations are dealing with the nation's lowest unemployment rate.

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BY THE NUMBERS

Committed employees make the difference in skilled nursing settings, whereas turnover can send quality measures plummeting.

Vacant CNA positions take an average of 26 days to fill, according to a HealthcareSource study. Hard-to-fill CNA positions — 27% of all healthcare positions — take an average of 151 days to fill, a 60% increase year over year.

“There is a direct relationship between your starting levels of CNAs, LPNs and RNs and the prevalence of challenges like contractures, pressure ulcers, catheter use, and antipsychotic drug use,” said HealthcareSource Chief Strategy Officer David Wilkins. “All of those things increase as turnover does. So do mortality and readmission.”

What else should you know about vacancies and staffing efforts?

10%

Increase in turnover correlates with a 9.4% to 17.4 % increase in discharge death rate

10%

Increase in nurse retention in LTC correlates with a 0.2% decrease in readmissions

10%

Increase in facility nurse turnover results in 2.2 more deficiencies per annual survey

64%

Drop in new-hire terminations if CNA candidates were considered “ideal,” according to a case study using behavioral and job skill assessments and structured interview questions

\$3,000

Minimum replacement cost per CNA

“Reducing Staff Vacancies in Senior Care Organizations,” presented at the 2018 AHCA annual meeting by David Wilkins/HealthcareSource.

SPROUTING GROWTH

Attracting the right candidates to your company might come down to finding people who value your mission as much as a decent salary.

Debbie Penn, national director of recruitment for Watermark, said HealthcareSource solutions have allowed her organization to focus its messaging on inclusion and coaching and highlight room for growth, especially for CNAs and LPNs.

Working with HealthcareSource, Watermark pushes its content out to seven job boards and an internal hiring site, using templates that strengthen brand recognition and tell a story about working in long-term care.

Gone are the days when Penn’s onsite recruiters would call to complain that their local ads weren’t garnering interest. In late March, the company had more than 16,000 applicants for 537 open positions nationwide.

“The product was created by people who have sat in end-user seats in our industry,” Penn said. “You not only get the candidates, you get valuable data on your candidates. It’s like a little window.”

Watermark, like many HealthcareSource clients, uses built-in assessment tools to measure candidates’ behavioral competencies and job knowledge.

Many candidates blanket employers with applications. Offering assessments as part of an online application speeds up the hiring process. Seeing which applicants don’t complete them also tells employers which candidates are less committed.

PROVIDER’S BEST FRIEND

HealthcareSource also assists clients by creating structured interviews with questions that can be customized by brand and position. Those standardized questions provide guidance for the individual handling interviews, even if it’s a dietary manager who is more comfortable with menu planning than screening. They also provide compliance by creating a fair hiring process organization-wide.

HealthcareSource also encourages companies to build retention strategies into their recruiting and hiring processes.

Offering consistent training that sets employees up for career growth and development is vital, Wilkins said. Aptitude assessments given as part of the application show companies where employees might best respond and bloom. Getting them to stay and explore opportunities is a big first step toward developing your workforce. ■



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