

Early last year one of my clients in Texas asked if I had any statistics on employee retention rates for hospitals, and if I had any different ideas on how to retain good employees. I am not sure they are new ideas, but ideas none-the-less. I thought this might be good information to share with you since it took us over 6 months to gather the data.

It turns out the best hospitals we work with have an average annual turnover rate of approximately 11 percent. According to Human Resource Management (HRM) this is about 9 percent less than the national average. HRM projects the annual turnover rate among health care employees to be approximately 20.4 percent—or about one and five. By comparison, this number easily exceeds the 12 to 15 percent turnover rate experienced in most other industries, with sales being the highest.

Granted, some turnover is unavoidable. People get married, move away, go back to school or retire. But other types of turnover are very preventable. Here are a few suggestions that might make a difference in your department if implemented.

1. *Offer competitive wages* – I'm sorry to say, but you can no longer look at just your local market (or state) when it comes to wages. Look at national figures to determine where to set your new beginning pay rates and you will have a better chance at attracting good candidates. For advanced specialties such as Vascular and Nuclear Medicine, chances are high that you will have to look outside your local market for a placement. Do not look only at what your competition down the street is offering. Fair compensation alone does not guarantee employee loyalty, but offering below-market wages makes it much more likely that employees will look for work elsewhere. Conduct reviews of the salaries you offer at least annually and use reliable averages. If there are significant discrepancies, make adjustments to bring your wages in line with the marketplace.
2. *Offer retention bonuses instead of sign-on bonuses* - **Sign-on bonuses may encourage employees to skip from job to job, but retention packages offer incentives for staying.** Also think about an annual bonus system that is given when employees are less likely to walk out. Generally, April and September seem to be the best months to pay out a bonus usually because the "New Year/New Job" mentality has passed and because some workers have kids in school.
3. *Recognition* - Show your employees that you value them. Most managers think they do a good job at recognizing their employees, but in reality they do it on an inconsistent basis and do not promote it. There is an art to effective recognition, and strong leaders know this. If you need more information on this art, read "**How to Win Friends and Influence People**" by **Dale Carnegie**, or "**Pushing up People**" by **Art Williams**. If you've read either of these books before, read them again. Leaders that recognize outstanding achievements promptly and publicly and take time to comment on the many small contributions their staff members make in the overall organization will excel beyond the many mediocre managers I meet on a regular basis. Don't forget, these are the people who make you look good!
4. *Have fun* – One of the main reasons employees leave a department is due to burnout. For example, one of my hospitals has set up a Nurf Basketball Hoop in the break-room and they have a daily free-throw contest. Techs can rotate through when it's convenient and take their turn in the daily competition. The winner has bragging rights for the day, and the person with the best free-throw percent at the end of the week gets a free lunch. According to my client, this little competition has really caught on. He said it first started with his three MRI Techs competing and bragging about who was the best "Nurf Tech", and the next thing he knew he had Teams competing with each other (Team CT, Team MRI, etc.)
5. *Structure a Cross Training Program* – I interview Techs on the phone every day. When I ask them what professional goals they would like to achieve over the next 5 years, one of the most common responses is "**to learn a new modality**". I recently had a Tech tell me that the only reason he wants to leave his current position is because he was wrongly promised he

would be cross-trained in CT after working as a Rad Tech for 6 months. These days you cannot just tell Techs you will do it, that's what your competition tells them too. To foster employee loyalty, implement a structured program for cross training and promote it during the hiring process. A clear professional development plan gives employees an incentive to stick around.... most likely it will be the first time they've seen such a plan.

I hope you find these ideas helpful. For more specific data on employee retention or employee wages, please feel free to contact me.

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