

THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE TURN-OVER ON PATIENT CASE ACCEPTANCE

White Paper



Introduction

As a business owner or manager you are faced with administrative challenges that occur when an employee leaves the practice. Whether you are given advanced notice or the change is sudden, your team and patients are affected. In some cases, the dynamics change in a positive way for a better patient experience and in other cases, the patients perceive the change in “new faces” as a negative experience. This article will discuss reasons for employee turn-over, ways to engage and motivate employees and the impact on case acceptance.



Problem

Hiring and retaining employees who are the right fit for your practice is a common struggle among employers. Depending upon what study you read, the cost of losing an employee ranges from \$15,000 to over \$100,000. If we use data from the Employee Benefit News report, then 33% of an employees' annual salary is the estimated cost. For example, if a Dental Hygienist who is paid \$65,000 per year leaves, the cost to replace him/her at 33% is \$21,450. The cost adds up with multiple employee changes each year. The 2017 Work Institute Retention Report concludes that 74% of the respondents reported the turnover could have been prevented. Potential ramifications of an employee leaving are loss in productivity, decreased team morale, burn-out for remaining team members, decreased patient customer service, patients deciding to go to another office and increased overall stress. When a patient comes into the office and the perception of high-turnover is evident, trust is reduced and the patient starts to wonder what is wrong. The patient will not be as likely to refer to other people and may hesitate to accept recommended treatment.

The healthcare field is growing and employees have many options for employment. Currently you may not be experiencing turn-over,; chances are you will. A best practice for employee turnover is having a pro-active approach and being prepared.

Solutions

The solution is a multifaceted approach. Having awareness of your Vision and goals, knowing your limitations and barriers, understanding the trends in the industry and recognizing a need are critical to successful employee retention. The medical and dental industries are changing. Follow-these recommended systems in order to have an effective business model for employee retention and patient satisfaction.

1. Create a Vision. Be clear and intentional on what you want your practice culture to look and feel like. Patients are more likely to accept recommended treatment when they have a positive emotional experience. Employee retention is improved when they have a clear understanding of their role in achieving the Vision.

2. Have a Documented Hiring and Training Process in Place. Doctors and dentists go to school to learn the clinical aspect of their profession. Operational systems for hiring and training are critical for employee satisfaction, retention, alignment and increased efficiency for practice growth. Depending upon your budget and size of the office, hiring a 3rd party for aide with specific processes may be indicated.

A study from Atlantis Press found that "training develops the employee commitment making them feel the obligation to reciprocate the employers. "

Thus they stay longer in the organization after training is provided. On the other hand, training helps employees feel the organizational support and results in trust in the employer. Hence, training is positively related to trust in management and reduces employee turnover.

3. When an Employee Leaves, Don't Hire the First Person Available for the Position. When you are left in a bind from a sudden change to the team, a common reaction is to fill the position as quickly as possible. This can be detrimental and contribute to future turnover rates. Communicating with existing employees that they will temporarily be taking on more responsibilities while we take our time finding the right fit for our office, is critical to a successful transition.

A study by Personnel Psychology found that employees who fit well with their organization, coworkers, and supervisor had greater job satisfaction, were more likely to remain with their organization, and showed superior job performance.

4. Proactive Communication to Inform Patients of the Change. Patients will ask questions when a new face is noticed or when they don't see a familiar face. An intentional response should be prepared in advance for team alignment, positive patient experience and developing effective communication skills.

5. Stay Current with Advanced Technology, Professional Skills and Clinical Advancements. When a new patient comes into your office, they will compare the feel, look and overall experience to their last office. Several articles stated that a first impression is formulated within the first 7 seconds of meeting someone. Understanding the industry standards and advancements keep you current and competitive for new patients and hiring (and retaining) high level employees. Although you may not purchase every possible gadget that is available on the market, being able to expand your scope of practice broadens your resources.

6. Patient-Centric and Team Centric Mindset. Sir Richard Branson is a very successful business owner who is quoted saying that his "employees are his greatest asset and when you take care of your employees, the employees will take care of the customers." These concepts apply to any industry. When a leader takes the time to know and understand the needs and desires of their employees, the chances of the employee leaving are reduced. According to Towers Watson & Willis, "A successful engagement strategy is fueled by a deep understanding of employee attitudes and needs." In addition, the increase in productivity and personal accountability goes up. A positive ripple effect happens when the patient is treated exceptionally at your office. *Trust is built and an emotional connection is made. The effect is an increase in case acceptance and referrals. In turn, you create a more profitable, marketable and stress-free environment.*

Conclusion

Patients are bombarded with choices for dental and healthcare providers through multiple marketing campaigns. In order to rise above your competition, patients need to feel an emotional connection to the team and trust in your abilities. Concurrently, employees have their choice of employment. As a leader in your industry, engaging your employees, building rapport with each patient and having a proactive plan for hiring and training new employees will increase case acceptance and employee fulfillment. Ultimately, the result will be an increase in production while enjoying a positive and cohesive practice culture.

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