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Essential strategies to support nurse recruitment and retention

A discussion on how nurse leaders are approaching nurse fulfillment and motivation



Recruiting and retaining nurses is top of mind for today's nurse leaders. Burnout and lack of job satisfaction are taking their toll — 64% of nurses are stressed and 57% are exhausted. And almost 1 in 5 nurses leave their first job within the first year.¹

When you consider the job struggles and high turnover rate alongside the average cost of turnover for a staff RN in 2023 (\$52,350)², the impact is clear.

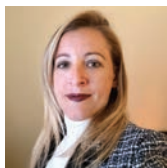
Many healthcare organizations are strengthening efforts to support and encourage nurses throughout their career journeys. They're finding that building a culture that attracts and keeps nurses depends on helping them feel valued, managing conditions that contribute to workplace stress, and providing clear avenues for growth.

Let's look at how a multifaceted approach can make a real difference. Elsevier hosted a virtual roundtable in which five nurse leaders and Elsevier's clinical nurse executive, Tammy Purcell, MSN, RNC-OB, shared their challenges, experiences, and strategies for nurse recruitment and retention.

Over one-third of new nurses feel they are not emotionally healthy.³



Discussion participants



Dr. Christine M. Demo,
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Director of Nursing
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Rebecca Weiss,
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Tammy Purcell, MSN, RNC-OB
Clinical Nurse Executive
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Additional participants:

- Nurse leader at non-profit healthcare system in Ohio
- Nurse leader at non-profit health system in Virginia



Recruitment and orientation



By 2025, there will be a shortage of 78,610 RNs.⁴ Strong hiring strategies are needed to help organizations curtail the nursing shortage today and into the future.

Nurse leaders revealed during the roundtable what they are dealing with as the biggest challenges in recruitment and orientation, including:

- Competitive hiring incentives
- Limited pools of candidates
- Lack of hands-on experience in new graduate nurses
- New grads bypassing residency/orientation to go directly into travel nursing
- Underdeveloped communication skills in novice nurses

“We do a year-long nurse residency program for all new grads at our hospital, where they can talk to other people, hear the same frustrations, and gain that friendship and camaraderie inside and outside of the department.”

Nurse leader at non-profit healthcare system in Ohio

5 strategies for strong recruitment

To recruit new and experienced nurses, focus on what they are seeking in their careers while showcasing the unique opportunities and benefits your organization offers.



- 1. Provide resources to enhance clinical skills.** Evidence-based resources and tools that help nurses understand how to care for their patients are highly valuable. Ultimately, nurses need to feel empowered to deliver top quality care through timely access to clinical skills and procedures, trusted information for actionable answers, and customized continuing education, among other resources.



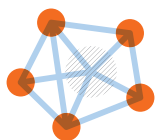
- 2. Offer a supportive nurse residency program.** Today's new graduate nurses have little hands-on clinical experience and high anxieties around working with patients. Incorporating a nurse residency program into your hiring and orientation efforts can provide vital confidence-building opportunities for clinical exposure.



- 3. Connect new nurses with strong preceptors.** Experienced preceptors provide much-needed guidance – both professionally and personally – throughout onboarding and orientation. This critical relationship gives preceptees the chance to work with seasoned and empathetic colleagues, receive feedback, and have their questions answered.



- 4. Promote learning and development as part of the benefits package.** With competition for nursing staff fiercer than ever, it's important to differentiate your organization as a best-in-class place to start, develop, and advance nursing careers. Partner with your marketing team to create attractive promotional materials that highlight your learning and development (L&D) program and benefits; then collaborate with your HR team to promote L&D as part of your talent acquisition approach.



- 5. Highlight career ladder and growth opportunities.** As part of recruitment efforts, show how your L&D programs provide opportunities for nurses at every level and map to a fulfilling career path. Let them know that whatever their specific interests in nursing are – whether that be exploring specialties or leadership roles – your organization will provide resources and tools to support their growth and professional fulfillment.

Retention

Addressing the issues that dissatisfy nurses is important – especially for novice nurses, who are more likely to feel discouraged in their jobs. Nurses with less than 10 years of work experience say they feel less valued, supported, and hopeful.⁵

As the future of the profession, vulnerable new nurses need mentors, support structures, and programs designed to help reverse the trajectory of high first-year turnover rates.

From the perspective of nurse leaders, challenges in retention include:

- Competition between local hospitals
- Generational differences between nurses
- A greater desire for work/life balance
- Focusing on salary rather than complete benefits package
- No time or space for professional development



4 strategies to anchor retention

Healthcare organizations can reduce turnover by offering a clear career pathway for nurses from the moment they are hired.



- 1. Personalize learning paths.** Blended learning programs with evidence-based education tools can benefit nurses' personal and professional growth and foster practice improvement. Creating professional development career plans with their managers can help nurses feel valued and understand their opportunities for growth within your organization.



- 2. Provide comprehensive career development resources.** When you offer strong orientation, advisory councils, and continuing education programs, your nurses feel more supported and prepared. Evidence-based clinical resources can also pave the way for opportunities to move into specialties of interest or pursue leadership, certifications, or advanced degrees.



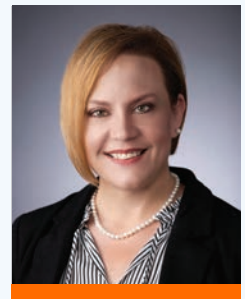
- 3. Create time and space for nurses to focus on professional development.** Nurses want to feel like they work for a hospital that shares their commitment to providing excellent nursing care. Ensuring they have dedicated time and access to technology and education programs in their workdays shows them that you support them and their patients — both in theory and in practice.



- 4. Prioritize communication.** A supportive environment that prioritizes communication can help improve nurse engagement. Providing a regular cadence of two-way feedback, encouragement, and acknowledgement of nurses' struggles and suggestions for organizational improvement can help them feel valued in their roles.

“When nurses’ plates are very full, professional development is dessert. We have to create space on their plate.”

“There’s a social structure behind work that if you feel supported, you feel like you have a team, so that even when it’s hard, you do better in that space. There has been a big focus around a healthy work environment, not just for our staff, but for our managers.”



Alisha Harter, MSN, RN,
CHSE, NPD-BC

Leadership

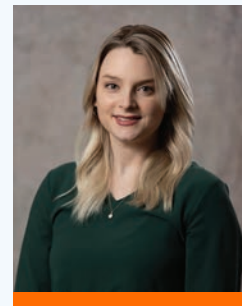
Developing strong nurse leaders who can be positive agents for change has a significant impact on organizational outcomes. Motivated leaders help support and uplift others. Their focus on improving clinician and patient experiences can influence recruitment, retention, and transformation in your organization.

Roundtable participants identified the following challenges related to nursing leadership:

- Lack of awareness of career opportunities
- The struggle to embrace change
- Retaining nurse leaders



“Newer nurses may not be looking ahead to their ten-year plan or their retirement. They may not have an experienced leader that’s tapping them on the shoulder to say, ‘Let me show you what the benefits of that are. I think that you would be great at this and let me help you get there.’”



Rebecca Weiss, DNP, RN,
NPDA-BC, NPD-BC

4 strategies to build an authentic leadership culture

A commitment to authentic leadership is arguably the most important element for nurses to stay, grow, achieve, and excel within your organization. By investing in your nurse leaders' success, you are also investing in the success of your entire organization.



- 1. Define what your organization needs in its nurse leaders.** There's no one-size-fits-all approach to developing tomorrow's nurse leaders. Start by defining the characteristics your organization needs in its leadership, and then encourage nurse leaders and experienced individual contributors to nominate promising newer nurses for leadership roles. Bringing nurses into leadership development programs early can demonstrate your commitment to their career growth and help foster greater loyalty.



- 2. Support the development of strong nurse leaders.** Providing emerging and new leaders with strong educational resources to help them grow into their roles is crucial to their success. Performance insights from eLearning analytics can help you tailor learning. For example, if a nurse wants to learn about a specialty or leadership role, they can engage in targeted coursework to help in this phase of career planning. When you establish a comprehensive, evidence-based learning and development program, you create a strong foundation that says, "All we do is evidence-based clinical practice."



- 3. Be an authentic leader who is open to feedback.** Nurse leaders have daily opportunities to be relatable and supportive of their teams. Foremost, leaders should be candid about understanding how difficult the job is. Stay vigilant of your nurses' stressors and concerns, and actively pursue ways to alleviate their burdens. Ask for feedback and embrace their suggestions for what type of resources and support would be helpful.



- 4. Promote balance.** More than half of nurses say they feel guilty just for taking a break and their mental health is at risk because of burnout.⁵ New generations may be coming into nursing with higher preferences for work-life balance. You can foster a more balanced work environment by offering more flexible workday and weekly schedules, providing opportunities to work in different settings, and encouraging nurses to take their breaks and leave when their shift is over. Acknowledge that they've done their best work in support of their patients. Nurse leaders that provide support in this way can see payoff in nurse retention and loyalty.

Solutions to support your nurses

By investing in resources to create personalized career ladders so that each nurse can follow the path that most interests them, you can offer highly rewarding career experiences within your organization. Elsevier's clinical nursing solutions can help build your nurses' confidence and skills to support them at each stage in their career journeys.

- **Transition to Practice** and **Shadow Health** help to ensure novice nurses are successful from the start by offering immersive virtual learning to develop and assess clinical reasoning and professional skills.
- **Clinical eLearning** courses enhance nurses' knowledge and growth during orientation and residency along with ongoing professional development and practice improvement.
- **Clinical Skills** promotes consistent, high-quality care by combining evidence-based skills and procedures at the point of care with continuing education and competency management.
- **ClinicalKey** helps clinicians expand their knowledge and support optimal treatment decisions by answering complex questions based on current evidence.

For additional information on these solutions or to request a demo, visit: www.elsevier.com/clinical-solutions/nurses

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