

Increase your ROI on Nurses

By

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Do you want to double your money this year? What if you could choose your return on investment? Would you choose 20 percent or 50 percent a year? Why stop? Why not double or triple your money. Healthcare human resources, particularly nurses, are an investment where you get to choose your own rate of return.

Recent research by the Advisory Board, a private research company in Washington DC, shows that decreasing your nursing turnover by just 3 percent, from 13 percent to 10 percent, saves a 300-bed hospital \$500,000 a year. For example, if you invest \$50,000 and make the right changes, you can multiply that investment by ten to \$500,000.

Choose the rate of return on your nursing investment three ways. Each choice is within your control, and is free of charge. You only have to act.

1. Be proactive

Healthcare organizations tend to be reactive instead of proactive. Some organizations spend large amounts of money to recruit and train new nurses, but little to keep them. Others try to prevent turnover, but they spend their money in the wrong ways, recruitment and retention bonuses and advertisements. More money doesn't help when nurses leave work feeling ashamed of the care that they gave, because no matter how hard they worked or what they did, their professional effort wasn't enough. In a recent American Nurses Association survey, 75% of the nurses said that the quality of care had declined in the last two years.

Organizations fail to realize that their reputation in the community determines where nurses want to work. Most nurses look at employment ads and immediately eliminate those with poor

reputations. Nurses don't apply when the glowing words in the ads are a sham. They may know, for example, from talking with other nurses in the community, that the facility is severely understaffed, that the care is unsafe, or that they will be treated with disrespect.

Sometimes organizations hope that the problem will go away by itself, so they do nothing. But the revolving door with nurses coming and going continues. Along with the nurses going out the door, out goes your money; money that can be better spent on constructive projects instead of being wasted.

2. Create a staff-friendly culture

Organizational cultures are like magnets; they either attract or repel.

Think about your organization and whether it is attracting or repelling your staff.

Which organizations attract good staff? Those with respectful attitudes. Many organizations emphasize respect in their employment ads. However, they negate themselves when they don't put respect into practice. This failure to respect causes resentment. Raising staff expectations and then not delivering on your promises is worse than doing nothing.

Disrespectful behavior takes place within organizations. It happens between management and staff, between different professional fields, and within teams. It happens when nurses are valued according to the number of tasks that they can perform instead of being measured as important professionals. At times blatant verbal abuse occurs. At other times, people use sarcasm or not so subtle undermining.

Staff can be out-powered. Nurses are punished for expressing different beliefs, and are frequently without effective recourse. We present ideas at meetings only to find out later that our time and energy was wasted because no one paid attention. All these are forms of disrespect. Thus, healthcare pays a high price for these abuses. The result is a declining rate of return and a cynical and

rapidly shrinking workforce. Your rate of return will continue to be negative as these practices continue.

3. Look the big picture

Both nurses and managers need to look at the big picture instead of just their own issues, because input from both sides is needed to be successful.

Nurses can look at the big picture by enlarging their thinking to include the CEO's perspective as well as their own. For example, we should support cross training because it helps our organizations use staff effectively. We should ask how we can work together to make the whole organization successful. When management looks at the big picture, we learn that our success is dependent on our nurses' cooperation.

You lose credibility and nursing cooperation if you blatantly cut staffing without considering the effects. Nurses feel alienated when they find their units understaffed. Management says, "Do the best you can" or "We'll do what we can to help you." Such comments don't help and decrease credibility, credibility that you need to communicate, influence and collaborate.

What decisions will you make about your human resource investment? Are you missing opportunities for better human resource investment returns?

Are you proactive? Is your culture staff friendly? Are you looking at the big picture? What choices will you make? Take control and choose a high rate of return for your human resource investment.

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