

Engaged Employees – The Key to Increased Profitability & Resident Satisfaction

By Tom Kelley

Throughout Long Term Care, the level of engagement of employees will impact the productivity, resident satisfaction and profitability of your community.

Webster defines *engagement* as “to secure and hold interest or induce to participate”. You will have a competitive advantage when you have employees who are engaged in their work and who demonstrate commitment to the organization. The end result is increased productivity and reduced employee turnover.

There must be a link between your Employer Practices and Employee Engagement. From recruitment and selection to the time an employee makes a decision to leave your organization, the degree they are actively engaged is critically important. The primary influence is having employees who enjoy and appreciate their jobs. Every area of Human Resources must be carefully evaluated, including hiring, orientating, training, evaluations, compensation, recognition and reward, and communication strategies and programs.

Hiring

Analyze your hiring process. Are you recruiting and selecting employees who are a good match for your organization and who will fit your culture and demonstrate your values in their performance and behavior? A west coast casino resort has established four values which are important to their organization: Respect, Integrity, Commitment and Humility. Their recruiting and selection process emphasizes these values and every attempt is made to hire new employees who demonstrate their values. Performance evaluation and recognition and rewards are tied to the employee's ability to demonstrate the values of this west coast casino resort at all levels of the organization. Is the recruiting and selection process in each of your communities linked to the values of your organization?

New Employee Orientation

Develop and implement an educational and motivational new employee orientation where employees learn the history, culture, mission statement and values of the company and how the importance of their position fits into the overall organization. Stress the quality care which must be demonstrated to respond to resident needs.

Training

Every new and current employee should have formal training and the opportunity to develop their skills and competencies within the organization. New employees may be trained “on the job” but still have a formalized training process with checklists followed as they demonstrate knowledge and skills required. Management Training is also important, especially for employees who are technically proficient and who have now been promoted to a supervisory or managerial role. Coaching and developing employees at all levels to be successful in their positions will improve retention and will motivate employees and reduce turnover.

Performance Evaluation

Develop and implement a performance evaluation process that provides for ongoing communication and feedback, allows employee participation in the process, and holds managers accountable for accurate and timely performance reviews.

Compensation

You must have a compensation program that attracts and retains employees at all levels, is affordable, internally equitable and externally competitive. Top performers must be recognized for their contributions. Managers must be trained and employees educated so that your compensation program is understood and perceived as fair by employees.

Benefits

Benefit programs are also important. How you administer and communicate the value and cost of benefits will determine if your employees perceive them as fair, competitive and appropriate. Balancing work and life programs are an important part of benefits. Examples are wellness programs, flextime, job sharing, etc.

Recognition and Reward

This can include non-monetary recognition and rewards. Every employee wants and needs recognition and feedback on their contributions. There are numerous ways to implement employee recognition programs, including an employee committee representing different departments and levels of the organization who will then identify what employee's value in terms of meaningful recognition. A study by the Society for Human Resource Management determined that 79% of people who leave their jobs cite lack of appreciation as a key reason. A Gallup Organization Poll found that 65 percent of employees said they received no praise or recognition in the workplace last year. Employee Recognition is critical to the success of the Long Term Care profession and must be a continuing effort throughout your organization.

Employee Communication

How you communicate with employees at all levels of the organization will influence their "level of engagement." This begins with the new employee's orientation and is followed by a communication process that considers how employees feel and align with corporate values. Employee newsletters, staff meetings, social events, community and volunteer services are just a few ways to enhance communication. Consider an Employee "Pulse" Committee that periodically surveys all employees on important issues to get their input. This committee can also administer the company's Employee of the Month, Quarter and Year programs. You may also want to consider staff meetings where the Executive Team comments on the success of your organization, discusses challenges and responds to employee issues and concerns. Companies who have engaged employees listen to their employee issues and concerns and respond accordingly. They conduct Employee Engagement Surveys every 12-18 months with a systematic process for follow up and communication of the results.

Ten Common Themes: How Companies Measure Engagement

Employers typically assess their employees' engagement levels with company-wide attitude or engagement surveys. The Society for Human Resources Management Foundation recently published guidelines for Employee Engagement and Commitment. Ten common themes were identified which relate to engagement.

- Pride in employer
- Satisfaction with employer
- Job satisfaction
- Opportunity to perform well at challenging work
- Recognition and positive feedback for one's contributions
- Personal support from one's supervisor
- Effort above and beyond the minimum
- Understanding the link between one's job and the organization's mission
- Prospects for future growth with one's employer
- Intention to stay with one's employer

Organizations that have engaged employees have an open door policy and truly listen to employee ideas, issues and concerns. Employees are respected, empowered to do their jobs and have a high degree of loyalty and commitment. Employee satisfaction creates resident satisfaction, which in turn means the success and profitability of your organization. When employees are committed and energized, they will make bigger contributions and will clearly demonstrate that they are "engaged" in your organization.

Long Term Care will continue to have a dynamic future and will continue to grow throughout the country. How effective you are in developing a mission statement, values and philosophy which link Employer Policies and Practices with Employee Engagement, will determine your ability to establish and maintain a competitive advantage.

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