

12 Ways to Supercharge Your Practice in 2012: #7 Take Care of Your Staff So They Can Take Care of Your Patients

Is Your Practice Struggling?
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SUPERCHARGE IT!



Employees are the most valuable resource in any business.

We hear that statement all the time. I believe it. Most managers would say they believe it. But a lot of managers don't act as if they believe it. If you take it to heart and realize what the extreme cost of turnover is to your organization, then you are always trying to find new ways to find the very best staff, and once you've hired them, to keep them motivated and willing to stick with you.

Each of us require the basics – compensation and benefits must

meet baseline needs for anyone to consider any job offer. Survey after survey tells us, however, that it is the needs beyond the basics that close the deal and keep employees satisfied going forward.

An article discussing the recent Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM) Job Satisfaction Survey stated:

"...there are more important factors that contribute to job satisfaction, such as relationships with immediate supervisors, management recognition of employee job performance, and communication between employees and senior management."

What contributes to poor job satisfaction and turnover and how can you fix it?

1. **Lack of Formal Onboarding/Training.** The Fix: start with a job description and develop protocols for the primary tasks. Have a written plan for new employees that takes at least 2 weeks and includes the new employee sitting in every department and hearing from the staff in that department what they do and how the new employee's job relates to theirs. Have a checklist of competencies for the new employee to complete before being cut loose.
2. **Lack of Performance Standards and Incentives.** The Fix: You can develop a whole incentive plan and tie it into performance, but an easier, less costly and more immediate way is to have teams (individual departments or the whole gang) work on specific goals and earn periodic rewards – a pizza party, leaving early on a Friday, gas cards, a bowling party.
3. **Lack of Formal Evaluations.** The Fix: Use the **simple format here** and meet with every employee for at least one hour every year and dig down into where they want to go. It's not enough to say "You did a great job last year." You have to ask "What are we going to do this

year?" Find out if the employee is bored, frustrated, overwhelmed,

4. **Lack of Advancement.** The Fix: make it possible for employees to Advance-in-Place and learn new skills and take on new responsibilities without actually changing positions in the office. It could be a clinical person learning an administrative position or vice versa, it could be someone pursuing special training in website management, Meaningful Use or Diabetes Education, or it could be a staffer released for one day a week to visit referring practices and take them appointment cards or brochures.
5. **A Revolving Front Desk.** The Front Desk is a pressure cooker and takes tremendous skill to manage, yet the front desk staff are typically some of the lowest paid and the jobs are often the entry point into healthcare for non-clinical staff. Employees get their foot in the door at the front desk, then advance to another position in the practice or move to another practice. The Fix. Split jobs so more staff share in front desk duties and everyone gets a chance to rotate through non-front desk positions, which should elevate the pay rate. Allow 4 10-hour day shifts for the front desk so front desk positions have a perk. See #4.
6. **Poor Treatment by Patients.** The Fix. Make sure staff report if they are being verbally abused by patients. This is not the routine verbal abuse that goes along with caring for patients who are anxious, sick and scared. This is the exceptional verbal abuse that no one should have to take. Managers need to support their employees by speaking privately with abusive patients and asking them to alter their communication style when dealing with the practice employees. Patients who are routinely should be dismissed from the practice.
7. **Poor Communication.** The Fix. Tell all employees (not just some) as much as you possibly can, as soon as you possibly can. Don't leave out the details.

8. **Doom and Gloom.** Everything is a fire. The doctors are worried, preoccupied, consumed. The Fix. Realize you are always on stage and you set the tone for the practice. You exude calm, confidence and peace. You smile every morning when you come in and you smile every evening when you leave. This is not to say you are not serious, but, you never let them see you sweat.
9. **Lack of One-on-One Time with You.** The Fix: Invite employees passing your office to step in your office and sit down for 15 minutes now and then. Sit in a department when things are quiet. Ask how the latest project is going. Ask how their husband's new job is or how their mother-in-law is doing after her stroke. Then listen. Look at and listen to your most valuable resource.



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