CULTURE
PARTNERS

Culture of Care

How Healthcare Leaders Can Ease Employee Burnout and Turnover



Create a *Culture* That Means *Business*

While factors such as unprecedented volatility from Washington and deepening friction between care givers and payers are among the chief worries facing healthcare providers today, the top issue remains the workforce.

Shortages of nursing staff, in particular, are reaching the critical point. There are now projected to be **nearly 64,000 registered nurse (RN) positions left unfilled by 2030**, and a staggering dearth of more than 302,000 licensed practical nurses (LPNs) by 2037.



Burnout is an Epidemic

The stress and pressure of delivering meaningful patient care while understaffed and overworked is taking its toll. In fact, forty-five percent of nurses report experiencing burnout.

Due to current and anticipated staffing shortages, remaining healthcare workers are stretched thin. This puts an enormous strain on them, because they are then forced to work longer hours to cover shifts that might otherwise be filled by another staff member. Being overworked often leads to decreased efficiency, more errors, lower job satisfaction, and a lack of engagement.

Add to those burdens the staggering finding that more than eight in 10 nurses have experienced workplace violence in the past year — almost exclusively at the hands of their patients. It should surprise no one that at least 41 percent of nurses say they plan to leave their jobs within the next two years.

Unfortunately, as college programs aren't keeping pace with the demand for new nurses, there is no clear easy fix to replace departing caregivers.

So what can healthcare organizations do?



Create a Culture That Fosters Clarity, Alignment, and Accountability

Imagine if you could retain the employees you already have, and, better yet, were able to attract new talent because of your reputation for having a great culture? You'd be able to solve any number of challenges, because when you dedicate fewer resources to attracting new talent, you can allocate those resources elsewhere.

Additionally, having to constantly train new staff members slows down your productivity. Proactively investing in your culture leverages your most valuable asset: your people.

Culture Isn't Just About Making Your People Feel Good

Healthcare professionals have many responsibilities – chief among them is saving human lives. With that in mind, it can be hard to imagine prioritizing culture. But with so many retention issues, healthcare organizations cannot afford to ignore the importance of a strong culture that encourages employee engagement, professional growth, and personal ownership.

Culture is a valuable tool to help solve problems such as stagnant or declining revenue, poor employee engagement, or decreased productivity.

Why Should Healthcare Organizations Focus on Culture?

Effectively shifting your culture doesn't mean having more meetings, providing better break rooms, or even increasing wages and benefits. A good culture is one where everyone is aligned on the results you need to achieve, and works together to get there.

Culture is an untapped resource for organizations that struggle to retain employees. If leaders, regardless of industry, focus more on culture, they are more likely to hit their goals, particularly if one of them is employee retention.



Retention in Healthcare Can Cure any Number of Challenges

Digital Transformation

Constantly having to train new employees on how to use specific pieces of technology is a drain on resources in time and money.

Patient Satisfaction

High turnover leads to a constant stream of new faces. Familiarity with one's patients can lead to an increase in quality of care, resulting in higher satisfaction scores.

Financial Health

When hospitals are short-staffed, in-house hourly employees often work longer hours, leading to more overtime pay, or they turn to traveling nurses, which are more expensive. The cost of recruiting, onboarding, and training new staff members is significant.

Turnover of nurses alone costs organizations an estimated $40,000-$64,000 per staff member.



Building a Culture of Care

Here's how you can define, shape, and build a culture that not only attracts and retains the best people, but also supports your bottom-line objectives and patient satisfaction.

1. Clarity

2. Alignment

3. Accountability



Clarity

Most healthcare organizations are clearly focused on patient care. Yet often, there are other metrics and objectives that may be discussed in the board room, but not the break room.

To ensure everyone is rowing in the same direction, healthcare leaders must define and communicate with clarity a definitive, achievable roadmap that everyone can follow.

Conveying clear objectives can bring all your staff along, both to support the overall goals as well as understanding their own contribution. And that kind of participation will impact hard targets related to patient care, operational efficiency, and organizational alignment, not to mention building the kind of trust that supports adaptive leadership.

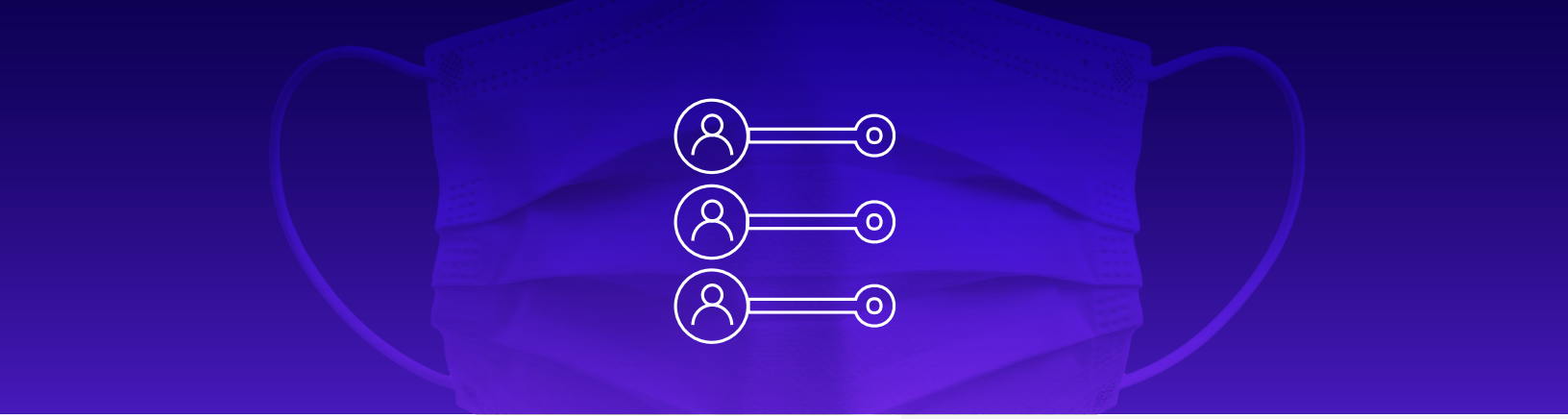
CASE STUDY: KING FAHAD MEDICAL CITY

With nearly, 9,000 employees, 1,200 beds, and more than 800,000 patients served every year, King Fahad Medical City (KFMC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is among the leading healthcare centers in the world.

Yet a specific challenge in the emergency room prompted leaders to consider the impact of culture on performance. The national target for blood sample turnaround time (TAT) in the ER was 60 minutes, yet KFMC's average was 76 minutes. Despite revising workflows, they had only shaved three minutes off the time.

Working with Culture Partners, the KFMC team defined and communicated a clear focus to save lives by acting as one team. This clarity provided the context to communicate more effectively and more quickly identify the obstacles.

Within four days of the culture reset, KFMC's turnaround time dropped by 40%, bringing it well below the national target.



Alignment

When employees don't feel connected to the organization, they are more likely to leave their roles for better pay, more flexible hours, or better benefits elsewhere.

Every employee — from the support staff all the way up to the executive leadership team — plays an active role in creating, maintaining, and modeling your culture. Each team member needs to understand how their work impacts the organization as a whole.

The best way to do this is through alignment and transparent communication. In a thriving, positive, and engaged culture, employees easily connect their daily tasks to the overall results the organization needs to achieve, instilling purpose and meaning that goes beyond delivering quality care to each patient.

CASE STUDY: OSF HEALTHCARE

With headquarters in Peoria, Ill., OSF Healthcare employs almost 26,000 people in 171 locations, including 17 hospitals, 200 primary and specialty care clinics, 41 urgent-care locations, and two colleges of nursing.

Adding a digital transformation initiative on top of the already stressed care team resulted in low employee engagement and patient satisfaction scores in the 35th percentile.

When change management practices failed, the leadership stepped back and took a look at their culture to identify what was inhibiting their ability to do things differently.

Working with Culture Partners, the team reoriented in the direction of needed change, and saw results: Patient satisfaction has more than doubled, jumping to the 73rd percentile.



Accountability

"Accountability" is a word often associated with negativity. When a process breaks down or a patient is unhappy, leadership may want to "hold someone accountable." But what if your team sees accountability as something they take, rather than something that is placed upon them?

Organizations with high levels of accountability often see less turnover. This also helps your employees thrive, because they feel empowered to take ownership over the results the organization needs to achieve.

Taking accountability is the difference between taking control of your work or letting your work happen to you.

CASE STUDY: SSM HEALTH

SSM Health operates in Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma and Wisconsin, employing 40,000 team members and 15,000 medical staff across 11,000 hospitals and care facilities with a profound mission and focus on delivering a truly exceptional experience.

Human resources leadership worked with Culture Partners to determine how one cultural belief was holding them back: the belief that HR was a traditional support function with a transactional focus. Shifting that to viewing HR as a collaborative, accountable partner enabled them to elevate the organization.

This cultural change empowered HR to become consultants and relationship builders from within. The result? SSM Health is the first health care company in history to receive the Baldridge National Quality Award, the highest level of national recognition a U.S. organization can receive for performance excellence, with a particular focus on resilience and long-term success.

Culture is an Investment in Your People and Business

In healthcare, building a results-driven culture is especially critical due to the life-saving outcomes needed.

Taking the reins of your culture is the single best way to help your organization thrive. When your teams have clarity around goals, alignment on priorities, and are accountable to each other and to the organization, they will be more engaged.

With the right culture, you can achieve — and surpass — your goals, allowing you to focus on what really matters: **patients.**

> **The idea that resonated most with me was that company culture can be managed. The worst thing we can do is leave a culture to evolve with no thought or intervention. Moreover, culture permeates from the top through observed leadership behavior. That means the buck stops with top leaders when it comes to company culture.**
>
> – Jill Ragsdale, Chief People & Culture Officer, Sutter Health

About Culture Partners

For over 36 years, Culture Partners, the leading culture consulting firm, has empowered clients across the world to harness culture to produce game changing results. Culture Partners powers thousands of top organizations across the world to achieve their goals by connecting their purpose and strategy, while activating those through culture to realize record-breaking results.

For more information, visit us today at culturepartners.com

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