

Highlight Career Advancement Ops to Recruit and Retain Staff

by: [Sarah Schock](#), Feb 8, 2024

A growing challenge for agencies this year will be filling management roles, but those agencies that work to create career ladders will thrive.

This is important work as those agencies struggling to fill these positions will see a direct impact on the workload of other agency leaders, as well as inefficiencies in operations that can impact all aspects of the operation.

Management hiring was put on hold for a lot of agencies during the wait for the final rule, says Eric Scharber, managing principal at SimiTree in Hamden, Conn.

Many agencies are looking to fill these roles now, which could lead to more demand than there is supply. While this is great news for prospective employees, it could mean trouble for agencies.

Make career paths your biggest asset

The best way to both recruit and retain staff is to offer career paths for growth, Scharber says.

“There’s an ROI in investing in internal talent,” he says.

One of the best ways that staff can feel like they are improving is via learning and growth, says Beau Sorensen, director of finance and operations at First Choice Home Health and Hospice in Orem, Utah. “Help them to get the growth they desire, while improving your organization’s outcomes at the same time,” he says.

Because there will likely be competition amongst agencies to fill leadership roles, administrators who have a growth plan to promote within will come out ahead, Scharber says.

“In this industry we have not done a good job of investing in internal talent,” he warns. But there’s an opportunity to create growth paths for staff to fill those management roles that will be harder to come by, he explains.

Agencies looking to create growth paths to aide in recruitment and retention should do the following, Scharber recommends:

Create a formal process. Have a plan written out so that everyone, including clinicians and office staff, know what steps they need to take to move up in your agency. This should include a map showing which roles are possible for the staff member to work toward, and what steps they need to take to get there.

For example, you could show them how this journey could include signing up for a mentorship program, taking advantage of educational opportunities and connecting with staff members in the role they want to climb into so they can learn more about it.

Create a mentorship program. For staff looking for management opportunities, assign a mentor that isn't their direct manager to guide them through the steps to grow in their role.

Offer learning and development opportunities. For example, you can hold monthly sessions in management training. This can be done in-house. The CEO/CFO can take one day a month to train staff in things like how to improve ROI, how coding affects reimbursement, etc.

"If you're doing this development in a purposeful way, you will see reduced turnover," Scharber says.

When you promote internally instead of hiring outside, transitions will be smooth because staff will be prepared to step up. Hiring externally usually causes a dip in productivity during the changeover, he adds.

Market your employee growth program

Once you've set up a career development program, it's time to market it.

Use this program as a main talking point in interviews with potential candidates, Scharber recommends.

It's important to be honest and realistic about development during the interview though, he adds.

Show real life examples of your staff that have moved up the career ladder in your agency. For example, if there's a clinician that moved up to a clinical manager role, get some testimonials from that staff member talking about how your agency helped them get there.

On the flip side, if there aren't any openings higher up in the agency, tell the potential employee that too. Stress that they can still utilize that career ladder in the interim so that they can be ready to step up when an opportunity does arise.

This will be especially important for the younger generation of workers, Sorensen says.

Job seekers in today's workforce are looking for the kind of opportunity that checks off several boxes. Sorensen says they want to know that:

- Their hard work will be recognized.
- They will have the ability to advance.
- They will have a good work life balance and flexibility.
- Their work matters to the world.

Each one of these points can be tied into the career paths your agency will sell to candidates. For example, Scharber says, if you offer learning experiences virtually, let them know that this learning can be done in their own time, giving them the flexibility to learn when they want.