

# Creating change that sticks

## 5 strategies to address the healthcare workforce crisis

A myriad of workplace challenges — administrative burden, high turnover and slim budgets to name a few — are affecting healthcare careers for current and future employees. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic permanently changed employee expectations and preferences. Unless hospitals and health systems transform their operations and culture, the sustainability of the healthcare sector will be seriously jeopardized.

During an April webinar hosted by *Becker's Hospital Review* and sponsored by Infor, two workforce experts from Infor — Marcus Mossberger, Future of Work Strategist, and Joanna White, Chief Nursing Executive — discussed five strategies that healthcare leaders can use to address the needs of today's and tomorrow's workforce.



### 1. Reduce Risk

To reduce risk, healthcare organizations need the right number of nurses and other staff on every shift.

"Technology has a role to play as we connect staffing and scheduling systems with electronic medical records. It's essential to understand the workload associated with patient care, which can be derived from census data and patient acuity information," Mr. Mossberger said.

Employee safety is as important as patient safety. Historically, violence against nurses has been under-reported. Now this issue is getting the attention it deserves. Real-time location services can help with immediate response to crisis situations. Technology can also help with reporting.





## 2. Retain talent

Employee retention is the #1 challenge in healthcare right now. “Organizations need to focus on retention before they consider recruitment. If you can retain good staff, you don’t need to recruit as much,” Mr. Mossberger said.

According to McKinsey & Company, 48 percent of people are leaving their job and moving to an entirely new industry. To improve talent retention, hospitals and health systems must fundamentally change the way they structure work and addressing burnout must be a top priority.

“At the end of the day, employee well-being needs to be a strategic objective,” Ms. White said. “That contributes to retention because we know that employees are happier when they feel safe.”

People like having control over their lives and schedules. Empowering employees with technology solutions that enable them to easily swap shifts via mobile devices enhances that sense of control. It’s also essential to improve internal mobility. Formal career ladders, as well as training, education and licensure, can enhance employee satisfaction.



## 3. Redesign work

To address current and predicted nursing shortages, the healthcare sector must get more creative and redesign the way work is done. “We have to do more with less, which can only be done by leveraging new technologies and developing new ways of working,” Mr. Mossberger said.

Hospitals and health systems must automate the manual, administrative tasks associated with care delivery. Nurse scheduling also needs to be rethought — shorter shifts and flexible scheduling are proven ways to retain valuable intellectual capital.



As part of rethinking care delivery models, virtual nursing is getting a lot of attention. “This approach can reduce work for bedside nurses and it works well as long as you have the infrastructure to support it,” Ms. White said.



## 4. Reskill the workforce

According to a Deloitte survey, only 19 percent of business executives and 23 percent of workers say work is best structured through jobs. Behavioral assessments can be an effective way to determine what job a team member should be in and can reveal new opportunities.



Healthcare organizations need to focus on cultivating “future-proofed” skills in the workforce. “Employees must possess both practical skills and people skills (i.e. “soft skills”) to be successful in the next 10 years,” Mr. Mossberger said.



## 5. Recruit the next generation

Given the persistent nature of healthcare workforce shortages, hospitals and health systems must start recruiting the next generation now. This means launching outreach programs at high schools, colleges and even middle schools.

Organizations can no longer simply post a job description online and expect candidates to show up. Contemporary recruiting tools are an essential differentiator. "You need to give candidates the ability to apply from their phones and to upload their resume or use a LinkedIn profile," Ms. White said. "Remember, the application experience is the first impression of what it's like to work at your hospital."

Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEI & B) also can't be overlooked. "If you want your employee population to mirror your patient population, you must make that a priority in your recruiting efforts," Mr. Mossberger said.



## Conclusion

The healthcare workforce crisis is real, it is significant and it is not going away any time soon. To respond to this crisis, hospitals and health systems must focus on best practices including retaining talent, redesigning working, reskilling the workforce, recruiting the next generation of non-traditional talent and taking steps to reduce risk. Technologies that automate administration can go a long way in helping employers do more with less while addressing employee burnout.