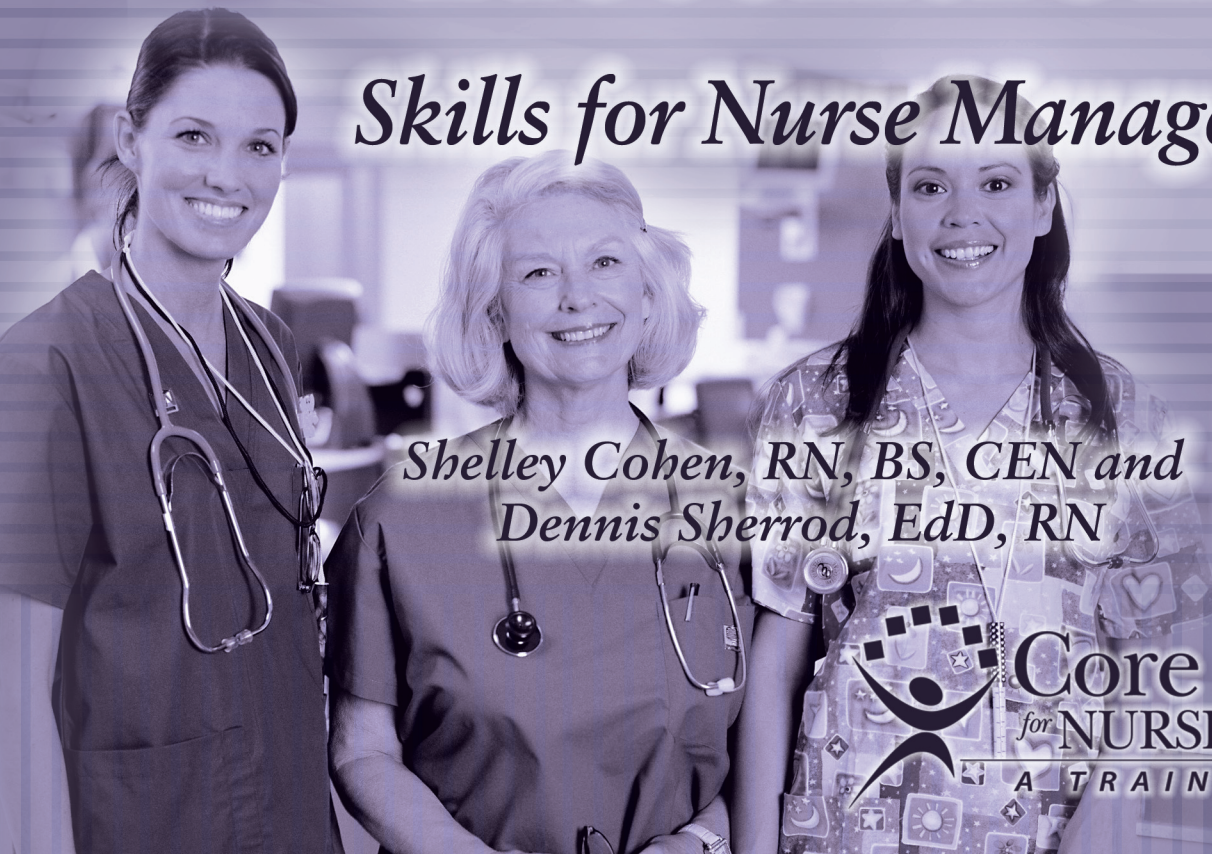


A Practical Guide to Recruitment & Retention

Skills for Nurse Managers

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Core Skills
for **NURSE MANAGERS**
A TRAINING TOOLKIT

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Chapter 1

THE REVOLVING DOOR: THE DISADVANTAGE OF HIGH STAFF TURNOVER

Learning objective

After reading this chapter, the participant should be able to

- identify the major disadvantages of high staff turnover

Case study: Staff in, staff out

As I was driving home from work one night, all I could think about was how to find people to fill the empty slots for the night shift. With my best clinical resource person leaving in two weeks, night shifts were going to be pretty naked as far as skills go. I tried to concentrate on the drive, but my mind kept reverting back to the nurses I had lost in the past year. For each one, I kept asking myself, “What could I have done differently? Did they leave because of me, the organization, or their coworkers? What was going on that was pushing my nurses out the door?” I dreaded the thought of the time I would have to spend going through applications and interviews and all the stresses that go along with that process.

I promised myself that this time things would be different; this time, I would not wait for people to tell me they wanted to leave. Instead, I would find a way to identify what I could do to keep them. For those who are still on staff with me, I would create a process I could use to work with them to ensure that they don’t become a new statistic in the revolving door of staff.

Make the change—you can stop the door from revolving

How many times have you promised yourself that next time you would handle things differently? Yet when that time approaches, we revert back to our old and comfortable behaviors.

Now is the time for you to commit to changing your recruitment and retention attitude and behavior. At a time when the facility down the street may simply dangle more money per hour to recruit staff, you need ammunition you can dangle back to keep staff from moving out the door. Therefore, recruitment and retention needs your ongoing attention.

The disadvantages of high turnover

For every nurse you keep, consider the savings in time and money that did not have to go toward hiring and orienting a replacement nurse. Also consider that lower turnover places less stress on the existing staff. As managers, we know all too well that staff already feel overwhelmed by their daily responsibilities. For most of them, orienting a new nurse feels like a burden rather than a privilege. Even once the orientation process is underway, someone still has to fill in for the nurse who left, you may find yourself begging staff to pick up more hours, and your budget changes as you pay overtime for coverage on top of the salary of the new person being oriented.

New managers have not been given the education, tools, and resources to manage recruitment and retention. Many organizations now realize the important role you play, not only in retention, but also the likelihood that your staff will recommend their place of employment to others. This book will provide you with resources and will guide you in using leadership skills to embrace the concept that you are the number one recruiting officer for the organization.

Changing perceptions

The first step is to be realistic. You may need to change your attitudes and perceptions regarding keeping and recruiting talented staff. If any of the following thoughts are still in the back of your mind, make an attitude adjustment before you can hope to find success with your recruitment and retention strategies:

- “What more do they want from me? They’re getting paid for what they do.”
- “In my day, we were just grateful to get the job we wanted.”
- “I’m getting really tired of ‘making nice’ just to keep people from leaving.”
- “This new generation expects so much from us, but they are the first to say no to working a weekend or holiday shift.”

These are the realities of nursing practice today. We are in the midst of a national nursing shortage, even if some areas of the country are experiencing more challenges than others. Our work force is getting older, and the new, young entries are from a generation that knows how to negotiate to get what they want from an employer. The role of the nurse manager has changed—you are more of a leader now than ever before.

Nurse managers play a key role

Realize the importance of your leadership role. You can find a way to ensure that the revolving door only moves when you want it to. You can embrace the research and evidence about work environments and how they directly affect staff’s perceptions. If money were the only thing people wanted, then why do so many nurses report being dissatisfied with where they work, the resources available, and the managers to whom they report?

One of the most commonly uttered phrases in the nursing tradition is, “that’s how we’ve always done it,” but it is time to go ahead and break your traditions. It is time to embrace new processes that will reap benefits not only for nurses, but also for patient care. You are taking a giant step forward as you embrace the contents of this book.

“Recruitment without retention is a colossal waste of time, effort, energy, money, and good nurses.” —Rita. H Losee, ScD, Med, RN¹

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1. Rita. H. Losee, ScD, Med, RN, “Viewpoint,” American Journal of Nursing 104, no. 5, (May 2005): 13.

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