Valuable Lessons on Enhancing Workforce Retention in Laboratories

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Objective

No matter your role, I hope you gain new strategies for improving workforce retention that you can apply in your laboratory

Introduction to Workforce Retention

Definition of workforce retention

“an organization’s ability to hold on to its employees. It refers to the strategies an organization develops to mitigate employee turnover risks and the processes it puts in place to increase retention of top talent.”

The Importance of Retaining Skilled Personnel in the Laboratory Setting

Finding individuals with experience in a clinical laboratory, particularly in the field of Mycobacteria, can be quite challenging. High turnover rates not only increase stress on the remaining staff but also put the laboratory at risk of losing valuable institutional knowledge.

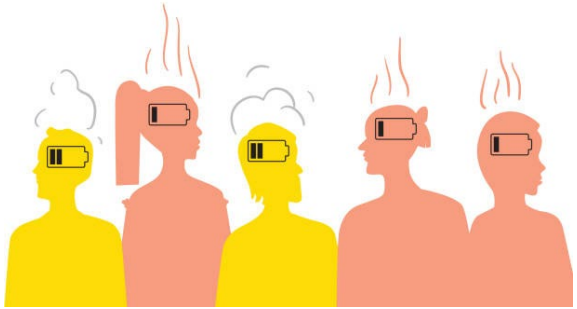
Importance of Workforce Retention

Average time to fully train a new laboratory hire: 1 to 2 years

Average time for a laboratorian to become a subject matter expert: 3 to 5 years

Challenges in Laboratory Workforce Retention

Burnout : Long working hours, high pressure to meet deadlines



Lack of career development : Limited growth opportunities

Challenges in Laboratory Workforce Retention

Compensation issues :
Salary not competitive with industry standards

Generational Differences :
A lack of understanding between different generations

Lessons Learned from Successful Retention

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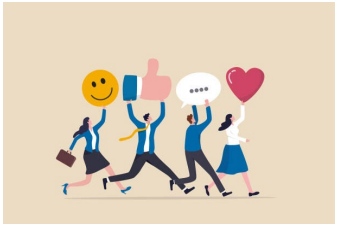
Lessons Learned from Successful Retention Strategies

Fostering a Positive Work Culture



Work -Life Balance

Transparency

Lessons Learned: Fostering a Positive Work Culture

Actions taken to improve a Positive Work Culture:

- Regular meetings with staff
- Open communication channels between staff and management
- Celebrating achievements (e.g., project completions, personal milestones)

Challenges ：

- Staff involvement

Example: Fostering a Positive Work Culture

The Heartbeat

Purpose：

- To provide a quick and easy way for an employee to recognize another employee for their outstanding work or assistance.
- It only requires a few fields of information, and both the recognized employee and their supervisor will be notified.
- The employee giving the recognition can also nominate their colleague for Employee of the Month.

Lessons Learned: Work -Life Balance

⚠ Generational Differences Ahead ⚠

Actions taken to improve Work -Life Balance:

- Allowing flexible scheduling to accommodate personal needs, such as 4-10 hour workdays
- Predictable schedule

Challenges:

- Business needs
- Expectations of performance

Example: Work -Life Balance

The On Call Schedule

Problem:

The on call schedule was unpredictable and always changing because staff would leave. This was always in the Top 3 reason why they left.

Solution :

Fixed Schedule

Staff assignments are changed only at the beginning of the year.

Staff may also trade with others (with approval of the supervisor.)

Staff departures are covered by management or volunteers until a new employee is trained.

Lessons Learned: Transparency

Actions taken to improve transprency:

- Public Health Scientist Series
  - Clearly defines expectations and goals for each positions
  - Automatic promotion from Public Health Scientist I to Public Health Scientist II once you met the requirements.
  - Transparent Salary

Challenges ：

- Leadership involvement

Example ：Public Health Scientist Series

Job Title	PHS1	PHS2	PHS3 Senior	PHS 3 Supervisor
Level Guide	Entry laboratory analyst level position. Regular assignments that have lower level complexity or volume. Learning testing protocols, quality control requirements, laboratory workflow, time management and departmental policies. Trainee with gradual progression in complexity and volume. Exercise sound judgment.	Intermediate laboratory analyst level position. Regular assignments that have moderate complexity or volume. Performs a minimum of eight approved testing protocols on an annual competency cycle. Perform assignments that have a significant impact on patients and department programs. Exercise considerable independent judgment. Cross-functional analyst: In addition to the eight approved testing protocols, performs a minimum of two testing protocols on an annual competency cycle across other testing sections in the laboratory.[2]	Advanced laboratory analyst level position. Regular assignments which have a significantly greater complexity or volume than those assigned to other analysts. Performs a minimum of ten approved[1] testing protocols on an annual competency cycle, with the majority of competencies encompassing testing protocols performed in the testing area and the ability to work in other testing sections. Assists the testing area by providing technical oversight of the analysts in the testing area, monitoring of routine Quality Control, troubleshooting of testing issues and conducting methodological research as assigned. Cross-functional analyst: In addition to the ten approved testing protocols, performs a minimum of two testing protocols on an annual competency cycle across other office(s) or testing sections in the laboratory.[2] Exercise independent judgment.	Supervisory position. Professional laboratory experience equivalent to a PHS 3 Senior. Responsible for the day to day operations of a laboratory testing area. Includes but is not limited to: overseeing work assignments, hiring, employee reviews, establishing and coordinating testing area activities, reviewing budgets, oversight of grant activities and resolving other work-related issues. Exercise independent judgment.

Example ：Public Health Scientist Series

Job Title	PHS1	PHS2	PHS3 Senior	PHS 3 Supervisor
Supervision Received	High degree of supervision. Regularly provided specific instructions to complete tasks.	Moderate degree of supervision. Regularly provided specific instructions to complete tasks.	Works with minimal supervision and guidance.	Works independently.
Decision Making Authority	N/A	N/A	Improve administration of programs and make recommendations to resolve recurring technical problems and situations covered by established precedents and procedures.	Develop and recommend new approaches and methods for program; resolving technical problems that are critical to accomplishment of objectives. Hire staff to perform environmental work, based on need assessment, including scope and budget. Guide and direct oversight daily activities and review of staff work assignments.
Education & Experience	Bachelor's degree or higher in related field.	Bachelor's degree or higher in related field. 2 years of relevant experience in the laboratory testing area. Cross-functional analyst: 1 year of experience as PHS2	Bachelor's degree or higher in related field. 4 years of relevant experience in the laboratory testing area. Master's degree in related field may substitute for one year of experience. Doctorate in related field may substitute for two years of experience.	Bachelor's degree or higher in related field. 4 years of technical experience Master's degree in related field may substitute for one year of experience. Doctorate in related field may substitute for two years of experience.
Licensure / Certifications			An ASCP (or equivalent) laboratory certification may substitute for one year of required experience.	An ASCP (or equivalent) laboratory certification may substitute for one year of required experience.
Other Selective Preferences	N/A	AZ Performs 3.0 (Meets Expectations) or greater	AZ Performs 3.0 (Meets Expectations) or greater	AZ Performs 3.0 (Meets Expectations) or greater

Example ：Public Health Scientist Series

Job Title	PHS1	PHS2	PHS3 Senior	PHS 3 Supervisor
Base Salaries & Additional Pay Criteria	$55902	$67276 Master's Degree: $1,500 above base Doctorate degree: $2,000 above base Cross-cutting ability across testing areas: $3,000 above base	$74778 Master's Degree: $1,500 above base Doctorate degree: $2,000 above base Cross-cutting ability across office(s)/testing areas: $3,000 above base	$84700 Master's Degree: $1,500 above base, at hire or promotion. Doctorate degree: $2,000 above base, at hire or promotion.

Summary

No matter your role, I hope you gain new ideas for improving workforce retention that you can apply in your laboratory

Thank you

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