

# WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS



### PART 1

reviews what the profession's employees are telling its leaders, based on the recently released national report on nursing home workforce satisfaction.

### PART 2

looks at the attributes of leadership and explores how they are related to the needs of the workforce.

### PART 3

investigates the complementary relationship between employee satisfaction and employee engagement.

*'Research indicates and practice supports the fact that clinical outcomes, quality of resident life, and business success are directly related to satisfaction of employees.'*

# QUALITY CARE

## BEGINS WITH SATISFIED, COMMITTED EMPLOYEES

**T**here has been a significant dialogue in recent years focused on the definition of quality, with a recognition that the voice of the customer—your residents and their families—must be at the center of that conversation.

However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that quality cannot be defined without also listening to the voices of the employees who provide the care and services.

Research indicates and practice supports the fact that clinical outcomes, quality of resident life, and business success are directly related to satisfaction of employees.

The authors of this article suggest the foundation of your quality agenda be built on a clear understand-

ing of your residents, their families, and your employees, along with a focus on the organization's mission, goals, and capabilities. That foundation will enable you to establish a quality agenda and execute the strategies that drive it.

Hearing the voice of your workforce is a very important first step. Integrating this information into leadership practices is the next step.

But, what matters most to employees? Where does the leader start? What organizational practices support a "staff-centered" culture?

This three-part series takes a look at creating a work environment that produces employee satisfaction and commitment, which yields a harvest of positive results, from resident satisfaction to state regulatory surveys.

*'What matters most to employees? Where does the leader start? What organizational practices support a staff-centered culture?'*

## PART ONE

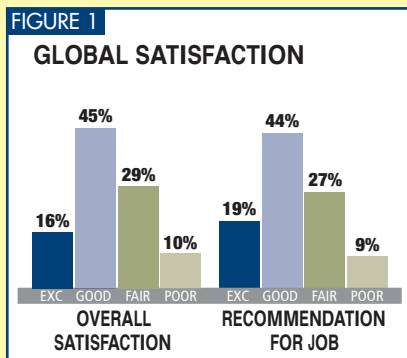
# ★ ★ MANAGEMENT HIGH ON ★ LIST OF 'WHAT MATTERS ★ MOST' TO EMPLOYEES

This past June, My InnerView released its “2006 National Survey of Nursing Home Workforce Satisfaction,” which was based on satisfaction surveys collected from more than 100,000 employees working in about 2,000 U.S. nursing homes. These voices reflect the opinions of those individuals who know best what goes on in America’s nursing facilities. (Download report at [www.myinnerview.com](http://www.myinnerview.com).)

### THE GOOD NEWS

First, when looking at global measures of satisfaction, the large majority of nursing home employees report being satisfied (see figure 1).

Key factors for employees recom-



mending their facility as a place to work include feeling that: they get help with job stress, management cares about and listens to them, and they have a safe workplace.

Supervisory practices are also important ingredients in terms of feeling that their supervisor cares, shows appreciation, and keeps workers informed.

Second, workers report being more

satisfied with aspects of the supervision they receive and their work environment than they are with training or management. In fact, the majority of nursing home employees gave “fair” or “poor” ratings to management caring about and listening to their employees—two factors that are the most highly predictive of workplace recommendation.

### AREAS OF CONCERN

A third set of findings is of particular concern to the profession in light of the composition of the workforce and ongoing shortages. Specifically, nurses and nurse assistants (the majority of the nursing home workforce) are the least satisfied compared to all other employee categories.

Priorities were identified for focusing improvement efforts for nursing staff based on satisfaction scores and how those scores predict workplace recommendation. In addition to providing more help with job stress, adopting more caring and attentive management practices were the top priorities shared by nurses and nurse assistants. These were the areas that nursing staff rated less favorably but were most predictive of workplace recommendation. Although other components of satisfaction (for example, pay compared with other facilities) were rated less favorably, such areas were weaker predictors of satisfaction.

### HIGH MARKS

Satisfaction levels among nursing home employees are higher than commonly recognized or expected,

### WHAT MATTERS MOST

- 1 Management who cares
- 2 ...and listens
- 3 Help with job stress and burnout
- 4 Safe workplace
- 5 Supervisor who cares
- 7 ...appreciates
- 8 ...and communicates
- 6 Adequate equipment/supplies

particularly when considering the challenging environment and work demands.

However, closer examination of specific ingredients of satisfaction reveals varying levels of performance across domains and between employees. Some areas are also more likely to influence reported levels of satisfaction than others.

Clearly, the practices adopted by those in leadership positions are among the major drivers of employees being satisfied.

While leaders seem to be performing relatively well in providing a positive work environment, few employees give those in leadership positions high marks for caring about and listening to them.

The first step in addressing the needs of the workforce is to listen to the voice of the employee, to measure the levels of employee satisfaction and commitment.

It is important that leaders understand the levels of workforce satisfaction and the specific aspects of the employment experience that are driving that satisfaction. This is critical to individual provider entities and to the profession as a whole.



# ★ ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

## ★ IN RETENTION, DEVELOPMENT, OVERALL QUALITY

**A** primary goal of any long term care organization has to be to provide high-quality resident care. Organizational leaders must make certain that available resources are used as effectively as possible to ensure that this goal is met. Unfortunately, many in the long term care profession continue to view quality as the management of satisfactory levels of clinical outcomes and regulatory compliance rather than a focus on achieving high satisfaction for the resident. In the past, receiving a good survey was the bar for running a good facility in terms of quality. That is no longer the case.

### THE 'Q' IN QUALITY

In his book, "Juran on Leadership for Quality" (1989), Joseph Juran uses "Big Q" and "Little q" to describe the difference in perspectives on quality. "Little q" thinking is narrowly focused on specific outcomes or tasks such as clinical measures and survey deficiencies. "Big Q" requires visionary thinking to develop systems that align all functions and resources of the organization to contribute to performance excellence and customer satisfaction.

In long term care, our primary resource is, of course, the human one—the dedicated caregivers that enable us to meet and exceed the needs of our residents. Today, good management is expected to have systems in place to allow and empower staff to be able to execute their work to not only meet operational standards but, more importantly, to meet

or exceed customer expectations. An emphasis on leadership is necessary to more proactively work in this changing environment.

Leadership is ultimately responsible for setting the tone and working with management to align the organization's goals, strategies, and work pri-

orities. A key factor for getting everybody on board and aligning the organization is creating a positive work environment with open and transparent communication practices. This direct link of communication between administration and staff is especially important in the human resources arena.

Research has shown that leadership drives performance through its influence on organizational culture, including information and clinical systems, human resources, operations, and environmental design. Leadership sets the agenda, supports change, and enhances communication. The one common aspect of leadership across all views is that it

involves purposeful influence of a group or organization.

### BETTER LEADERS, HIGHER SATISFACTION

The quality of leadership in an organization—measured along specific domains of practice (*see figure 2*)—has an impact on the overall satisfaction of staff. Facilities ranked in the top half ("high") for overall scores in the five domains of leadership are compared to those ranked in the lower half ("low"). Facilities that are ranked highly for important attributes of leadership have correspondingly high levels of satisfaction among their workforce.

High-performing organizations require a balance of both effective leaders and managers. While all organizations have leaders, not all leaders are effective. A couple of key ways that leaders are evaluated is by the base of support that they have within the organization and how they are viewed. Simply stated, they need to have the buy-in or engagement of their organizational workforce, respect for their abilities to get things done, and tenacity to make necessary changes.

Staff perform at higher levels when they have clarity in their roles and job requirements. Effective leaders see their staff as valuable resources. They strive to align their organizational goals and objectives to empower staff to function more effectively. Sincere management also takes the time to care and listen to their staff, to help develop the environment

**FIGURE 2**

### FACILITIES RATED MORE HIGHLY ACROSS LEADERSHIP DOMAINS HAVE MORE HIGHLY SATISFIED EMPLOYEES

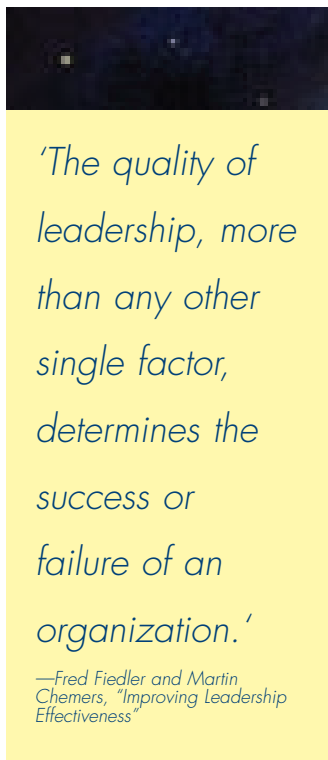
		PERCENT "EXCELLENT" OVERALL SATISFACTION	
CARING LEADERSHIP	LOW	11.4	
	HIGH		26.8
COMMUNICATION	LOW	11.3	
	HIGH		24.0
FOCUSED VISIONARY	LOW	11.4	
	HIGH		24.3
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	LOW	11.2	
	HIGH		24.1
SUPPORTING CHANGE	LOW	13.2	
	HIGH		22.8

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of trust, to support staff to take chances and be more personally involved in their jobs. A leadership team that takes the time to communicate well with its entire staff will be steps ahead of the competition.

There are numerous studies in long term care that link effective leadership practices with organizational performance. Successful organizations tend to have a lot of personal interaction, relatively flat organizational structures, and high-touch service environments. These unique elements drive a need for a genuine, compassionate perspective; lots of communication; and an emphasis on relationships.



tions need to consider both the education and experience of individuals, along with how the knowledge and resources get incorporated into their daily activities.

### STRONG CORRELATIONS

Leadership and employee loyalty are closely linked. Organizations that ask their employees

to rate different aspects of leadership will find that scores are very strongly correlated with how employees recommend their facility as a place to work.

Nursing homes ranked highest in terms of overall leadership scores tend to have workers who are more likely to recommend their facility (see figure 3).

figure 3).

According to research conducted by My InnerView, the top five leadership attributes most highly predictive of employee loyalty include:

- 1.) Leaders caring about their employees
- 2.) Leaders having a focused vision
- 3.) Leaders

taking the time to plan for quality improvement

4.) Facilities doing a good job in prioritizing goals

5.) Leaders taking responsibility for results.

## PUTTING KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE

Good leaders accept that each staff member is a unique person. They fashion a workplace that meets a caregiver's basic need for security, recognition, achievement, friendship, decent wages, and enjoyable work. A good leader will:

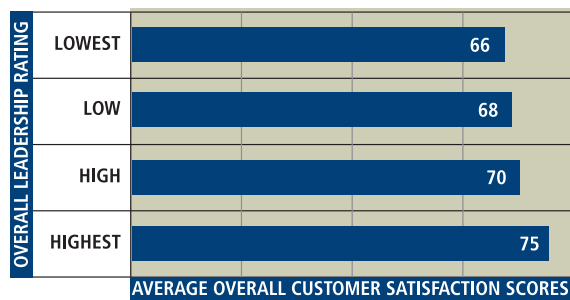
- Make new staff feel welcome and orient, mentor, and train them to reach their full potential.
- Ensure staff have what they need to do their job well, giving them responsibility and freedom to innovate, recognizing and celebrating their contribution.
- Appoint supervisors who care about staff as persons, appreciate their work, evaluate them fairly, and communicate with them on important matters.
- Show concern by supporting staff in difficult and challenging situations, shielding them from abuse, defending them when falsely charged, and training them to deal with difficult residents and unreasonable families.
- Recognize that personal hardships occur in the lives of employees, and strive to be supportive when these situations arise.

Such a workplace, as caregivers see it, is an expression of their managers' concern for them. It adds quality to their life and offers them emotional rewards worth more than material wages.

The well-being of residents depends on the devotion of their caregivers. In exemplary nursing homes, caring managers create a quality work setting that turns workers into devoted caregivers.

FIGURE 3

### FACILITIES WITH BETTER LEADERSHIP RATINGS HAVE MORE SATISFIED CUSTOMERS



Developing effective long term care leaders requires a new way of thinking about both support and the provision of resources to help leadership and their management teams achieve success. Forward-thinking organiza-



# ★ EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND ★ FOSTERING ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The words “satisfaction” and “engagement” can mean different things to different people. Creating a culture of excellence dictates that we understand both. In most common terms, “satisfaction” refers to the extent to which an employee “likes” his or her job and feels good about the employment experience.

Evidence of satisfaction is often measured in terms of retention, based on the assumption that a satisfied employee will tend to want to stay with an organization.

Considering the costs of turnover in economic terms, in terms of its impact on effectiveness, and the impact on our residents when a trusted employee leaves, reduction in turnover is a laudable goal.

“Engagement” can also be thought of in terms of “commitment” or “loyalty.”

By whichever word you choose, it is often measured in terms of the alignment of the employee’s motivations with the mission of the organization—to what degree does the employee feel that he or she is mak-

ing a positive contribution to the ultimate outcome?

## A CULTURE WITH BOTH

As we address our workforce goals, then, it is critical that we understand both of these definitions and consider whether our approaches are in line with achieving both satisfaction and engagement. Further, we need to understand each within the context of our overall organizational goals.

It is possible to have loyalty in the absence of satisfaction or satisfaction in the absence of loyalty, but it is unlikely that the end result will be what we expect it to be. You might say that the satisfied employee is more likely to stay, while the committed employee is more likely to be effective. Organizational excellence is achieved by creating a culture where

*‘We are not hiring for commitment—that is something that must be cultivated.’*

we can have both.

## LOYALTY COMES WITH TIME

Loyalty is not a characteristic for which we can recruit or hire. When we recruit for staff, we try to attract those individuals who seem most devoted to caring for people and who want to be successful. But we are not hiring for commitment—that is something that must be cultivated.

Once we have the right people on board, leaders need to build a culture of effectiveness—one that aligns with both satisfaction and engagement. My InnerView’s workforce satisfaction survey does more than just measure satisfaction, it also focuses on those organizational practices that engage the employee and help us to meet their needs.

One indicator of loyalty is the extent to which the employee would



# ENGAGEMENT



recommend the facility as a place to work and a place to receive care. While individual motivators vary, the “recommend” questions capture how well one’s employees embrace the organization. Beyond just workplace factors, it encompasses pride of place and sense of purpose.

My InnerView’s recently released “National Survey of Nursing Home Workforce Satisfaction” identified several concepts that were crucial drivers of employee recommendations (*see page 3*). All of them have to do with actual practices that management can follow to support the needs of the workforce.

It is critical to understand these practices and how they are at play within individual organizations. The most effective leaders adopt practices that foster both satisfaction and commitment.

The combination of a committed workforce that is also satisfied with different aspects of their employment will foster success. When we review the results from workforce surveys, we need to reflect upon and understand our own culture, considering how these practices are perceived by the employees and what we can do to impact that perception.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Increasingly, the new generation of workers is not content to just show up. Today’s workforce wants to understand the big picture and their

part in it. That is particularly true in the health care profession. The engaged employee needs to know the job, how to do it, and how it fits in with overall organizational success.

To do that, we have to provide the training, tools, and resources for the employee to be successful, but we also have to clearly communicate what those goals are. That communication goes beyond just the basics of the mission statement, but encompasses the operational goals that drive success. Employees will benefit by understanding why we are doing certain things and following certain practices, and they will better understand their success if we are able to chart our progress toward their goals.

It’s not enough to just get our employees to stick around. We need them to be committed to what they are doing, be part of the bigger picture, and play an active role in meeting the needs of our customers and the organization.

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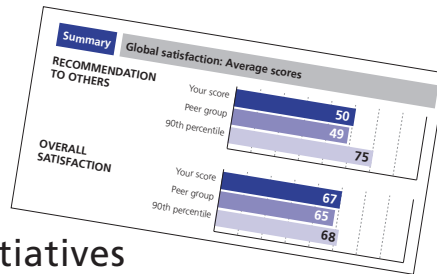
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