

How Hospitals Can Incentivise New Nurses

Nursing is a challenging and difficult career and one that, while rewarding, isn't always the most rewarded path to take. Some motivations for nursing include feeling it is a calling to help give patients something they really need - steady work, standardised pay grades, established predictable best practices and employee benefits while working a shift, and an achievable barrier to entry for [becoming a registered nurse](#).

Paygrades for nurses with different amounts of experience and specialisations are standardised in many countries, as are many of the skills required to be a registered nurse, such as a [CPR certification](#), so salary expectations depend less on negotiation and more about knowing the right people. Like any other paid employee, most nurses want to get the best possible compensation for their level of experience and skills, and there are ways that a nurse can maximise [their earnings](#) if that is the goal. Offering good compensation and bonuses is one prong in attracting and retaining the most competent and caring nurses, but probably not the most important. Let's explore some less obvious ways a hospital can incentivise new nurses:

Professional Development and Lifelong Learning

Hospitals should not underestimate how much nurses geek out on new technologies and strategies that can make life easier for caregivers and patients. You can achieve this in healthcare settings by encouraging and supporting your staff to learn new skills and best practices; employing nurse educators; offering study leave; and investing in trialling new technologies and techniques.

Taking Initiatives to Promote Work-Life Balance

To distinguish yourself as an employer of choice for skilled nurses, you can offer your nursing staff support to maintain their work-life balance in a meaningful way. Some options for how to do this are flexible scheduling, adequate shift levels, paid time off (PTO) and vacation policies; employee assistance programmes (EAP), employee wellness programmes, clear communication and transparent policies on how to apply for leave and how to reduce shifts when home life has to come first.

Employee Excellence Recognition Programmes

Nurses often treasure handwritten notes of appreciation from patients, and employers can encourage patients and their families to express appreciation in this way for hospital staff they feel went above and beyond. But beyond this, hospitals can incentivise new nurses by implementing recognition programmes such as a "Nurse of the Month" or "Nurse Excellence" award. Publicly acknowledging nurse contributions is a powerful way to encourage individuals for very little investment and also motivates peers to strive for similar recognition.

Non-Monetary Performance-Based Incentives

As mentioned previously, many nurses do not become nurses for the money. With that in mind, non-monetary incentives that are either inexpensive or free to offer to high-performing nursing staff can be really effective and gel with the nursing mindset. Some examples of non-monetary rewards you could offer are a month's use of a premium parking spot that's easier to find with less walking to the nurse's ward, gift certificates for a rideshare service, lunch with the CNO, or an extra day of paid time off.

Building Your Brand as a Place Where Good Nurses Work

Patients experience your hospital at some of the most vulnerable times of their lives and tend to have vivid memories, good or bad, of their experience there. Since it's such an emotionally significant topic and stories of the healthcare experience are shared, word of the quality of care and attention patients have experienced will spread. If you get a reputation among patients as being disorganised, having poor communication, making mistakes, or not listening to patients, nurses considering working for such an organisation will factor this into their decision-making. Some of this you can control by doing what you should be doing anyway to ensure the hospital provides consistently high-quality care to all patients and implementing the steps mentioned above to make working for the hospital a great experience.

On the other hand, reputation is not always deserved, and some image management for the hospital can help consciously communicate what your hospital has going for it as an employer that may not be obvious from the outside. Also, gather regular feedback from patients and staff, through surveys and informal communication, about what works well and not so well, so you can notice patterns that could affect your brand reputation and implement effective corrective action before reputational damage can occur. As we know, prevention is better (and cheaper) than cure - and this applies to an organisation's reputation as much as it applies to a patient's health.

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Foster an Environment of Positive and Effective Communication

Nursing staff tends to be a group of detail-oriented and action-based people, so some of them can be educated about how people's mental well-being is just as important as their physical health. There is a skillset and process for addressing communication in a constructive way, and nobody is born knowing these skills. Training and upskilling your staff to communicate with each other in an effective, clear, and compassionate way is a powerful tool for making your teams bond and gel.

Many nurses find that it is the relationships they form with their colleagues and patients that keep them in this demanding job for the long term. Similarly, the quality of relationships formed at a particular workplace can make or break the decision to choose and continue working for that employer. If through education and providing good role models in the leadership team, you are able to create a hospital full of excellent communicators who support each other when stressful or unexpected things happen, you'll also have a group of people who are able to form genuine connections and friendships and don't want to leave each other. Such a team will also be able to offer the best possible care to the patients who rely on them.

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