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## Strategic HR Management Creates a Competitive Advantage in Midst of Growing Workforce Shortage

According to SAMHSA, 55% of U.S. counties are without a single behavioral health worker. There are a myriad of factors contributing to the worsening healthcare workforce shortage – most of which are beyond your immediate control. While positive measures, including routine screening for mental health issues,



broader eligibility for behavioral health services through Medicaid and Exchanges, and efforts to reduce prison populations, are contributing to the growing demand for mental health services, the number of providers is dwindling. Aging behavioral health providers are retiring in droves and fewer professionals are willing to enter the field due to low salaries, heavy caseloads, burdensome paperwork and the public’s persistently negative perception of mental health professionals.

Healthcare is a labor-intensive industry, and as work becomes more integrated

Strategic human resource management is critical to developing, maintaining and growing your workforce to ensure you are able to adequately staff organizational growth. According to Myron Fottler, PhD, author of *Fundamentals of Human Resources in Healthcare*, “Organizations that use more progressive HR approaches achieve significantly better financial results than do comparable, although less progressive, organizations.”

Some key questions to consider are:

- Is your organization’s mission and business strategy supported by an HR strategy that considers both current and future staffing needs?
- Do you view employees as assets and invest in their development to help differentiate your organization from your competitors?
- Do you routinely recognize and reward employees for contributing to organizational success?

Many millennials are looking for jobs that provide them with a sense of purpose, not just a paycheck; still, managers often erroneously believe that salary is the key determining factor for recruitment and retention. According to a [2016 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management](#), respectful treatment of all employees was the number one contributor to overall employee satisfaction for the second year in a row. While salary ranked second, other items in the top 10 included job security, trust between employees and senior management, performance recognition, and advancement opportunities.

Also enlightening is [Gallup’s research that shows employees join companies and leave managers](#). How do you ensure your leadership has your organization positioned such that individuals want to join your team? What initiatives do you employ to ensure your managers are aware of the roles they play in retaining your workforce?

Our industry, like many others, does not devote sufficient resources to developing our clinical and non-clinical managers. We review job descriptions and work hard to recruit qualified people to meet current needs, but tend to scrimp when it comes to developing employees to meet future organizational needs and providing appropriate incentives to attract and retain top talent. To overcome these barriers to long-term success, it’s important to:

- Screen for cultural fit and attitude over skills that can be taught on the job
- Decentralize – self-managed teams can eliminate management layers
- Invest in professional development
- Pay for performance
- View marketing as a workforce recruitment tactic

According to Fottler, achieving a competitive advantage through effective workforce management takes time, but it is an enduring advantage difficult for competitors to replicate.

Finally, given the shortage of a traditional workforce - a number of behavioral healthcare organizations are looking to extenders and technology, as well as contracting, partnering and outsourcing, to meet the needs of their communities.

Want to learn more? Join us for our [Spring Conference in Cincinnati on May 16](#), featuring a half-day Innovation Incubator - *Becoming the Employer of Choice: Innovative HR Practices for Recruitment and Retention*. See you soon!

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