

Enhance nurse engagement

By Catherine Spader, RN

Positive work culture = nurse engagement

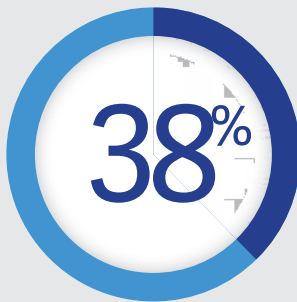
How do you foster a work environment that supports and engages nurses? An engaged nurse is less prone to competitor poaching and improves patient safety and outcomes by:

- embracing continuing education
- actively participating in shared governance
- supporting teamwork and mentoring other staff
- advancing and perfecting skills.

A positive work culture is the keystone of nurse engagement, and it can help recruit and retain nurses by promoting quality care. Nearly all (99%) nurses agree that a healthcare organization's work culture affects patient care, according to a 2019 work-life balance survey conducted by Bright Horizons in partnership with the journal *American Nurse Today*.*



Work culture impacts turnover and recruitment



of respondents say their organization **does not** have a **great work culture**, and this **inversely correlates** with likelihood to **recommend** their employer to others.

Of those who say their organization **does not** have a **great work culture...**

76% have **seriously considered** leaving their employer in the past 6 months.

Only 2% of nurses are **highly likely** to **recommend** their employer (9 or 10 on a 10 point scale), **compared** with 55% of nurses working in a **great culture**.

Education bolsters engagement



Nurses are motivated to advance their skills, and young nurses are especially hungry to continue learning. They aspire to advanced clinical roles and teaching jobs at significantly higher levels than older nurses, so it's vital that employers support education and foster a positive work culture to engage the new generation of career-minded nurses.

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*The survey was conducted in May 2019 and represents 1,323 nurses. Respondents represent a cross section of employment settings, educational levels, and ages, including baby boomers, Gen Xers, and millennials. Sixty percent work in a hospital, 85% work full-time, and 70% have attained a BSN or higher degree.

How relationships shape **work culture**

Negative workplace relationships have a negative impact on work culture and nurse engagement and retention.

- Unchecked bullying in healthcare organizations can lead to lower morale, lower productivity, absenteeism, and increased turnover, according to The Joint Commission.¹
- A report from Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation™ found that over 25% of nurses have experienced verbal or nonverbal aggression from a peer in the last year.²
- Among nurse respondents in the work-life balance survey, 65% say that a negative relationship with a supervisor would make them leave their current job.

1. The Joint Commission. Quick Safety: Bullying has no place in health care. June 2016. [jointcommission.org/assets/1/23/Quick_Safety_Issue_24_June_2016.pdf](https://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/23/Quick_Safety_Issue_24_June_2016.pdf)

2. American Nurses Association. *Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation: Year One Highlights 2017-2018*. [nursingworld.org/~4ab629/globalassets/docs/ana/practice/hnhn17-18highlights.pdf](https://www.nursingworld.org/~4ab629/globalassets/docs/ana/practice/hnhn17-18highlights.pdf).



Tips and strategies

Improve nurse engagement by building a framework to support a healthy, positive work culture.

- **Create** an environment where continuing professional development is valued, supported, and rewarded through clinical ladder programs, tuition assistance, and advancement opportunities.
- **Develop** a competency program for all staff that teaches skills in professional communication and conflict negotiation.
- **Provide** a nonpunitive process that allows staff to express and work out grievances and differences.
- **Enforce** a zero-tolerance policy for bullying.
- **Nurture** a Just Culture in the organization. This includes supporting and rewarding staff for reporting adverse events, as well as providing safety-related information.



“An investment in professional development has been helpful in decreasing turnover and improving nurse engagement. To support nurses to achieve professional certification, we have worked to remove as many barriers as possible. We host certification review courses, cover the registration fees, provide paid education time for the nurses to attend the review courses, and pay examination fees up front so the staff have little out-of-pocket expense.”

— Jamie Wiggins, DNS(c), RN, NEA-BC, FACHE, Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer, Children’s Hospital New Orleans

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