

Why Employee Recognition Matters in Your Home Care Business

As a home care business owner, retention of high-quality caregivers may be one of your largest concerns. Home Care Pulse® has found that home care businesses experienced a 61.6 percent turnover rate for caregivers last year, based on our survey results published in the “2015 Private Duty Benchmarking Study.” This can be an expensive, stressful problem for your business. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, it could cost you \$3500 to replace one minimum wage employee.

With that in mind, how do you prevent this rate of turnover in your business? How do you help your caregivers to love their job and want to keep working for you? If caregivers are happy with their jobs, they will be less likely to leave. One way to improve caregiver satisfaction is to recognize your caregivers for their hard work. The number one thing Home Care Pulse hears from caregivers every month, during our quality satisfaction interviews, is that they would like more recognition for the hard work they do. They like to know their employer and supervisors notice their work and are grateful for it.

It is interesting that though many caregivers do mention they would like higher pay, they more often mention the need for positive recognition. A recent World at Work survey found that 65 percent of U.S. workers wanted more gratitude and thanks on the job. It’s all about recognition! This is what keeps caregivers happy and is why they stay loyal to a certain company.

Time spent recognizing and rewarding caregivers for good performance is time well-spent. “Data abounds showing that happy workers have higher levels of productivity, produce higher sales, perform better in leadership positions, and receive higher performance ratings and higher pay,” says Shawn Achor, author of the book “The Happiness Advantage.” He adds, “They also enjoy more job security and are less likely to take sick days, to quit, or to become burned out.” In other words, caregivers who are happy with their jobs—who have been recognized and rewarded by their employers—perform even better on the job, accomplish more, provide excellent service to their clients and are less likely to quit.

Aaron Marcum, CEO of Home Care Pulse and former home care business owner, often points out that happy caregivers provide better quality service, which leads to happy clients. And happy clients are more willing to refer others to your company—and more referrals means greater growth! All of these benefits stem from one thing: happy caregivers.

Do you have a caregiver recognition plan in place? If so, is it working? Here are some ideas for recognizing your caregivers' good job performance:

Create a Plan to Capture Caregiver Satisfaction.

In order to recognize caregivers for a job well done, you first need to know when they have done something worth rewarding. It is important to pay attention to feedback from clients, fellow co-workers, supervisors and staffing coordinators. You can do this through surveys, interviews, emails, word-of-mouth, etc. In addition, Home Care Pulse can provide you with a third-party way to gather information. Through our Satisfaction Management Program, Home Care Pulse will conduct interviews with your caregivers and clients, collecting feedback and providing you with a Monthly Satisfaction Report. This information can give you a basis for your recognition program.

Focus on Goals.

When recognizing caregivers, keep in mind your business goals. Watch for caregivers whose performance is helping your business reach those goals. Point out that their success is helping the entire company. "One of the best ways to produce happy caregivers is to clearly communicate how they can become more involved in carrying out the overall mission of your company," suggests Aaron. "If they feel they are part of that mission and a key member of your team, they will typically stay longer and help produce happier clients." You have set important goals for your home care business. Help your caregivers to know they play a vital role in reaching those goals.

Budget.

It is possible to recognize your caregivers without spending any money. "Thank-you" notes and words of encouragement don't cost a thing. But if your business is able to, consider budgeting money specifically for caregiver recognition. Let supervisors have a budget they can use just for this purpose: money to spend on things like awards or gifts for caregivers. According to World At Work, most organizations budget an average of 2 percent of their payroll budget to be used for recognition awards. Many organizations strive to budget at least 1percent for recognition.



Giving Recognition.

Here are some overall tips for caregiver recognition, based on advice from Successories, a website dedicated to employee recognition:

- **Timely.** Recognition should promptly follow an accomplishment. Delayed recognition may seem less sincere or important. “Make time for recognition.”
- **Specific.** Be specific when you recognize a caregiver’s accomplishment. Show that you know the details of what they have done and how it positively impacts your business.
- **Earned.** Give recognition to those who have earned it. Recognizing caregivers who have poor performance, in hopes of improving their performance, doesn’t work, and it may have negative consequences. Recognize good, positive achievements.
- **Sincere.** Know your caregivers’ names, pronounce them correctly. Know their job and the specific achievements you are recognizing. Be positive, “upbeat and genuine.”

Top Five Preferred Methods of Caregiver Recognition:

Once you’ve planned and budgeted, and you begin making an effort to give positive recognition to your caregivers, here are some suggestions for ways caregivers prefer to be recognized, taken from Home Care Pulse’s caregiver satisfaction interview results published in the “2015 Private Duty Benchmarking Study.”

Verbal Recognition by a Supervisor

Verbal recognition by a supervisor is the number one way caregivers like to be recognized; 36.9 percent of caregivers interviewed by Home Care Pulse say they prefer this method of recognition the most. Caregivers mention how much they appreciate it when their supervisor knows their name, asks about their family, and compliments and encourages them.

Shawn Achor emphasizes that employees should hear more positive comments in the workplace than negative comments. If employees hear too many negative comments, their work performance suffers. How many positive comments do your caregivers hear each day?

Reinforce your verbal recognition by sending hand-written notes containing positive recognition to your caregivers. Aaron recommends that home care business owners send “thank you” notes to 10% of caregivers each month—so in a ten month period, each caregiver will have received a personal note from you, recognizing the good work they are doing.

Vacation Time, Bonuses, Perks, Gift Cards

20.4 percent of caregivers prefer recognition in the form of various bonuses, gifts and perks. Some caregivers mention they would love to have insurance benefits, 401k, vacation and sick pay. Often, especially if your business is small, this isn't possible, but you can recognize caregivers with smaller bonuses or gifts. Caregivers also mention they would like to be reimbursed for mileage or wear-and-tear on their cars. In this case, you could award them with gift cards for gas or for an oil change. Help caregivers with the regular supplies they need for the job. Get creative with the awards you give to caregivers—make them personal and show caregivers that you are aware of everything they do for your business.



Pay Raise

According to caregivers interviewed, 14.1 percent preferred recognition in the form of a pay raise. Caregivers have made comments during interviews such as “A raise never hurts” and “I would like an increase in pay.” A pay raise does not have to be a large amount; a small pay raise can have a positive effect. Aaron points out that the amount of the pay raise isn't as important as the fact that you are recognizing them for a job well done. Through competitive pay raises, caregivers will feel like they are being fairly recognized for their hard work.

Recognition by Client

Many caregivers (13.5 percent) mentioned they prefer being recognized by their clients. As a home care business owner, don't assume that your clients themselves are always giving positive verbal feedback to their caregivers. If a client tells you something great a caregiver has done for them, be sure to pass that recognition on to the caregiver. This can serve as double recognition—from you and from the client. You may even consider posting positive client feedback on a company bulletin board or in a company-wide email or newsletter. Caregivers want to know that you are aware of the feedback, and you are happy about their good performance.

Company-Wide Recognition.

12.3 percent of caregivers appreciate company-wide recognition. Aaron suggests creating a bi-weekly or monthly bulletin or newsletter that recognizes employees. He also recommends having an employee of the month program. If your business employs a large number of caregivers, consider having several employees of the month, so caregivers are recognized more often.

Caregivers also mention they like to have company-wide gatherings for social reasons: a potluck lunch, a picnic, “bring your favorite dessert” or some other fun gathering. Caregivers work alone with clients most of the time, and they enjoy getting together with co-workers to make friends and share advice and support. These gatherings can also serve as an opportunity for supervisors to get to know caregivers and to announce awards and give recognition to outstanding caregivers.

Make it Happen.

Aaron sums it up when he says, “Happy caregivers are the best medicine!” Keep your caregivers happy—let them know how much you appreciate their hard work. Prevent caregiver turnover and keep your caregivers satisfied by creating a successful recognition program.

About Home Care Pulse and our Quality Satisfaction Management Program

Home Care Pulse’s Satisfaction Management Program can assist your home care business with more than just caregiver satisfaction. Through monthly interviews with your caregivers and clients, Home Care Pulse will collect feedback and provide you with Monthly Satisfaction Reports that enable you to address problems and celebrate successes within your business. Through the Satisfaction Management Program, your business can be Home Care Pulse certified and also qualify for Best of Home Care® awards. And you can be listed on BestofHomeCare.com™, where potential clients in your area can view your business listing.



For more information on Home Care Pulse's Quality Satisfaction Management Program, please contact us at (877) 307-8573 or connect@homecarepulse.com. You can also visit us on the web at www.homecarepulse.com.

Home Care Pulse is the industry's leading firm in satisfaction research and quality assurance, serving hundreds of home care businesses across North America. Home Care Pulse is a top resource for business development and agency certification and recognition, including the prestigious Best of Home Care award. Home Care Pulse also publishes the Annual Private Duty Benchmarking Study™, which is the most comprehensive independent national study for the Private Duty Home Care industry.

For more information on the Private Duty Benchmarking Study, please visit www.benchmarking.homecarepulse.com or www.homecarepulse.com.

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