



The Missing Link to Caregiver Well-Being: Why Healthcare Leaders Need Real-Time Engagement

A proactive approach to reduce burnout and increase retention

Call it COVID-19's "second pandemic." Since the arrival of the novel coronavirus to the U.S. in 2020, healthcare's frontline clinicians are reporting significantly higher levels of stress, lower levels of morale and engagement, and an increasing propensity to look for other lines of work.

According to a 2020 Medical Economics survey, more than two-thirds of physicians said they feel burnt out, with 73% of physicians wanting to quit practicing medicine, whereas the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that half of the doctors would give up at least \$20,000 in annual income in order to reduce their work hours.^{1,2} The situation with nurses is equally dire: The pandemic's arrival – already coinciding with a shortage of more than 150,000 registered nurses in the U.S. – has increased burnout and poor mental health to the point that "nearly one in five nurses plans to leave bedside nursing altogether by the end of 2021."^{3,4}

"It's been part of the pre-pandemic conversation," said Kristi Roe, Head of Healthcare Experience at Medallia. "But COVID-19 has exacerbated the impact of these issues on the workforce, on the lives of clinicians, on quality care, on safety, and on the patient experience. The pandemic has poured gas on a pretty big fire."

In an industry where median hospital operating margins are tight (they were 3.5% before COVID-19 and were negative by the fourth quarter of 2020), hiring costs can have a staggering impact on the bottom line.⁵ In fact, it's costing approximately \$4.6 billion a year because it can cost upwards of \$500,000 to replace a physician and \$80,000 to replace a nurse.⁶ Even hiring traveling nurses to fill temporary vacancies can decimate budgets.

Seeking real-time feedback

As a result, healthcare executives are implementing new programs to continually gauge the engagement and well-being of their frontline staff. Data from a December 2020 HIMSS Market Intelligence report with Medallia, *Engaging Frontline*

Staff in Healthcare, found that 92% of respondents agree that "having a real-time feedback and listening program for frontline staff ... helps drive a culture of high performance and retention." Additionally, 81% report that gaining real-time insights and feedback from frontline staff is a priority.⁷

"So many leaders have energy around caregiver well-being," Roe observed. "They *know* that they need to open better lines of communication and that they need to be getting more signals from their care team."

But knowing they need to do something and knowing *what* to do may be two different things. A full third of survey respondents acknowledged having no listening or support program in place as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. More than half of all hospitals still place frontline morale somewhere between *very low* and *moderate*. And, 61% of all IDN leaders responded similarly. Roe said even those numbers may overstate morale among clinicians.

"Previous research with frontline workers reveals discrepancies between how they perceive morale and how their leaders do," she explained. "Leaders report that things are better than what we hear from frontline staff. My experiences in healthcare paint a different picture in that often care team members at the front line do not feel heard or supported in the way they should, given the incredible sacrifices they make."

Understanding the friction points

While executives may hold an overstated view on staff engagement, it does not reflect a lack of concern, according to Roe.



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Kristi Roe | Head of Healthcare Experience | Medallia

“Healthcare leaders understand that the legacy thinking and annual engagement surveys that constituted feedback programs of the past have done damage,” she said. “They come to us deeply committed to a new view of their healthcare workforce experience. They want real-time feedback around different moments that matter in the employee journey. And they are dedicated to understanding those friction points so that they can alleviate them.”

Achieving a real-time listening program means supplementing annual surveys with technology that enables frontline staff to communicate on any channel, at any time: text, video, voice or short, open-ended feedback in a mobile app, according to Roe. But it also needs to include powerful text analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) on the backend to parse unstructured data and deliver dashboards that accelerate time to insight. While incorporating new technologies may seem daunting,

Roe mentioned that not all organizations need to start from scratch. Medallia’s clients, such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, who already leverage AI in their current patient experience programs can easily incorporate the voices of their internal workforce.⁸

“Experience insights need to be integrated with operational metrics to get a full picture of the employee journey,” Roe said. “The systems that implement this and create a model where the employee experience is seen as the chassis in which all things occur will end up ahead. This is about retention, performance, and honoring the experience of our caregivers to ensure they have the balance they need and deserve in their lives.”

To learn more about proactive listening tools from Medallia, visit medallia.com/healthcare.

References

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Medallia’s award-winning SaaS platform, the Medallia Experience Cloud, leads the market in the understanding and management of experience for customers, employees and citizens. Medallia captures experience signals created on daily journeys in person, on calls and digital channels, over video and social media and IoT interactions and applies proprietary AI technology to reveal personalized and predictive insights that can drive action with tremendous business results. Using Medallia Experience Cloud, customers can reduce churn, turn detractors into promoters and buyers, create in-the-moment cross-sell and up-sell opportunities and drive revenue-impacting business decisions, providing clear and potent returns on investment.