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To Meet Employee Needs, Healthcare Providers Need to Shift

How HR teams can empower
people, attract talent, and rise to
the challenges of post-pandemic
healthcare delivery



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It's been an exceptionally challenging couple of years for healthcare providers. The COVID-19 pandemic caused huge surges in demand for healthcare services while simultaneously making them more complex to deliver and administer than ever before.

During the pandemic, frontline workers set aside their personal concerns and pushed through its challenges to safeguard patients and provide care to those with the greatest need, when they needed it most. But now, after two years of incredibly hard work, the long-term impacts on healthcare workers and IT systems have become impossible to ignore.

As many as one in three healthcare employees have considered leaving their job due to burnout—causing critical staff shortages. Seasonal shifts in demand have disappeared, giving way to a new pattern of consistently high patient numbers. And resources are more constrained than ever, making it even harder for systems to adapt to the new normal of constant change.



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Together, those shifts—paired with massive ongoing digital transformations across the healthcare industry—have created four critical challenges that today's healthcare HR teams need to rise to:

Attracting and retaining talent: Acquiring the right talent with the right skills and keeping turnover low have always been tough challenges in healthcare. But with staff shortages creating critical gaps across the frontline and beyond, this is now more important—and more challenging to achieve—than ever before.

Safeguarding employees everywhere: The key to reducing turnover is protecting your workforce no matter where they perform their jobs. That means providing channels and technology to keep track of the challenges they're facing, and having processes and mechanisms in place to respond to their changing needs quickly.

Controlling costs and increasing resilience: As perhaps the biggest challenge of all, HR teams need to enable better employee experiences and acquire and retain strong talent while keeping costs under control. Organizations don't have excess resources to throw at these challenges, so HR teams need to find creative solutions that are both cost-effective and scalable.

Enabling agility and improving employee experiences everywhere: Delivering healthcare services can be a tough job, so HR teams need to do all they can to make their services easy, engaging, and intuitive. By enabling agility and empowering employees to engage with HR conveniently, organizations can help build the resilience of healthcare workers and reduce attrition.

The disruptive trends reshaping the world of healthcare

The world of healthcare was already going through a period of significant, accelerated transformation long before the pandemic hit. While organizations have been adapting to the crisis, these trends have continued—and in some cases, accelerated. And each has its own role to play in defining the healthcare industry's new normal.

- **Changing views of health:** According to the National Academy of Medicine, just 10% of an individual's care is attributable to medical care. Understanding all of the factors contributing to an individual's well-being is essential to gaining a holistic view of health. Doing so opens the possibility of embracing preventative and proactive care delivery options.
- **Increasing consumerization:** New technologies like connected wearables give patients greater control of their healthcare journeys than ever before. Convenient technologies help patients track their health, understand their symptoms, and make informed choices about their care needs. As a result, they expect a high standard of digital and physical experience from their providers. Providers are now rising to that challenge, with 69% indicating that consumer experience is a top priority for their organization.
- **New demand peaks:** With a growing aging population to serve, organizations are beginning to accept that demand for healthcare services may never fall to pre-pandemic levels again. This excessive demand is driving costs up and putting pressure on providers to do more with less in the long term.

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To successfully meet these pressing challenges, healthcare organizations must create an inclusive culture that engages, supports, and protects its employees.

As the drivers of talent acquisition, guardians of employee well-being, and champions of shifting workforce needs, HR is uniquely positioned to help healthcare organizations succeed in these highly challenging times.

It all begins with a shift in your people strategy:

Skills: Employees want to understand how to improve, develop their current skills, and promote themselves for new growth opportunities. As the digital healthcare agenda advances, employees need to be upskilled in line with it, ensuring they can get the most from new healthcare technologies and practices.

Health, well-being, and safety: Employee safeguarding has been at the top of many organizations' agendas during the pandemic. People want to work in an environment where their mental and physical well-being are protected and nurtured. That includes having a healthy work/life balance and options for flexible working.

Inclusion, equity, and diversity: People want to be their authentic selves at work, receive equal opportunities and pay, and feel like they're part of a community.

Flexible work: Remote working options aren't possible for every kind of healthcare worker. But as demand for flexible work increases, HR must give employees as much flexibility in how, when, and where they work as possible—and provide them with the technology needed to do so effectively.

Tailored employee experiences: Employees want personalized, mobile experiences, on-demand access to unique insights, and automated tools that make their working lives simpler and more efficient. That means reducing friction across every digital touchpoint—including HR.

By meeting these five needs, HR teams can respond to the enormous challenges created and accelerated by the pandemic—and play an active role in redefining their organizations and how their people work in the post-pandemic healthcare world.

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Many organizations have already begun their HR transformation journeys, and are reaping the rewards of higher retention, lower costs, and a happier, more empowered workforce.



Here are some of the things healthcare providers are doing today to embrace and meet the five demands of the shift.

Increasing internal mobility

Even before the pandemic, employee exhaustion was a genuine and very present threat to healthcare operations. But leading HR experts recognize that when employees hit their limit and don't want to continue in their work, they generally don't want to leave their company—they want to leave their role.

With talent gaps appearing within healthcare organizations, that's an important distinction to draw. Giving employees opportunities to take on new roles can reduce turnover, foster employee development, and improve their work experience without creating further talent gaps.

With an accurate view of internal talent gaps and a clear picture of where people across an organization want to take their careers, HR can use internal mobility and redeployment as a valuable way of combating burnout directly—in a way that doesn't result in talent turnover.

Making support easy to access for everyone

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an immense and widespread impact on the mental health and well-being of people across the globe. Today, numerous studies have highlighted a need to provide significant mental well-being support for healthcare professionals, as they continue to process what has been an exceptionally challenging time in their careers and personal lives.

Leading HR teams are exploring a wide variety of ways of delivering that support. From offering employees sessions with mental health professionals, to providing digital guidance and additional time to decompress, there is no single “right” way of meeting that need.

Crucially, however, whatever support an organization chooses to provide needs to be easy and equitable to access. HR leaders are using digital platforms to empower employees everywhere to access and choose the support they need through any device. It's that freedom and choice that help to create truly inclusive and satisfying experiences—and encourage everyone to access resources designed to improve their wellness and happiness.

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Consolidating technology to cut costs while improving employee experiences

As we've known for quite some time, more technology in the hands of employees doesn't always mean better working experiences. As HR faces the dual challenges of improving experiences and cutting operational costs, one solution is emerging that can help tackle both at once: HR tech consolidation.

Jumping between platforms to complete everyday tasks or access information creates friction and negatively impacts employee experiences. Plus, paying for all of those platforms and maintaining a complex HR technology stack consumes vital HR budgets.

By bringing everything together into a single place, accessible through employees' devices of choice, leading healthcare HR teams can enable friction-free experiences while simultaneously freeing up much-needed budgets.

Transforming recruitment and onboarding

With reports currently projecting that the US will need 1.2 million more nurses by 2030 to meet demand, HR teams are doing everything they can to improve recruitment experiences and show people that their doors are firmly open for new talent.

With such a significant shortage of labor, recruitment and customer experiences have never been more similar.

In the same way as shopping for something, people today (if they're looking for a job in healthcare) know they have options. If your organization isn't easy to engage with; if your application process is convoluted; or even if information about your role isn't transparent, potential recruits will be deflected elsewhere.

To prevent that from happening, teams are looking closely at their recruitment and onboarding journeys—utilizing new technology to streamline them and create engaging experiences that pull talent in, rather than pushing it away.

Refocusing on culture

In times of crisis, it's easy to lose sight of softer goals like maintaining a strong workplace culture. But arguably, at times like that, cultures of openness, inclusion, diversity, care, and growth are more important than ever.

Today, many HR leaders are increasing investment to build and enable those kinds of cultures across healthcare organizations. Lots of workflows had to transform overnight when the pandemic hit, and now, it's up to HR leaders to ensure that the way their people work is aligned with and supported by the right culture.

That means ensuring the transparency and accessibility of growth and development resources and opportunities. It means putting a clear emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and equity across the organization. And it also means HR leaders doing everything they can to enable and embed a culture that people love being part of, as the organization works on defining itself in the new normal.

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Deloitte identifies a need for firms to deliver a more human approach to HR and shift from “survive to thrive.”

Deloitte.

Josh Bersin says: “90% of the companies we talk with need a refresh or new operating model for HR. Why? Because HR has become a center of innovation.”

joshbersin
academy

Gartner found that employers that support employees with their life experience see a tangible increase (more than 20%) in the number of employees reporting better mental and physical health.

Gartner.

Jeanne Meister believes that: “We will see more companies make a public commitment to invest in employee well-being and mental health, and use this as an advantage in recruiting and retaining talent.”

According to **PwC**, “The COVID-19 pandemic has only underscored the need for digital transformation and upskilling initiatives aimed at improving both internal processes and customer engagement.”

pwc

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How can you make a shift in your own organization?

With greater talent shortages and unprecedentedly high turnover rates than ever seen before to contend with, healthcare HR teams have a lot on their plates. But with those pressures comes immense opportunity.

If HR teams can make that shift and improve working experiences, they can then tackle the widespread people-based challenges in healthcare today. Such adaptation will drive positive organizational, employee, and patient outcomes during a time of immense disruption.

Start with complete workforce and talent visibility

If you can't see where your talent gaps are, which employees need your support, or where you're likely to need more people in the near future, you can't tackle any of those challenges effectively. So the first step in your shift needs to be to gain complete workforce and talent visibility.

Practically, that means breaking down HR silos to gain a complete view of your workforce and future talent needs. This visibility will help you better identify resilient workers and what led to their success during adversity—helping you develop ideal candidate profiles for future roles.

All together, a complete view of the workforce enables you to understand individual employee and organizationwide needs better, so you can make precisely targeted shifts across your HR strategy. From proactively offering well-being support, to providing everyone with the resources and opportunities they need to take the next step in their careers, it all begins with a clear and complete view of your employees and their needs.

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Empower employees to drive their own journeys and fill talent gaps for you

With the right technology and strategy, healthcare HR teams can tackle many of their biggest challenges simultaneously. The clearest example of this is how HR empowers employees to engage with services, access opportunities, and develop their careers.

When they're empowered with intuitive tools that enable them to easily access HR services, explore development opportunities, and see opportunities for internal mobility, employees can start to drive their own HR journeys. Those tools improve their working experiences, make it easy to access support, and help create an ecosystem where greater internal mobility makes it easier to fill skills gaps while helping employees develop and remain engaged.

These employee experiences can even be extended to the recruitment process, making it easy for new talent to join your workforce, and removing friction points to increase the total inflow of talent. It's a single technology change that helps improve experiences, reduce employee burnout, cut turnover, and drive talent acquisition.

Give everyone a voice—then listen

When you're up against such significant talent shortages, HR teams need to do all they can to keep people engaged and happy in their working lives. For healthcare workers, that all begins with clear channels to make their voices heard.

When employees have a problem or something is making their job more challenging, they need to be able to voice their concerns easily and be confident that someone will take action as a result. Today, new digital tools make that more accessible

than ever—empowering everyone to get the help, support, and opportunities they need through any device.

Giving employees that capability also goes a long way to creating a positive, supportive, and open culture where everyone feels they can share how they're feeling, and see direct benefits afterward. With competition for frontline talent heating up, enabling those kinds of employee-first cultures isn't just good for current employees; it's a powerful differentiator that can help HR teams attract top talent for years to come.

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To rise to the challenges of modern healthcare delivery, empower people, and reduce employee churn on a limited budget, you need to elevate and empower HR with a platform fit for employee-driven success.

An HR platform that helps you break down silos between disparate HR systems and other business applications is essential to help you shift. Doing so will give you a single source of truth and visibility into all workforce data so you can take proactive steps to improve experiences, provide targeted development opportunities, and act before burnout kicks in.

To learn more about how the shift helps healthcare providers solve their most pressing HR and business challenges, speak to one of our HR experts today.

Speak to our HR experts

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