

# Caregiver Recognition and Reward:

Enhancing your agency culture to attract and keep the best caregivers



## A key to retaining great caregivers

### Recognition and reward

It costs the average home care agency \$1,678 every time a caregiver quits.\* The 2016 Home Care Pulse Benchmarking Study (1) reports an astounding 59.7% median turnover rate for caregiver employment. The single most difficult issue home care agencies deal with every day: finding and keeping caregivers.

The Home Care Pulse study also gives insight into why some home care agencies are able to maintain much lower turnover rates than the national average. These home care agencies:

- Hire caregivers to fill growing client demand rather than hiring to replace the lost ones
- Focus on growth rather than survival
- Reward and recognize caregivers in a formalized way

The third bullet in many ways informs the other two. What are these high performing home care agencies doing to reward and recognize their caregivers? Their best practices in incentive programs show that focusing on personalization, participation and convenience are the most successful.

If you haven't seen our [blog](#) on this subject yet, you may want to check it out. There you will see a graph that illustrates the enormous efficiency and savings that can occur if there is a great focus on the pre-hire screening. Pre-hire screening in combination with a comprehensive recognition and rewards program can really keep your caregiver turnover rate low.

An incentive program can help caregivers feel the effects of positive behaviors. Rewards are excellent for promoting good work, participation and accountability. These types of programs can provide clearly understood ways for the caregiver to be recognized and rewarded. A number of tactics can be employed and are listed below. It is important to understand that a good recognition program can have the added affect of improving the quality of care. This effect is systemic and builds a stronger home care agency all around.

### Activities and practices to incent

A care recipient, client family member or care manager says something good about a caregiver. Inform clients and family members that the agency gives rewards to the caregivers if they are doing good work and encourage positive feedback. People will do the right thing if they can. If a caregiver is doing good work, then they may get kudos on a regular basis; this is a win all the way around: for clients, caregivers and agencies.

Make it easy for care recipients or family members to give feedback by doing regular check in calls, provide in home forms or do regular email surveys. Make sure that individual caregivers are notified of the compliment. That in itself is a reward. Don't forget to share it with the rest of the company in the monthly newsletter. This is a great way to get quotes for website publication, too.

### Caregiver finds a new client

Caregivers might know of a family member, a member of their church, a friend's parent who needs care or any number of scenarios. Caregivers can facilitate a new referral sources. Be sure caregivers know what potential referrals and referral sources look like so they can be vigilant. This is a potential revenue stream that can make a healthier home care agency. Its value can be directly measured in dollars. Referral tracking and encouragement are a core stream for revenue. (See the Rosemark white paper "Strategies for Improving Referrals for Home Care Agencies")

### Caregiver finds a new caregiver

It is a great indication of caregiver loyalty and satisfaction if they are recommending their friends and acquaintances for employment. The average cost to acquire a lead on a new caregiver is \$338 (1) and is reflected in a direct savings for the home care agency. It would be well worth the reward to create a culture that says, "I love where I work, come work here too!" Making employee referrals part of an incentive program can significantly add to bottom line income for the home care agency.

### Last minute shifts and on-call hours

Reward behaviors like accepting a last-minute shift (some call them e-shifts or emergency shifts). Volunteering to be on call during the holidays can provide agency staff and clients peace of mind having more predictability during the holidays. Incent this additional responsibility accepted by the caregiver with additional pay or flat dollar rewards.

### Attendance and timeliness

Rewarding good attendance is a great way to establish good habits. When caregivers attend beneficial activities such as educational trainings, in-services and agency meetings, they will get useful information to do a better job and experience those activities with others in the same position, building community. \*\*

Friendships may arise, along with other positive outcomes, building a community of caregivers more willing to help one another. Of course, being on time to their shifts and not calling off or missing shifts could be rewarded as well.

### Achieving goals set by a care manager

All of the above should be laid out so that caregivers understand clearly the goals set for them. Of course, the program must be fully supported by agency staff, with care managers leading the charge. Reward her/him as well. Figure it out. Remember retention is the ultimate goal.

### Answering a newsletter trivia question

This is a fun way to reward caregivers for reading the newsletter prepared for them, especially if it contains important and timely information that they need to know.

**Like agency on Facebook, follow on Twitter and Pinterest**

More and more, these social media sites are where caregivers are participating. Why not encourage them to say something good about the agency? A simple like or follow could also increase SEO (Search Engine Optimization) so that more people are finding the agency online organically. This particular tactic is relevant for potential caregivers and even potential new clients.

**Ways to acknowledge and incent**

**Thank you notes and calls**

This is the first, best and easiest way to meaningfully recognize caregivers. Each week write handwritten notes to about 10% of the agencies caregivers. Additionally another 10% of the agency caregivers could be given a call during the course of a given week. With this process, contact of a personal nature happens at a frequency that recognizes all caregivers and communicates an appreciation that mass communications can't. There are many creative ways to recognize and thank people for great work. Check out more at: [University of Washington - Employee Recognition](#)

**A point system is great for collecting and claiming rewards**

Give points for all of the above activities, weighting them appropriately. Give rewards on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis; choosing a process is a great first step. Figures 1 through 4 are examples of how Rosemark (a scheduling system used for scheduling and management of home care agencies) provide a sketch of how a process can be tracked.

**Completed Action: Velvet Easton**

Completed:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Type:	Rewards
Date:	05/24/2016
Time:	9:27a
Who:	Velvet Easton
Subject:	Compliment - 2pts.
Comment:	Helen's daughter is thrilled with the work Velvet is doing.

Figure 1 . Record in Actions the rewardable action and it's details of your caregiver Velvet Easton.

C	Type	Date	Time	Who	Subject
✓	Rewards	03/02/2016	4:42p	Francis R. Thurston (caregiver)	Referred Client 6pts
✓	Rewards	03/16/2016	4:45p	Velvet Easton (caregiver)	Stayed Late 1pt.
✓	Rewards	03/21/2016	4:43p	Francis R. Thurston (caregiver)	Marketing 4pts.
✓	Rewards	03/28/2016	4:49p	Buster Brinkley (caregiver, referrer)	On-call 2pts.
✓	Rewards	04/04/2016	4:45p	Velvet Easton (caregiver)	Compliment 2pts.
✓	Rewards	04/10/2016	4:44p	Francis R. Thurston (caregiver)	On Call 2pts
✓	Rewards	04/11/2016	9:17a	Charlene Zeboff (caregiver)	Emergency shift 2pts
✓	Rewards	04/13/2016	4:46p	Velvet Easton (caregiver)	Emergency shift 2pts.
✓	Rewards	04/15/2016	4:49p	Buster Brinkley (caregiver, referrer)	Stayed Late 1pt.
✓	Rewards	05/02/2016	4:47p	Velvet Easton (caregiver)	Emergency shift 2pts.
✓	Rewards	05/05/2016	9:17a	Charlene Zeboff (caregiver)	Marketing 4pts.
✓	Rewards	05/19/2016	9:18a	Charlene Zeboff (caregiver)	On Call 2pts
✓	Rewards	05/23/2016	4:50p	Buster Brinkley (caregiver, referrer)	Referred CG 4pts.
✓	Rewards	05/23/2016	4:48p	Velvet Easton (caregiver)	Referred Client 6pts.

Figure 2. View list of Velvet's rewardable actions.

Caregiver: Velvet Easton #4841

Summary
Info
Credential
HR
Communications

### Communications

Caregiver #:	4841
Caregiver Points:	13.00
Send Shift Reminders:	

Figure 3. Shows the accumulated reward points for Velvet at any given time. When Velvet has reached the agency goal it will be time to reward Velvet for her good work.

Agencies can arrange so that points can be redeemed in a number of ways. Small point items like movie tickets or lunch money are appreciated and caregivers can also save points to redeem for larger prizes like laptops or tablets, additional vacation time, etc.

There are all kinds of perks that can be offered. Asking caregivers what they would like is a great way to build meaningful incentives.

### **Gift card drawing**

A certain activity like accepting an e-shift or earning a number of points could enter the caregiver in a drawing. Again, it could be a weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly drawing. Over the course of a given time period a caregiver could have multiple entries.

### **Bonuses, pay raises and per shift pay bumps**

Agencies might find that the best way to incentivize the staff is simply reward money.

Clearly there are many ways to incent or encourage positive behavior. The key to a program that is most effective is to know what the staff finds most meaningful and to track the good behavior effectively to form the rewards. Remember, however the incentive program is constructed, get involved personally with the caregivers recognition, make it easy for them to redeem points and make it meaningful to them.

## **A word about demerits**

Some agencies only have demerit systems in place. There is value to demerits for things like being tardy, receiving negative comments or cancelling shifts at the last minute. These activities should be generally discouraged. Imagine how a fair demerit system coupled with a strong, consistent point system for positive reinforcement could significantly increase caregiver loyalty to the agency and decrease turnover.

## **The foundation to caregiver retention is creating a culture of appreciation and support**

Agencies that focus on creating a culture of appreciation and support for their caregivers have a loyal and strong workforce. The cost of high turnover can be devastating. All the behaviors mentioned above and the tactics for incenting those positive actions is a smart investment.

Many agency owners worry about caregivers talking to each other, that it may breed discontent. This may be true if you have a culture that consciously or unconsciously promotes negative talk. Taking the leap to a positive, communicative culture could get caregivers talking the good talk. Home care agencies with positive talk cultures create an attractive employment opportunity for other caregivers. Make your agency the one everyone wants to work!

## About Shoshana Technologies

*Shoshana Technologies provides home care agencies with our Rosemark System, a cloud-based business management system that streamlines and integrates daily management tasks so our clients can efficiently run their home care businesses. We place a high priority on partnership and problem-solving.*

*For 25 years, we have developed relationships that allows us to get to know our customers' unique goals and challenges so we can ensure that our Rosemark System is customized for their specific home care business.*

Interested in exploring how Rosemark can work for you?  
Please contact Shoshana Technologies: 734-662-3537.

(1) Home Care Pulse. 2016 Home Care Benchmarking Study. Rexburg, ID:  
Home Care Pulse, LLC., 2016. Print.

*\* This loss is based on # of caregivers, caregivers lost per year, average salary per caregiver, annual value in revenue produced per caregiver, average days to fill the caregiver position opening, ramp up time to reach full productivity and recruitment costs of bring in a new caregiver.*

\*\* More on related topics:  
Home Care Plus: [Caregiver training best practices](#)