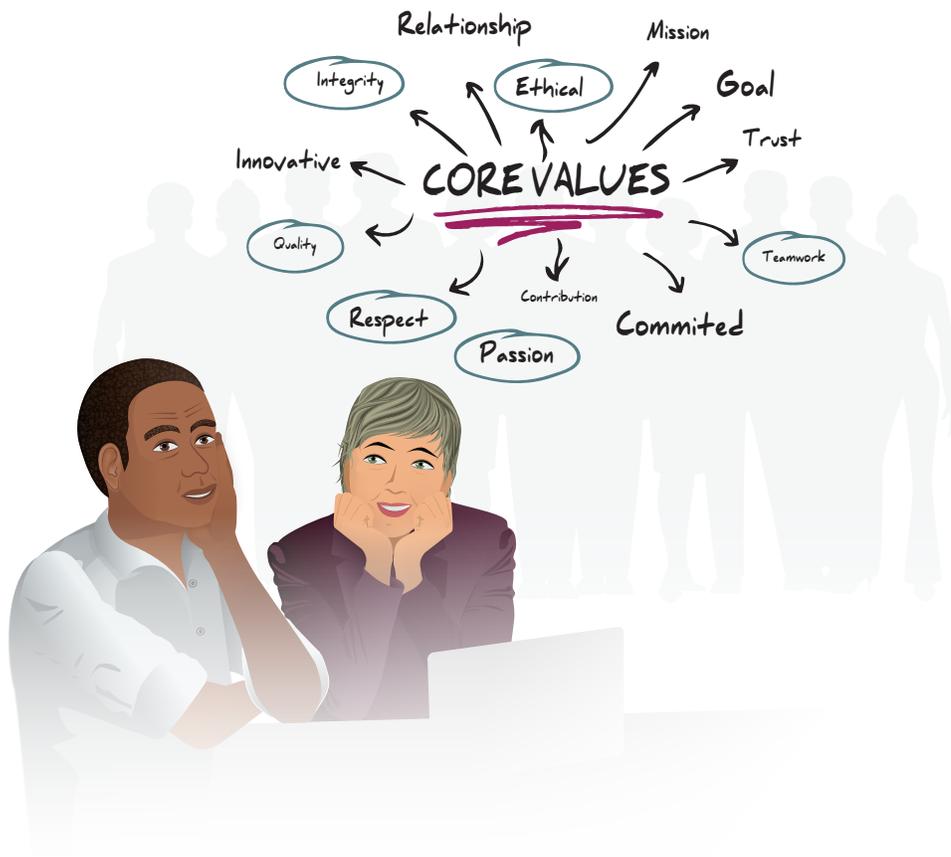# Make your home care agency the place to work

Start with an intentional culture

Caregiver turnover

The number of home health aides, certified nurse aides, and personal care attendants is approaching 4 million people in the United States.[1] Despite that figure, there is a growing shortage of care workers to provide care for the increasing population of baby-boomers moving into their 70s and 80s. And, in the 2016 benchmarking study, Home Care Pulse uncovered that the median caregiver turnover rate in the US is 59.7%.

Putting these three facts together has led us to the conclusion that anything home care agencies can do to attract, and retain caregivers while lowering turnover, is time, money and effort well spent.

How can a company have an effect on their turnover rate?

Some will find the answer surprising, but we believe it must start, with what's known as, an intentional culture!

Fortune Magazine states that a strong company culture is a major factor why the awardees of "The 100 Best Companies to Work For" have half the turnover rate compared to other companies in their industry. [2] "The 100 best…" does random surveys of the applicant's employees; they are asked many questions, among them are questions specific to their company culture.

A company that is knocking it out of the park is Encompass Home Health and Hospice, they have been recently named one of "The 100 Best Companies to Work For" by Fortune Magazine. Encompass provides an average of 160 hours of training for full and part-time employees, as well as providing opportunities for their full and part-time employees to engage in medical missions in their own communities and around the world. Because of their strong culture, 37% of their new employees are initiated from referrals, and their full-time voluntary turnover is 14%.[3] Encompass has created an intentional culture.

Core values are a key component of company culture. The Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) did a case study of the Ararat Nursing Facility, and found that Ararat's development of an environment consistent with its core values of compassion, dignity, respect, self-determination, empowerment, and flexibility achieved staff satisfaction rates of 95%.[4] Ararat has created an intentional culture.

Clearly, a strong and compelling articulation of business culture is where it begins. Top employers in the country have success because they intentionally create a culture, then continually support the culture through effective hiring procedures and encouraging company policies - explicitly matching their culture to their values.

Once a company has identified and committed to a culture it can and should be leveraged in many ways. You will find that your company culture will drive all operations. This becomes easier and easier as you put your intentional culture into practice. Then, when you know what you are looking for, it will permeate hiring, selling, marketing and brand identity, managing your employees, choosing vendors and your strategic partners.

Your company already has a culture

Every company is working within a culture. There are forces that are guiding your agency right now. Are you sure these forces are the ones that you would choose? Or, is your company culture making it seem that your agency is getting away from you as you grow?

If you are not happy with the way your company operates, changing your current culture can fix that problem. It is very important to begin by being honest about what your culture is today. Knowing where you are starting from will help you to figure out a path to establishing a culture that is closer to your ideal. Shifting culture takes time, so be patient. You may consider getting some expert help but we have provided some great guidelines and steps to help you on the road to an intentional culture.

To identify what makes your company great and nail down your company culture, clearly understanding these two key components is important:

- Core values (Why you do the things you do)
- Mood of your company (In what manner you do what you do)

Follow this step-by-step plan to define and create an intentional agency culture

Step 1 - Identifying your core values

If you have a leadership team, gather them off-site for a 2-hour meeting. If you are the leadership team, get yourself out of the office for a clarity break.

- Have each person list 3 - 5 people whom they admire (one of them could be you but preferably people in your company).
- Write them out so that you and your team can see them.

List the characteristics that these people embody. What are the qualities about these people that are admired? List them out. It can be a lengthy list. Here are some examples:

- Compassionate
- Works Hard
- Wins

Step 2 - Discovering your agency mood

How does it feel to the employees to work at your agency? Do an anonymous poll of your employees to find this out. List them out. It can be a long list. Here are some examples:

- Fun
- Grateful
- Inconsistent

Step 3 - Narrowing down the Lists

Be brutally honest and concise. Circle characteristics that are truly important. Cross out the ones that aren't Combine characteristics that are similar.

- Pare down your core values list to 5-10
- Pare down your mood descriptor list to 5-10
- If you are doing this alone, you may want to discuss this with a trusted colleague.

Discuss and debate the remaining characteristics.

- Settle and agree on 3-5 values and 3-5 mood descriptors.
- Write a short definition of what each value or mood means to you and your team. Make sure you are all on the same page.
- Live with the values and mood descriptors for a few weeks and schedule a meeting to agree on a final list. Answer this question: Are the values and moods you've identified representative of your company?

Step 4 - Presenting to your team

Prepare a presentation speech to the rest of the organization, including every caregiver hired. Choose words for each core value & mood that have the same pattern or tense. Write a short descriptive sentence for each value & mood.

- Read your speech or have an employee read it aloud. That is for current employees and each new hire.
- Live and breathe your intentional culture in every aspect of your agency.
- Review and confirm every 6 months. Do they still hold true, do you need to change them?
- Ask yourself and your team this very Important question: Do we need to change anything about the workings of our company so that we are consistent with the culture we have chosen for ourselves?

Conclusion

Compelling evidence points to a direct correlation between a strong culture and business success. Core issues for companies such as attracting and keeping good employees and customers can be resolved more efficiently by identifying and embedding a culture that is interesting and stirs loyalty in employees and customers. We hope that this information will enable discussion that can begin a journey of attaining a strong culture for your home care agency.

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] "About PHI." PHI. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Aug. 2016. <http://phinational.org/about>.

[2] "Connecting People and Purpose: 7 Ways High-Trust Organizations Retain Talent." (2016): n. pag. Great Place to Work, 2016. Web. 26 Aug. 2016. <http://learn.greatplacetowork.com/rs/520-AOO-982/images/GPTW-Fortune-100Best-Report-2016.pdf>..

[3] Fortune, 2016. Web. 26 Aug. 2016. <http://fortune.com/best-companies/encompass-home-health-and-hospice-69/>.

[4] Mayfield, Marcia. "Ararat Nursing Facility: Sustaining Excellence through Quality Improvement Systems, Trust, and Teamwork." The Business of Caregiving (Aug. 2010): 10. PHI, Aug. 2010. Web. 26 Aug. 2016. <http://phinational.org/sites/phinational.org/files/training/wp-content/uploads/PHI-Ararat-CaseStudy.pdf>.