



## WHAT A NURSE WANTS:

# 5 WAYS TO ATTRACT TOP NURSING TALENT IN 2019



# WHAT A NURSE WANTS: 5 WAYS TO ATTRACT TOP NURSING TALENT IN 2019



Respect. Autonomy. Flexibility. Compensation. These are among the first words that come to mind when considering what a nurse wants in relation to job satisfaction. While developing an effective nurse recruitment strategy, it is best to begin by understanding what nurses are looking for in the workplace. The best strategy will be designed to authentically demonstrate how your culture-in-action meets your nurse candidate's needs and desires.

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) created standards for establishing and sustaining a **Healthy Work Environment**. The published framework of six standards consists of skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision-making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership.

You will find that framework reflected in the evolving healthcare culture, whether through Magnet designation criteria or more informally through inclusive organizational structures. When it comes to recruiting, how can your organization stand out and attract the most qualified nurse candidates?

Let's deep dive into what a nurse wants and review five things that can help you attract top nursing talent.

---

## FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

### Salaries and Signing Bonuses

It would be false to leave financial compensation off the list of what nurses want. This point can be misconstrued as self-serving, but in fact it is an economic necessity.

- *Student Loan Debt is Climbing.* Nurses are committed to education and with education comes debt. According to a study published in Nursing Economics, the average student loan debt for a registered nurse is more than \$30,000. Another survey reported that more than two-thirds (69%) of advanced practice nurses have graduate loans between \$40,000 and \$55,000.



- *Salaries for Inexperienced or New Nurses Create Economic Disparity.* According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of 2017 the median salary for a registered nurse in the United States was \$70,000, but the starting salary can be as low as \$28,000. These new nurses are more likely to have to take on second jobs or sign up for extra shifts just to manage education debt and living expenses. All of this leads to early burnout and job dissatisfaction.
- *Signing Bonuses are Rising.* Thanks to a growing nursing shortage and rising retirement rate, it is the new normal to see organizations bumping up their signing bonuses to attract top candidates. Amounts of \$10,000 - \$20,000 are not unusual and are sometimes combined with referral bonuses for current employees. It is important to know how hot your market is and how high your competitors are willing to go to try and best you and land the most qualified talent.

## Meaningful Incentives

Increasing the starting salary is not the only way to sweeten the hiring offer. Healthcare organizations are finding that meaningful incentives can go a long way toward attracting and retaining top nurses. Some of the items that nurses value include a comprehensive benefits package, generous retirement savings programs, tuition assistance, and flexible scheduling. Some other creative and meaningful incentives that are being rolled out around the country include:

- No mandatory overtime
- Free housing for commuters
- Car allowance
- Education reimbursement for family members
- Concierge services covering daily chores like meal preparation and laundry
- Wellness benefits and gym memberships

*Healthcare organizations are finding that meaningful incentives can go a long way toward attracting and retaining top nurses.*

Keep in mind that the wage and incentive war might get nurses in the door, but you will need retention strategies in place to keep your staff from jumping ship to the next, more attractive financial offer once their obligation is met.

## INCLUSION – SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Hospitals that prioritize and implement concepts like shared governance experience greater levels of engagement. **Shared governance has been shown to increase retention and employee satisfaction, improve safety and patient satisfaction, reduce lengths of stay, and result in a more robust bottom line.**



Additionally, according to [this report](#), nurses were significantly less likely to report unfavorable job outcomes and poor ratings of quality and safety. Higher levels of nurse engagement were associated with higher HCAHPS scores.

An engaged nurse who is invested in a team, participating on leadership committees, and focused on patient outcomes feels valued and is less likely to be lured away by recruiters and competing offers. This is the type of nurse that your most qualified candidates want to be.

How does your organization rate? Look for statistics you can promote such as:

- How many nursing committees are in existence?
- What percentage of your nurses participate on committees?
- Is staffing and scheduling aligned to support nurse participation?
- Is your Chief Nursing Officer involved and accessible?
- Are there success stories where nurse participation led to bringing in a new product, advanced equipment, or a cutting-edge practice? Was nursing involved in designing a new charting flow or room set up that had an impact on patient outcomes?

Identify your shared governance success stories and promote them to candidates to gain an edge during the recruitment process.

## AUTHENTIC APPRECIATION

Authentic or meaningful recognition and appreciation are rated high on the list of things today's nurses value. There is a high turnover rate among nurses in the first two years of starting their first job. This [study](#) reported that almost one-in-five registered nurses leave their first nursing job within a year and one-third leave that job within two years.

A lack of appreciation is a contributing factor. Nurses ask for two types of appreciation – appreciation that is authentic/meaningful and appreciation that is peer to peer. The DAISY award is a great example of a respected recognition program that nurses value. The DAISY Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that formally recognizes the contributions of nurses through a nomination process.

When evaluating your recognition programs, consider these questions:

- Are they highly utilized?
- Are they fair for all or do they depend solely on a department head's willingness to participate?
- Is the recognition promoted and delivered in a meaningful or public way?
- Is there a team component?
- Is there recognition based on tangible, measurable criteria such as patient outcomes, goals, safety or quality measures, etc.?
- Is there an avenue for outside accolades such as from a patient or a patient's family member?



If you identify gaps or room for improvement, be a part of the change so that your recognition and appreciation programs stand out as authentic and meaningful.

---

## CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

Workplace culture is extremely important to nurses. Culture is a tangible criterion that is evaluated by the nurse candidate throughout the hiring process. Candidates make note of their impressions every step of the way.

It starts with your brand, which is an extension of your culture and is the public face of your organization. Candidates begin their search online – through your website, social media, ratings and reviews from the public and from staff, and media coverage. If you audit your complete digital footprint, will you see a cohesive culture represented, or will you find inconsistencies? For example, does your social media promote the nursing culture, but your website doesn't mention nurses at all? Do you promote open door leadership, but your Glassdoor reviews show a different story? A brand audit will help you find the areas that are working for you, and where you might need to align perceptions in a different way.

And finally, does your communication during the interview and hiring process reflect your brand? Are there proactive updates, friendly faces, and collegial teams on display during interviews? The experience a candidate has during the recruitment process is what they will know to be truth about the work culture there. Not many people want to work for a place where calls aren't returned, questions aren't answered, and staff isn't prepared for visits or meetings.

**Simply put, when you understand what a nurse wants from her organization and career, you can tailor your recruitment strategy and hiring pitch to be more effective and fill more open positions.**

---

Make your recruitment messaging travel farther and work harder by supplementing your candidate pipeline with verified talent funnels and high conversion rates from Katon Direct.

**Over 300 healthcare facilities partner with Katon Direct for their most challenging recruitment needs. For over 15 years Katon has pioneered connecting healthcare facilities with the most qualified clinical candidates.**

**With over 8 million candidates in our industry-leading database, we can help fill your talent funnel with qualified candidates.**

### Contact Us

Katon Direct

914-921-8800

[www.katondirect.com](http://www.katondirect.com)

