

Recruiting and Retaining Multigenerational Healthcare Professionals

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Today's multigenerational workforce has a significant impact on the rapidly-evolving healthcare industry. As a more comprehensively integrated system focused on population health begins to dominate, the healthcare industry, the healthcare experience, and provider recruitment initiatives must also evolve. Part of that journey is the effective implementation of a clinically integrated care model. While there are varying definitions and components of clinical integration, the basis of a successful model is always defined by the coordination of care across a continuum of services—and service providers. To proactively manage the health of entire populations, clinically integrated care models are essential. And clinically integrated teams require professionals from a variety of generations to communicate and collaborate efficaciously.

Not only must organizations work to bridge the gap between diverse age groups, but they must also learn how to tailor recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies for professionals from the following four generations:

- **Traditionalists:** born between 1925 and 1945. Multiple sources report that they comprise 17% of the US population, 8% of the workforce, and 9% of workers in healthcare.
- **Baby Boomers:** born between 1946 and 1964. Represent 28% of the US population, 43% of the total workforce, and 48% of healthcare workers.
- **Generation X:** born between 1965 and 1976. Represent 13% of the US population, but only 20% of the total workforce and 23% of healthcare workers.
- **Millennials:** born between 1977 and 1996. Represent 26% of the US population. Although not all have entered the workforce yet, they account for 27% of the total workforce, but only 20% of healthcare workers.

So, how can healthcare organizations do this? Below, we explore generational characteristics and provide generation-specific recruitment, onboarding, and retention suggestions so that healthcare organizations can effectively build age diverse groups, and leverage the benefits of multigenerational teams for gain.



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Traditionalists

Born between 1925 and 1945, these professionals value privacy, hard work, trust, formality, and institutional leadership. They believe in authority, responsibility, and accountability, and are usually not very technologically-savvy.

How to RECRUIT:	How to ONBOARD:	How to RETAIN:
Traditionalists are looking for exceptional opportunities to end their careers on a high note. Flexible and even part-time work arrangements are attractive, as are prestigious titles. Focus on formality and detail when recruiting. Emphasize the value their experience and institutional knowledge will bring to your organization.	Onboarding for traditionalists needs to be intensive; plan (and budget) for additional IT support. Pair them with a younger employee who can help guide them through the electronic health records maze. Set regular check-in meetings to ensure they have what they need and are assimilating as part of the team.	Keep all promises you made during the recruitment process. Traditionalists want to know that your word is good. Provide them with mentorship opportunities so that they have the opportunity to shape the younger generation. Offer leadership roles and responsibilities, and high compensation. They are motivated, in part, by financial success. Continue to communicate clearly and regularly to assess their satisfaction level and openly discuss goals and expectations.

Baby Boomers

Born between 1946 and 1964, these professionals embrace optimism, prosperity, success, and family-friendly workplaces. Representing almost half of today's healthcare professionals, Baby Boomers fill many healthcare leadership roles and derive a sense of identity and self-worth from career success.

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Baby Boomers are at the height of their earning potential so money is always a top incentive. The opportunity to lead or build a program or initiative is enticing. Other motivators include joining a team with a nationally- or globally-recognized reputation and the chance to do something they have not done before. During the recruitment process, Baby Boomers appreciate direct and concise communication; you should be prepared for extensive and thorough follow-up. In addition, they are looking to join an organization that demonstrates flexibility.	Baby Boomers want clear and constant communications about expectations. They desire regular check-ins about goals and want to ensure that you will provide them with the support and resources necessary to be successful in the position.	Baby Boomers value team-based approaches and are committed to climbing a ladder of success. Retention of these valuable assets centers around regular communication, financial rewards, and career advancement opportunities.

Generation X

Born between 1965 and 1976, Gen Xers are somewhat cynical. They place more value on their personal lives, as opposed to their professional lives. They do not rely on institutions for long-term security, making this population even harder to retain.

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Gen Xers value entrepreneurial spirit, independence and creativity, and information and feedback. By demonstrating your organization is open to new ideas, innovation, and an inclusive recruitment process, you will be ahead of the game. Additionally, they prefer email as their primary means of communication.	Gen Xers respond well to mentors who are similar in age and life stage. They desire regular communication, but prefer an informal style. They are more receptive to short pieces of information, delivered frequently. Talk in short soundbites and ask them for feedback throughout the process.	Gen Xers are looking for “the next thing.” They want to know that they are being groomed or trained for advancement. In addition, they crave frequent feedback and want to be asked for comments and suggestions regularly.

Millennials

Born between 1977 and 1996, this is the fastest growing segment of the workforce. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center analysis of US Census Bureau data, this group will make up 75% of the workforce by 2020. They are ambitious and collaborative, and prioritize work life balance. They value autonomy, positive reinforcement, instant gratification, and constant validation. Driven by empathy and a need for purpose, they are also extremely comfortable with technology and eager to learn.

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Millennials look for how they can fit into, and make an impact on, the organization. Loan repayment, flexible scheduling and ample vacation time, signing bonuses, relocation services, assistance with housing loans, educational opportunities, and responsiveness are all enticing to this cohort. They appreciate and respond to authentic corporate culture.	Onboarding should be inclusive for this group. You not only have to provide mentors and assistance to the healthcare professional you hire, but you have to mentor his/her family as new members of the community as well. Many organizations appoint clinical mentors and a similar-in-age social mentor for the new employee. In addition, create a separate onboarding plan for the partner, spouse, or family to make sure they are personally connected, engaged, and happy.	More than any other generational group, Millennials pose a flight risk. This is significant because a recent US labor data study revealed that replacing healthcare professionals can cost more than 20% of that person’s annual salary. And, this number doesn’t include the inevitable slow down before the professional leaves, revenue decline during vacancy, and money lost as the new hire ramps up. To retain millennials effectively, consider a retention bonus, continuation of mentoring support, and frequent meetings during which feedback is given and received. Stave off boredom by offering them unique opportunities to showcase skills and provide encouragement and motivation.

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Final Thoughts

While all organizations are facing the challenges of recruiting, onboarding, and retaining multigenerational team members, this struggle is compounded in the healthcare industry. Significant changes to healthcare’s infrastructure, delivery models, and measurement metrics dictate the need for well-trained, well-coordinated clinically integrated teams—teams comprised of healthcare professionals at every level and age. While adjusting recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies does take work, the payoff of a productive and satisfied multigenerational workforce is immeasurable. Healthcare leaders who work to enhance relationships between generations will cultivate more effective teams, enhanced patient care coordination and, ultimately, competitive advantages.



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