

Digital Approach to Nurse Recruitment for Increased Efficiency

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Background: The US healthcare system is experiencing a significant nursing shortage over the past decades. It is expected that the shortage will exceed 510,000 RNs by 2030. Aging demographic, turnover rate, and insufficient enrollment in nurse education programs are some of the key factors that intensify the situation. Because of these challenges, several staff contracting facilities created additional competition in the market which leads to lack of consistency and increased labor cost for hospital systems. It is therefore imperative for hospitals to continue to explore ways to hire and retain top talent to be able to survive in the current competitive job market. Rural healthcare particularly suffers from this challenge and we had similar situation at a rural hospital in Georgia.

Objective: A process improvement initiative was conducted to optimize the hiring process and improve nursing recruitment fill rate and speed of hire. The goal of the initiative was to reduce the use of contract nurses in order to decrease costs and maintain quality of care.

Planning/Research Methods: Following the DMAIC process improvement approach, a multidisciplinary team was formed including stakeholders from Human Resources, Operations and Analytics and the existing hiring process was investigated. Various measures were defined for the process and reviewing historical data, the bottlenecks were identified. Also, the demand capacity analysis was conducted and the vacancy rate was proactively determined through predictive modeling considering the attrition rate and budgeted FTE. Lack of timely communication with applicants and delay in noticing new applications through Applicant Tracking System (ATS) due to availability of hiring managers were the main obstacles delaying the recruitment process.

Interventions Implemented:

- Transitioned ownership of nurse recruitment activity to operations and established nurse recruitment office
- Improved communication with hiring managers by use of technology; call or text hiring managers beside sending email via ATS to inform of new applicant.
- Conducted phone/skype interviews vs. traditional face to face interviews on site
- Reduced contract nurses by offering short term incentive contracts with permanent staff, hiring LPNs, and transitioning agency staff to permanent staff

Results:

- Days to fill reduced by 23.2% (from 116.8 to 89.7 days, $p < 0.05$)
- Days to hire decreased by 42.8% (from 22.02 to 12.6 days, $p < 0.05$)
- Days to offer decreased by 69.6% (from 18.1 to 5.5 days, $p < 0.05$)
- Number of contracts decreased from 168 in June to 56 in September

Lessons Learned:

Leveraging new analytics supported digital technology in hiring process, improving communication and collaboration among recruiters and nursing directors and managers, standardizing the process and developing well established platforms to monitor the process can significantly contribute to improve nurse recruitment process.

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