

SIMPLE ACTS OF RECOGNITION CAN RESUSCITATE PERIOPERATIVE TEAMS

Author: Sarah McVanel, MSc, PCC, CHRL, CSODP helps staff and leaders leverage the power of recognition to retain top talent and fuel healthy cultures. She speaks nationally, leads workshops, coaches leaders, and conducts organizational recognition program reviews. She is a Certified Senior Organizational Development Professional (CSODP), Professional Certified Coach (PCC), Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL), and member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (CAPS). She has a BA in Psychology, Masters in Family Relations and Diplomas in Human Resources and Healthcare Administration. She has over 17 years' experience including at a senior leadership level in healthcare and now owns a boutique consulting firm, "Greatness Magnified." She is an author of peer-reviewed journals, articles, two books, "Forever Recognize Others' Greatness: Solution Focused Strategies for Satisfied Staff, High Performing Teams and Healthy Bottom Lines" (2015) and "The FROG Effect: Tools and Strategies to Forever Recognize Others' Greatness" (2016) and the recognition membership portal "The FROG Portal: Tools and Strategies to Retain & Engage Your Best Staff and Clients".



There has been much discussion about disruptive behaviour. When the author presented on this topic at the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada (ORNAC) National Conference, in May 2017, the number one thing that people asked me to address was "What can we do to fix disruptive behaviour?"

Recognition is a big part of the solution. If we take the time to practice the three common ways people wish to be recognized (a verbal thank-you, personal specific words of acknowledgement, or a written thank you) wouldn't there be less tolerance of disruptive behaviour? Wouldn't you have the confidence to stand up to someone who was being disruptive when you knew you were valued and appreciated by the rest of your team for your skill and contribution? Wouldn't there be less fertile soil in which those 'toxic comments' can grow?

According to research out of the Conference Board of Canada² we are spending time and money on recognition in healthcare. It is not, however, in a form that deals with disruptive behaviour and insulates

against compassion fatigue and change fatigue. Health care team members are most often recognized for Years of Service or significant milestones such as retirement. If a team is struggling right now then how much comfort can really result from knowing there will be a nice dinner, a watch, or pin 15 years from now? How does that help today? Although the answer isn't necessarily doing away with long service acknowledgement (after all, the nurse that's been waiting 24 years for this recognition would not be thrilled if that acknowledgement was suddenly eliminated!) what is needed most, and is often lacking in perioperative environments, is consistent, timely and specific acknowledgement by all members of the healthcare team on a daily basis. Small, sincere, and free gestures can resuscitate even the worst days.

The Data Has It

Let's also consider the bigger picture. The author worked with a Canadian survey company, Metrics@Work, to analyze their database of almost a quarter of a million staff engagement

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surveys from hundreds of companies. The goal was to substantiate what they were seeing when they worked with Operating Room (OR), Medical Device Reprocessing (MDR), and a host of other clinical and non-clinical teams within healthcare organizations. The data gave a clear picture: teams that had high satisfaction level regarding their recognition were dramatically different and better places to work (and receive care in) than those with low recognition ratings.³

What the data showed was there was a statistically significant difference in a whole host of areas resulting from varying recognition rates. They included levels of engagement in work, satisfaction with leadership, trust in the organization, striving for continuous improvement, and intention to stay.³ In other words, recognition is good for teams, leaders and patients in a myriad of ways. Something as simple as regular and sincere acknowledgments can actually make a team more satisfying and safer.

There is another very important reason to not ignore the power of recognition. According to Deloitte's Human Capital Research⁴ we're in a talent shortage that shows no signs of easing until 2030. The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) predicts by 2022 there will be a shortage of 60,000 nurses.⁵ How will OR teams cope with the loss of even more strong colleagues both in a department and in other departments that they depend on? Consider the impact if our system embraces recognition to help retain the most talented and experienced staff. Could this fuel a positive, productive and safe perioperative culture through the power of appreciation and acknowledgement? So much so that it attracts folks who are looking for greener pastures (and retains those who are already there)?⁶ Recognition is not 'fluffy stuff' that is to be ignored or brushed off as inconsequential. It is actually built into many of the recommendations from the CNA's report Tested Solutions for Eliminating Canada's Registered Nurse Shortage.⁷ So what is there to lose?

The benefits of recognition are not, of course, limited to nursing environments. Following a survey of a Medical Devices Reprocessing team, where engagement levels were reported to be the lowest of all teams in the organization, recognition was the first and foremost team intervention approach used over a two-year period.³ Two years later when staff were resurveyed, this team had become the second most empowered team in their facility! That not only made the work environment more satisfying for their team but likely also had an impact on the perioperative teams that depends on their accuracy, collaboration, and service-orientation.

Employers Take Note: Retaining Top Perioperative Talent MUST Be a Top Priority

If this doesn't seem like sufficient evidence for the business case (let alone the human case) for recognition, here's something to consider. Think about what type of company you would want to work for. Employees are 25% more likely to remain in the organization when they are recognized consistently.³ Imagine the cost savings, not to mention the reduction of the burden on burnt out recruiters, managers and preceptors, if we stopped a revolving door of nursing talent attrition?

There are many factors that contribute to someone deciding to leave the organization. But, of course, not all have the luxury of leaving which can result in less satisfied employees who feel stuck). How productive, focused and safely are nurses able to work if they feel undermined, undervalued, underappreciated, and unable to leave, rather than engaged and satisfied and there by choice?⁸ If your team or organization has folks, "on the job retired" (called "presenteeism") or experiencing significant turnover, isn't it worth considering (perhaps even asking in exit interviews, or better yet "stay" interviews) how recognition in their work areas and as an organization-at-large could play a role in rectifying issues?

Ask people how they want to be recognized.

One can't help but wonder why recognition is not part of the broader discourse in health care operational planning just as health and safety and quality are. The time to act is now. Recognition needs to be part of any total rewards strategy. I can become the way to differentiate a hospital as an employer of choice while others struggle with a revolving door of talent.

Workplaces Staying at the Top of their Game

What can be done to leverage the exponential power of recognition and retain amazing perioperative nurses? What can perioperative nurses do starting today? Here are a few recommendations:

Just Start

What can be done by those who work at a hospital that is not considered a 'great place to work'? There are limitations on what individuals can do when it is difficult to offer incentives in the not-for-profit sector; when individuals, as educators or nurse leaders who may not have direct contact with all of their staff every day; when individuals are busy frontline professionals; Or when an organization 'doesn't get it' (yet). A first step is to begin to recognize those around us by any accessible method – social media, a note, an email, a LinkedIn testimonial, a positive word shared with the boss, a gift of a (or dinner...you pick the budget.), offering a thumbs-up or even a smile (remember, a sincere smile is seen in the eyes as well). When it's unexpected or a surprise (but not an embarrassing one) even better!

Ask

Ask people how they want to be recognized. The author has developed a tool as one method to ask people for this feedback (it is available as a free download at <https://greatnessmagnified.com/cool-stuff/>). This page also offers free tools such as how to combat compassion fatigue while recognizing the greatness in ourselves and others. Use feedback to say "thanks" in the methods

they most value – the platinum rule of recognition is to consider what the recipient wants – as often as possible. To that end employees must tell others how they like to have their value recognized. And if you're responsible for corporate recognition (and let's hope that's not just been delegated to you...that those expecting you to fulfil this task recognize that they still need to do the recognizing even if you oversee the strategy) then really evaluate if recognition is getting you the retention, continuous improvement, trust, and satisfaction you'd expect to see. If it's not, then it is time to revisit your strategy.

Focus on What's Working

If nothing else gets done at least make the choice to focus on this: do more of what is already working. Where is recognition happening already? Where is recognition part of daily discourse? Where is it possible to experiment with different recognition strategies and settings? Even if there is no money, virtually no time, and no formal program, there are ways to start a conversation or have a meeting to acknowledge what's working and to learn what others' opinions are on this topic. It is not enough to have a corporate focused pep-talk about the organization – this must also recognize individual contributions to success. In fact, why not start your team meetings or morning meetings with the question "What worked yesterday?" or "Who are you glad is on your team today and why?"

Be in Community

Share what each individual is doing and what approaches are being trialed internally and externally to keep your organization on top of leading practices. This sharing benefits everyone and can stimulate new ideas in other organizations. The author encourages readers to tweet to the hashtag #FROG and #recognition so everyone can share and learn from each other! Believe me, all the effort you put into meaningful recognition will come back to you in a magnitude of ways, ask any of my clients. How can you possibly regret

doing the right thing backed by solid business evidence?

The suggestions provided here are not rocket science. The miracles the perioperative team makes happen on the operating room table are far more awe-inspiring than the ideas shared here. And yet many people often fail to practice the very simple acts that we most want ourselves. It's small steps forward that can begin to slowly shift a disruptive culture (or prevent a culture from becoming such). Anyone who is not convinced by this should consider how they feel about a room that they dread the idea of walking into versus how they feel when assigned to the 'golden room'. In which one do people feel more valued and appreciated? How much harder will we work for a team where we feel valued? Imagine what it might be like if every room replicated what works for the highest functioning teams? This can happen. And it starts with you!

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UPCOMING EVENTS / PROCHAINS ÉVÉNEMENTS

**Perioperative
Nurses Week is
November 5 - 9, 2018.**

**La semaine des
infirmières et des
infirmiers en soins
périopératoires est du
5 au 9 novembre 2018.**

ORNAC & PROVINCIAL COUNCILS L'AIISOC ET LES CONSEILS PROVINCIAUX

26th ORNAC National Conference	Halifax, NS	Apr 26 - 30, 2019
ORNANS Provincial Conference & AGM	Antigonish, NS	June 9, 2018
ORNAA Conference	Red Deer, AB	Sept 19 - 22, 2018
ORNAO 15th Biennial Conference	Ottawa, ON	Sept 27 - 30, 2018
N&LORNA Provincial Conference	Max Simms Camp, NL	Oct 19 - 21, 2018
28th Atlantic Conference	Moncton, NB	Oct 25 - 27, 2018
CIISOQ/CORNQ Conference	Laval, QC	Oct 10 - 13, 2018

OTHER CONFERENCES • AUTRES CONFÉRENCES

CNA www.cna-aiic.ca	Ottawa, ON	June 18 - 20, 2018
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Additional conferences can be found at www.ornac.ca.
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