# Four Simple Ways to Maximize Your Training Program

How a leading healthcare system launched and accelerated employee career training.

Introduction

 In the healthcare industry where work is non-stop, and expected to continue 24/7/365, burn-out is real and turnover rates are high. For in-demand roles or those that don't offer a clear career path, companies incur heavy costs to continuously recruit and retrain workers. But offering career training both as a retention and recruitment strategy has lasting benefits to both company and employee. And as we brace ourselves for the future of work amid the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, understanding these trends and how they can be addressed is essential to workers, employers, and the economy as a whole.

A recent Gallup survey reports that 87% of millennial workers consider career growth and professional development to be a deciding factor in accepting a position, while 91% of Generation Z feel the same. This points to a glaring fact: the need for career-focused training isn't slowing down.

Importance of Career Growth

Millennials	**87%**
Generation Z	**91%**
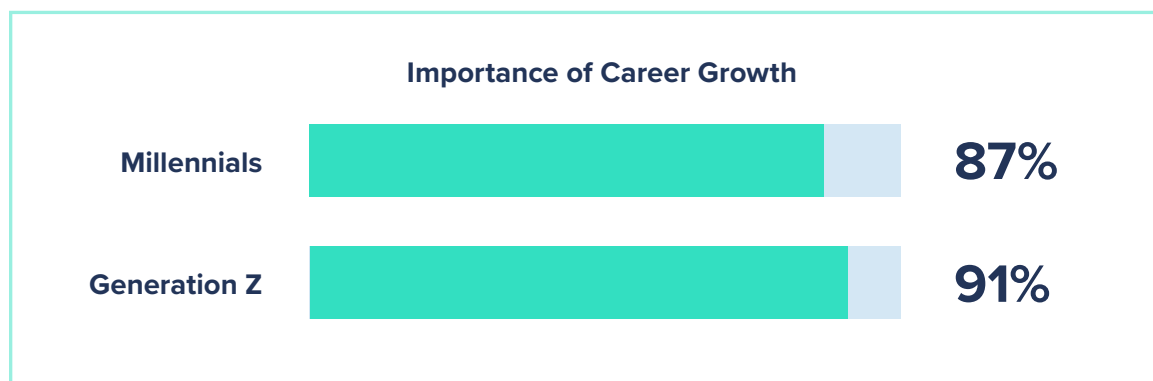
Attract and Retain Top Talent In Healthcare

With the pandemic, constant turnover, and skills gaps plaguing the healthcare industry, companies across the nation are turning to internal training programs as a key element of building talent pipelines, retaining good workers, and focusing on servicing patients.

Geisinger is a leading healthcare provider and medical hub servicing Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Their mission is simple: to provide extraordinary care to every single person who walks through their doors. To do this, they employ a vast array of skill sets that cover everything from traditional medical industry requirements of care to facilities maintenance and food services.

Geisinger Quick Stats:

13
hospital campuses

600,000
member health plan

2
research centers

**1**
School of Medicine

32,000
employees

1,800
physicians

Like many in the healthcare industry, they fight high-turnover rates and a lack of qualified applicants in mission-critical roles. To truly discern the problem, they began with surveys and data on why employees leave and what their core employer needs were. Resoundingly, they found the number one reason people leave is they don't feel they have additional opportunities.

To counter this, Geisinger has a robust training program that offers soft-skill and career-skill options. But just putting a training program in place isn't enough to keep workers learning when 12-hour, rotating shifts are the norm. Building and maintaining momentum for your training program is an on-going effort, one that requires dedicated resources, strategy, and partnership.

Here are four tried and true practices that Geisinger uses to help its L&D program thrive:
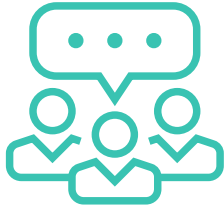
Know what your employees want.

Often, employers and hiring managers look at workforce development programs from their perspective only. Comprehensive training and education are benefits that can draw in talented hires, improve retention of employees, and increase productivity and profit over time. Focusing on the positive impact that the program can have on the company is your job, but forgetting the needs of the employee can eventually impede further growth.

Geisinger took the time to understand what employees wanted from their careers, the organization, and their training. Through surveys, focus groups, and information gleaned from hiring managers, Geisinger developed a deeper understanding of what employees valued, what types of programs and training would be beneficial, and more.

In addition to using the data mined from responsive employees, Geisinger also found that asking for input and feedback from loyal workers kept the training program relevant.

Remove barriers where possible.

The more steps you include in a process, the more likely a person is to drop out. By making it difficult to enroll in a training program, you aren't culling the less motivated applicants. You're ensuring that even the best employees, those who don't have time to sift through various forms, videos, and permissions, decide that the effort involved isn't worth their free time.

The more complicated a process becomes, the less likely someone is to push through it unless it's required. Further, streamlining the process of signing up and getting started can keep people moving forward.

One of the simplest ways to remove unnecessary barriers? Make the language you use through the process and in documentation as straightforward and accessible as possible. Whether you are looking to train entry-level workers or a mixed bag of experience and education, daunting and complicated technical and legal language can act as a roadblock. The more roadblocks your learner comes up against, the more likely they are to call it quits. Don't give your employees the option to stop and consider whether or not they're "up to the challenge" of returning to school or completing additional training.

Communicate often and authentically.

In any industry, the biggest hurdle to overcome can be getting information out to employees effectively. You could have several clever email campaigns, flyers, posters, and other materials promoting your new training initiative, but if no one is reading them, no one is signing up.

Create a varied, informative, and engaging campaign that involves video, infographics, images, and emails to spread the word, but keep things straightforward. It should be easy for a new hire or a long-term employee to find and understand the benefits offered by the company, including career development and training options.

If you're especially committed to successfully upskilling your workforce, regular in-person training or meet-and-greets can offer a simple way for employees who are unsure or uninformed about the program to quickly access information. Additionally, being available and open about the benefits of the training, why you're offering it, and what, exactly, it covers, can go a long way toward turning skeptics into supporters.

Celebrate success regularly.

When you acknowledge the dedication and hard work involved in earning a certificate while still putting in your day-to-day work hours, it shows your learners that you see and appreciate their efforts. It also reinforces the benefits of training and development to all of your employees.

Geisinger recently hosted a luncheon for 60 employees who completed the Career Readiness Bootcamp. These dedicated workers from Geisinger's Food Service Department strengthened their workplace skills through Penn Foster's interactive, self-paced program, providing them with core competencies that are vital to finding success in almost any field.

Several of these workers have found new, elevated careers within the Geisinger network and continue to be dependable, loyal workers. As the organization looks to continue its upward trajectory of building career pathways and helping to drive engagement in its training programs, these celebrated graduates will be nominating another fellow employee for the program and acting as advocates.

How investing in training and development can impact your company's bottom line:

The average cost of recruiting new hires and backfilling vacant positions can range from 16-20% of the position's salary. The outside cost to hire is around $4,000 or more, and it can take an average of 42 days to fill an open position. These costs add up, and preventing high turnover is a concern that hiring managers and human resources associates struggle to address. The solution? Investing in your employees, which can result in increased retention rates, productivity, and a talent pipeline you can confidently tap when new positions open in the company.

While the initial cost of implementing a training program can feel indulgent, the outcomes of upskilling dedicated employees are invaluable. Besides building loyalty, you're training workers to be the best they can be at their job — or in any role — which can make for a better experience for both customer and client.

ABOUT PENN FOSTER

Penn Foster is bridging the gap between education and economic opportunity to build the workforce of tomorrow. We partner with leading employers to design and deliver digital and blended learning programs that attract, upskill, and retain workers in America's fastest-growing healthcare professions. Serving more than 40,000 healthcare learners each year, the Penn Foster Healthcare Careers Institute helps individuals discover pathways to opportunity through accredited diploma, certificate, and degree programs that span across health administration, pharmacy, and clinical health care.

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