TAKE ACTION GUIDE - Practical Ways to Move Forward

The Saskatchewan Nurse Retention Forum reinforced that there is no shortage of ideas about how to improve retention. The harder challenge is developing a clearer understanding of what is happening within a workplace, identifying what may be getting in the way and deciding which actions are realistic, relevant and most likely to make a difference.

The SHRF-funded research led by Dr. Kandis Harris and Saskatchewan Polytechnic will examine the contextual factors, barriers, facilitators and organizational readiness that influence implementation.

Organizations do not, however, need to wait for the research to be completed before strengthening their understanding, planning or existing workforce initiatives.

The ideas below describe practical actions and supports available **outside the SHRF-funded research project**. An organization may begin with something modest, such as gathering better information, bringing the right people together or testing one practical idea.

1. Understand what is happening

A useful starting point is to better understand the experience of employees and the conditions influencing retention.

This could include:

- an organizational pulse survey designed to support internal planning and improvement;
- an assessment of workplace well-being and retention risks;
- a review of existing workforce, human resources and operational data;
- an examination of turnover, vacancies, absenteeism, overtime or agency staffing;
- conversations with employees, leaders or teams; and
- identifying areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement.

The goal is not simply to collect more information, but to clarify where attention may be most useful.

2. Build a shared understanding of the impact

Retention challenges often affect several parts of an organization at once. Human resources, finance, operations and frontline leaders may each hold a different piece of the puzzle and the impact of turnover may not be completely visible.

Bringing those perspectives together can help an organization:

- identify the workforce measures that matter most;
- understand the cost of turnover and employee replacement;
- examine recruitment, orientation, vacancy, overtime and agency-staffing costs;
- consider the broader impact on productivity, continuity and quality of care, and team capacity;
- estimate the potential value of retention investments; and
- develop a practical case for action and investment.

This can support better decisions about where to focus limited time, attention and resources.

3. Prepare for or move a practical idea forward

Once a priority is clear, an organization may be ready to strengthen its planning, assess its readiness, improve an initiative already underway or begin moving one practical approach into action.

That might include:

a) **Stay interviews:** Stay interviews can help leaders understand what encourages employees to remain, what may cause them to leave and what practical changes may improve their experience. These proactive conversations can build long-term relationships with valuable team members.
b) **Leadership development:** Leaders and managers have a direct influence on workplace culture, employee experience and retention. Development may focus on practical skills such as active listening, responding to concerns, strengthening psychological safety, communicating consistently and addressing early signs of disengagement.
c) **Implementation planning:** Promising ideas can lose momentum when roles, responsibilities, measures or resources are unclear. A practical planning process can help teams define the problem, understand their local context, assess feasibility and readiness, clarify roles, anticipate barriers, identify measures and determine an appropriate next step.
d) **Evaluation and measurement:** Organizations may also benefit from evaluating an initiative that is already underway, including whether it is reaching the intended people, producing meaningful change and providing value relative to the resources invested.
e) **Tools and resources:** Forum participants received a copy of **The Billion Dollar Blindspot**, which includes practical tools and approaches that can help teams examine workforce data, understand turnover-related costs and strengthen the business case for retention. Participants may wish to revisit these resources as they consider their organization's readiness and next steps. Additional copies of the book can be ordered through Amazon for leadership teams, boards or project groups.

Support for organizations and teams

Raesoleil works with healthcare organizations, leaders, and teams to better understand a workforce concern, prepare for future action, strengthen an existing initiative, or evaluate work already underway.

This support may be focused and modest, such as an internal pulse survey, review of existing data, facilitated conversation or calculation of turnover-related costs. It may also extend to workplace well-being assessments, readiness and implementation planning, leadership development, stay interviews, evaluation and development of a practical business case for investment.

Which path fits your team?

Interested in contributing to the research? The research team is inviting two to three partner teams to help examine local context, organizational readiness, barriers and facilitators before implementation. For more information, contact Dr. Kandis Harris at: **kandis.harris@saskpolytech.ca.**

Interested in preparing for or moving an initiative forward? Raesoleil can support with assessing a workforce concern, preparing an initiative, strengthening work already underway, or moving a practical retention idea toward implementation. The starting point can simply be a conversation to clarify what would be useful and realistic. Connect with Raelynn Douglas at: **rae@raesoleil.com** or **www.raesoleil.com**