Employee expectation gap analysis

It's an employee's market. To attract and retain staff,
employers need to meet their employees' evolving expectations.

Until recently, employees walked into a health care job with a predictable list of expectations. For example, pay was the number one determinant of how employees chose jobs in health care since surveys began 20 years ago. Organizational culture and career progression came next. Expectations of things like mental health support or being "valued by the community" were further down the list and didn't drive employment decisions for most staff.

The old workforce dynamics have changed in three ways:

1 Pay is no longer the number one driver, having dropped to number two for the first time ever.

2 Previously implicit expectations are now explicit and important. For example, robust well-being support, flexibility, and local employment are driving where employees choose to work.

3 Expanding virtual and home care channels mean you don't need to be in a health care setting to leverage your health care expertise.

We believe these new dynamics are here to stay, and most health care providers can't afford to throw money at the problem. Instead, Advisory Board is prescribing a differentiated workforce strategy.

About this tool

This tool introduces seven evolving expectations that the modern health care workforce has of employers. We identified these expectations through an extensive literature review and interviews with over 100 health care leaders around the world. Organizations often fail to meet these expectations, but updating your engagement strategy to incorporate and build upon these areas can help attract and retain employees.

This tool will help you take an impartial snapshot of current performance across the seven expectations below. It details bare minimum behaviors and offerings that organizations should invest in to meet baseline expectations, and it includes descriptions of what being a market leader entails. Lastly, it lists additional resources you can use to elevate your performance for each expectation.

How to use this tool

For each emerging expectation in the table below, review columns one, two, and three to understand what baseline behaviors and offerings employees now expect from their employers and what "market leading" looks like. Then, use the spaces in column four to rank the seven areas, with one indicating the area you most need to develop and seven indicating the area that you feel the strongest in. After ranking each row, prioritize the areas you placed in the top three and use the resources in the final column to learn best practices and insights for implementing new offerings and changing your behaviors in that area.

We recommend revisiting this tool at least twice per year to gauge progress and remain up to date with employee demand. We also recommend asking staff to conduct this analysis—this will provide you with a true gap assessment, one that identifies disparities between your perspective and that of your workforce.

Emerging expectation	Minimum behaviors and offerings employees now expect	Behaviors and offerings necessary to become a market leader	Rank (1 = furthest from meeting expectations)	Advisory Board resources to help you meet new employee expectations
Professional development is individually targeted	• A personalized development plan for every employee • Multiple career path offerings within the broader organization • Skill-building and career development opportunities that help employees grow and are not just formalities to be promoted	• Acknowledgment that employee aspirations may be at other organizations • Active support to help employees move laterally within the organization, even if their movement will create a staffing or expertise gap behind them	_ / 7	• Nursing Professional Development • Support Millennial Nurses' Early Career Development • Conversation Guide for Ongoing Employee Evaluation
Flexibility is embedded into employee workflows	• A system that allows employees to optionally flex across the organization to better suit their skill development, time, and external responsibilities • Visibility into other areas across the system that staff can work in and the ability to move into those areas • Transparency and empathy when capacity constraints mean staff must be shifted to different areas of the system	• Dedicated flexibility for employees experiencing key life events—such as having children or nearing retirement—or employees who are changing their career goals and aspirations • A new hiring default where staff are designated "site-agnostic" from their first day of work	_ / 7	• How to Flex RNs Across Sites of Care Using Blended Roles • Building a Flexible Nursing Workforce • Reinventing the Inpatient Float Pool • Your Organization's Approach to Remote Work Considerations

Continued

Emerging expectation	Minimum behaviors and offerings employees now expect	Behaviors and offerings necessary to become a market leader	Rank (1 = furthest from meeting expectations)	Advisory Board resources to help you meet new employee expectations
Employers support employee responsibilities outside the workplace	• Regular and honest two-way communication between employees and managers to understand each other's needs and expectations outside of work • Empathy for staff who must respond to nonnegotiable responsibilities outside of work • Connections to support and resources for employees to help them cope with external responsibilities and issues	• A system where nonnegotiable responsibilities outside of work are both honored and quickly met with flexible work options without question or penalty	__ / 7	• Informal Caregiver Flexible Working Arrangement

Employers support physical well-being and recovery within and outside of the workplace	• Time and space embedded in the day to recover and recharge
	• A variety of resources that address aspects of physical well-being, including:
	  – Diet and exercise
	  – Recovery time
	  – Workload management
	• Acknowledgment from managers that employees don't shut off their work stress once they're home or shut off their home stress when they're at work
	• Job responsibilities that align with physical capabilities of each employee
	• Support structures and resources that match the physical needs of staff
		• Encouragement of staff who are struggling to say "I'm not okay right now, and I need help" instead of ignoring them
		• Manager review criteria that includes staff utilization of support resources
		• Expanded time off offerings with dedicated recovery days
		• Managers who understand that well-being is a continuous strategic imperative
		• Proactive adjustment of physical job responsibilities based on the latest occupation risk data and existing staff supply
			__ / 7	• Employee Health and Well-Being Resource Library
				• The Mandate for Workforce Recovery

Targeted and visible mental health and emotional well-being resources and support, modeled by leaders	• A variety of resources that address aspects of mental and emotional well-being, including:
	  – Compassion fatigue
	  – Routine stress
	  – Moral distress
	• Acknowledgment from managers that employees don't shut off their work stress once they're home or shut off their home stress when they're at work
	• Organization values that prioritize emotional well-being as much as physical well-being
		• Mental and emotional well-being resources that are "opt-out" only, so all employees who need the resources can access them easily
		• Mental health resources that are provided to employees when they're at home and off-the-clock
		• Executives and leaders who unabashedly demonstrate emotional vulnerability in and out of the workplace
			__ / 7	• Strengthening Your Team's Resilience: Identifying Symptoms of Emotional Distress in Staff (Webinar)
				• Leadership Series #2: Stress and Emotional Resilience (Podcast)
				• The Executive's Role in Fostering Resilient, Adaptive Leaders
				• 3 Steps to Build a Culture of Vulnerability on your Team

Leaders have the time to lead and focus on strategy	• Empowerment to deprioritize or delegate tasks to allow leaders to focus on strategy • Rewards for new, innovative ways of solving problems that result in more efficient use of time • Active and regular analysis and rescoping of roles to ensure that employees operate at top-of-license	• Leadership responsibilities disseminated throughout staff who are empowered to make decisions without asking for permission	__ / 7	• Strengthening Your Physician Leadership Development Program • How Hywel Dda Hardwired Flexibility into Strategic Planning • Continuous Strategic Planning in Health Care
Social impact is embedded in everything an organization does	• Contribution to social justice • Reduced environmental impact • DEI* values that reflect and represent what staff need and stand for, and that underpin everything the organization does • Empowerment of staff to contribute to social responsibility	• Loud advocacy and heavy investment in social responsibility programs, including for DEI and climate change • Empowerment of staff to advocate for social justice and providing them with flexibility at work to do so • Offer of donation matching, employee resource groups, and volunteer hours	__ / 7	• Build Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Among your Staff and Leaders • Social Determinants of Health • The Executive's Role in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion • How Health Leaders can Address Climate Change (Podcast)

* Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion