

CHAPTER 3

Human Resources

STAFFING

Recruitment

Nurse recruitment occurs in a variety of ways: newspaper advertising, trade journal advertising, strategically placed human-interest stories, the Internet, and television. Perhaps the most effective recruitment strategy is word-of-mouth or person-to-person. Nurses who are satisfied in their current positions are often key to attracting their colleagues to a particular institution. Nurse recruiters, whether or not they themselves are nurses, add a human element to the recruitment process. Many organizations offer bonuses to staff that recruit others to fill particular positions. “Sign on” bonuses are also part of the recruitment strategy.

Retention and Turnover

While recruitment is key to filling positions, purposeful retention strategies are essential to retaining staff once they have joined an organization. Promise keeping is a key ingredient in one’s retention strategy. Promises that cannot be kept—for example, every weekend off, no mandatory overtime—should not be made. Honesty breeds respect. Thus, even if employment conditions are less than perfect, a new employee is likely to appreciate the sincerity of the manager who tells the truth about working conditions.

Use of Agency Personnel

Temporary agencies are often used to fill staffing gaps. Organizations may maintain their own “internal registry,” contract exclusively with one external agency, use short or long-term “traveler” nurses, or rely on community-based “temp” services to meet their needs.

In union environments, close attention must be paid to the use of temporary agency personnel to assure that conditions of the labor contract are not violated when “temps” are hired.

While agencies are responsible for assuring the quality and competence of temporary staff, the organization in which the temporary staff member practices must also have policies and procedures in place that govern the practice of the “visiting” staff. Of particular importance is the verification of licensure.

Scheduling

Scheduling must be done in such a way that the right persons are available at the right time to care for a defined patient population. Scheduling takes into account “peaks and valleys” that may occur throughout the week or by season. For example, a respiratory care unit is more likely to be filled to capacity in winter months as opposed to summer. Scheduling must also take into account the need to place only qualified staff in a given practice area in order to avoid harm to the patients and/or to the nurse.

Job Analysis

Job analysis is undertaken to systematically define the knowledge and skill needed to perform a particular job and the tasks associated with the job. Job analysis goes beyond the job description and makes the expectations of the position more explicit.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions include job title, major duties, relationships, educational and/or certification requirements, experience requirements, physical requirements, and work hazards of the job, if any. The job description is written in non-sexist language. Well-written job descriptions help assure that candidates who apply for a particular position are well aware of the scope and limitations of the job. Job descriptions also help recruiters or hiring authorities in the preliminary screening process of potential job candidates.

Role Clarification

Role clarification is a method for determining the expectations two or more people hold of one another in their respective positions. Role clarification may occur proactively when jobs and job responsibilities are changing or shifting in some way. Or it may occur reactively in the presence of conflict or disagreement about scope and responsibility. Role clarification, or role redefinition, is seen as particularly valuable for those moving from staff to managerial positions. In the process, the new man-

ager must also shift his or her focus from an almost exclusively present orientation to a perspective that looks more intently at the future.

Patient/Client Classification Analysis

Patient classification systems are used to categorize patients according to the severity of their illness or the acuteness of their need for nursing care and, in the more sophisticated systems, to predict what level of care is needed (i.e., must the care be provided exclusively by a registered nurse or may some part of the care be provided by another level of staff?). Staff members who see classification systems as financial instruments—which they are, in part—rather than as workload management/balance tools, sometimes question the believability of such systems.

Interviewing/Selection Process

The employee selection process includes several elements.

Interviews

Here is a typical interview plan:

1. Greet the interviewee and state the purpose of the interview.
2. Discuss unchangeable aspects of the job, to see if the applicant can meet them.
3. Discuss areas of incomplete information on the application.
4. Describe the job, the department, the organization.
5. Ask a set of structured questions.
6. Encourage the applicant to ask questions and make comments.
7. Tell applicant when to expect a decision and how s/he will be informed of the decision.
8. Thank the applicant for coming in and showing an interest in the job.
9. Evaluate the applicant's suitability for the job immediately after the interview.
10. Complete the interview summary.

Various interviewing methods may be used. The most common methods are as follows.

Structured Interview

For most selection purposes, a structured interview works best, particularly when more than one interviewer is involved. Interviewer judgments are more likely to be

consistent when the interviewers use the same approach. Listing the areas to be covered and letting the interviewer determine the order and wording of the questions may accomplish this. Alternatively, a more highly structured approach may be used in which there is a detailed form listing specific questions to be asked with space provided for the answers.

With a structured approach, two or more interviewers will elicit the same information from an applicant, and one interviewer will get approximately the same type of information from two or more candidates for a particular job, thus making comparison easier. One drawback is the lack of flexibility, with the chance that important information about the candidate may not come forth.

Unstructured or Discussion Interview

This approach makes use of nondirective techniques. The result is usually more information about the applicant's opinions and reactions, though not necessarily about characteristics related to anticipated job performance.

Multiple or Group Interview (two options)

1. Several different people interview the applicant, either at separate times, or in a group situation where a panel of interviewers asks questions in turn. This technique is used more often with higher management employees than with frontline staff.
2. The group oral-performance test in which a group of applicants react with each other rather than with the interviewer. Each applicant's behavior can be rated in terms of the effect on the other members of the group. This technique is more often used when deciding to promote current employees rather than in the selection of new employees.

Other activities pertinent to the hiring process include:

- Reference checks. It is important to verify the accuracy of the information included on the candidate's application, even though there are constraints regarding type and depth of information one can obtain from a standard reference check.
- Verification of credentials.
- Testing as required for the particular position (e.g., performance, cognitive, or personality tests) and/or drug testing if required as a matter of institutional policy.
- Physical examination.

The techniques used to recruit and hire employees must be reliable and valid. Reliability refers to the consistency of the hiring process over time. Validity refers to the accuracy of the selection methods (i.e., are the techniques used related to the job for which the applicant is being considered?).

Once placed in a position, a new employee must have the benefit of a well-planned orientation that includes aspects of socialization to the work environment as well as the acquisition of knowledge and skill needed to successfully perform the job.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff-development activities help assure that employees maintain competence and gain new skill and knowledge needed to stay abreast of changes in practice. In earlier times, knowledge was acquired by one generation in order to pass it on to the next generation. Those times are long gone! The body of knowledge in the field of health care is changing constantly and accelerating exponentially. Lifelong learning is not an option: it is a necessity.

ANA's *Scope and Standards of Practice for Nursing Professional Development* (ANA, 2000) provides a framework for the practice of those engaged in staff education and development, as well as for those who administratively support such activities within their institutions.

Standards of Practice for Nursing Staff Development

- **Standard 1. Assessment**
The nursing professional development educator collects pertinent information related to potential educational needs of the nurse.
- **Standard 2. Diagnosis: Analysis to Determine Target Audience and Learner Needs**
The nursing professional development educator analyzes the assessment data to determine the target audience and the learner needs.
- **Standard 3. Identification of Educational Outcomes**
The nursing professional development educator identifies the general purpose and educational objectives for each learning activity.
- **Standard 4. Planning**
The nursing professional development educator identifies and collaborates with content experts to develop activities to facilitate learners' achievement of the educational objectives.
- **Standard 5. Implementation**
The nursing professional development educator ensures that the planned educational activities are implemented.
- **Standard 6. Evaluation**
The nursing professional development educator conducts a comprehensive evaluation of the educational activity.

Standards of Professional Performance for Nursing Professional Development

- **Standard 1. Quality of Nursing Professional Development Practice**
The nursing professional development educator systematically evaluates the quality and effectiveness of nursing professional development practice.
- **Standard 2. Performance Appraisal**
The nursing professional development educator evaluates his or her own nursing practice in relation to professional practice standards, relevant statutes and regulations, and maintenance of continuing professional nursing competence.
- **Standard 3. Education**
The nursing professional development educator acquires and maintains current knowledge and competency in nursing professional development practice.
- **Standard 4. Collegiality**
The nursing professional development educator interacts with, and contributes to the professional development of, peers and other health care providers as colleagues.
- **Standard 5. Ethics**
The nursing professional development educator's decisions and actions are based on ethical principles.
- **Standard 6. Collaboration**
The nursing professional development educator collaborates with others in the practice of nursing professional development at the institutional, local, regional, state, national, or international levels.
- **Standard 7. Research**
The nursing professional development educator participates in and uses evidence-based research to identify strategies for improving professional development activities, nursing practice, and patient outcomes.
- **Standard 8. Management and Resource Utilization**
The nursing professional development educator considers factors related to safety, effectiveness and cost in planning, delivering, and managing nursing professional development activities.
- **Standard 9. Leadership**
The nursing professional development educator practices in a manner that provides leadership to the work setting as well as the profession (ANA, 2000).

Needs Assessment

The educational needs assessment should be tied to organizational goals. Specifically, what do employees need to learn or do that is not already part of their practice in order to more efficiently and effectively meet the goals of the organization? Education itself is not the purpose; rather, the educational process is geared toward organizational intent. Such an approach allows better use of whatever educational resources the organization has at its disposal.

Teaching/Learning Principles

The principles of adult learning hold that adults are self-directed, bring with them a wealth of experience upon which to build, must be ready to learn, and learn most effectively when learning is related to the problems at hand.

Learning occurs in three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Each domain presents a hierarchy of acquisition. For example, cognition is concerned with intellectual behaviors. The simplest behavior is that of knowledge acquisition in which the person is able to acquire and recall new information. Increasingly sophisticated cognitive elements are comprehension (understand meaning), analysis (distinguish importance of various messages), synthesis (recognize and act), and evaluation (judge significance).

Five levels also are identified in the affective domains: receiving (attend to, listen), responding (participate, react), valuing (assigning worth), organizing (categorizing according to one's value system), and characterizing (acting/responding consistent with values).

In the psychomotor domain, the following hierarchy prevails: perception (awareness), set (physical, mental, and emotional readiness to act), guided response (imitate; perform under the direction of another), mechanism (higher order skill; can put things together and perform more complex tasks), complex overt response (accurately and without hesitation performs complex activities), adaptation (ability to change action according to the situation at hand), and origination (ability to create new movement patterns).

Effective learning depends on three conditions: readiness, ability, and environment. The ability to learn depends on the alignment of these conditions. Identification of the client's preferred learning style is implied here.

Orientation

Orientation programs are designed to familiarize and socialize new staff members to the environment and culture in which they will practice. Planned, structured orientation programs are a mainstay in most organizations, whether for staff new to the facility or new to a particular department. There is no magic formula with

regard to the duration of orientation programs. Achievement of orientation objectives, more than time, should ideally drive the length of the orientation. While this approach works in theory, in practice it is not always practical. In general, newly graduated nurses receive a longer orientation than their more seasoned colleagues.

Orientation programs are usually conducted under the auspices of the human resources or educational services departments or units. However, a successful orientation is a shared responsibility with collaboration among the key players critical to achievement of the intended outcome—staff development personnel, the manager, and the new employee.

Inservice Training

Inservice training refers to needs-based training, conducted to fill an identified gap in the employee's skills or knowledge needed to perform effectively in her/his current job. Inservice training is generally linked directly to the practice expectations noted in the employee's job description. Inservice training may be conducted on the job, via computer, via other modes of distance learning, or in a classroom setting. The training is usually brief, practical, and directive; for example, the introduction of a new central line dressing procedure or a change in the safety needle product because of a switch from one vendor to another.

Continuing Education and Professional Development

The rate of change in health care continues to accelerate. Knowledge is obsolete in a matter of months or within a few years at most. The need to remain current in one's professional practice is the responsibility of each clinician. Staff development programs abound. Most are provided by reputable vendors (companies or individuals) or are offered "in-house" to meet the needs of staff members and to help them grow professionally. In contrast to inservice training, continuing education programs are of greater depth, help the learner acquire new knowledge, perhaps in a new or expanded field, and are most often constructed and facilitated by respected experts in a particular field. Continuing education programs may be offered as distance learning programs, seminars, workshops, collegiate or certificate programs, or independent study.

Mentoring, Precepting, and Coaching

Mentors, preceptors, and coaches—what are the differences and are the differences of significance? A mentor is defined as an experienced person who guides and supports the neophyte as s/he gains the needed experience to succeed in the job. The mentor relationship is reciprocal and is generally thought to last for a period of months or, in some cases, even years. Mentor relationships may be structured or unstructured.

A preceptor is one who assumes responsibility for orienting students or new nurses to a given unit or service. The relationship is purposeful, structured, and of relatively short duration. Preceptors themselves generally receive educational preparation for the role and are most often nurses with known clinical expertise and an ability to help new staff members succeed in the assumption of their roles.

A coach is one who helps staff on a day-to-day basis to improve their overall performance. Managers often fill the role of coach. Many do so without benefit of learning interventions designed to prepare them to serve as coaches for their staff.

Competence

According to Benner (1984), competence develops when the nurse begins to see his or her actions in terms of long-range goals or plans about which he or she is consciously aware. The conscious, deliberate planning that is characteristic of this skill level helps achieve efficiency and organization. The competent nurse has a feeling of mastery and the ability to cope with and manage the many contingencies of clinical nursing.

Learning activities linked to the development of competence take into consideration three dimensions of mastery: interpersonal relationships, critical thinking, and clinical practice.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Motivation

The extent to which one person can motivate another is a matter for debate. Some theorists maintain that motivation rests entirely with the individual who must act or change in some way, consistent with her/his value system. Others suggest that motivation can be external; that is, a person's behavior can change in response to external factors, for example, to a manager's encouragement or to a perceived reward for changing the way one acts or behaves.

Regardless of how "motivating" a manager might be, a word of caution is in order. If the person who is the object of the manager's attention has neither the ability nor the resources to change, change will not occur and attempts to motivate change will be met with frustration.

Perhaps it is more important for managers who wish to motivate their employees to establish the environment that will allow change to happen and to assure that the employees have the needed resources to embrace change within themselves and within the workplace.

Communication

Communication is the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, by speech, signals, writing, or behavior. Communication implies that there is mutual understanding of the message sent and the message received. Much of what is assumed to be communication is merely information delivery. Whether or not the intent of the communication is understood and accepted is unknown.

Exquisite communication skills are perhaps the manager's most valuable assets. And active listening may be the crowning achievement! As alternatives to face-to-face communication become the norm (e.g., e-mail and voicemail), the likelihood of miscommunication increases significantly.

Delegation

Delegation is the assignment of new or additional responsibilities to a subordinate. The person to whom the task (function, activity, or decision) is delegated accepts the authority and responsibility for completion of the assignment. The subordinate is expected to report to the manager regarding how effectively s/he was able to complete the assigned task. Delegation, particularly of day-to-day, in-the-moment tasks, is fundamental to managerial effectiveness because it allows the manager to focus on issues of greater long-term significance to the health of the enterprise.

In the delegation process, managers are advised to keep in mind three key concepts: responsibility, authority, and accountability. Responsibility implies an obligation to complete a task. Accountability means accepting ownership for the results or lack thereof. Responsibility is transferred; accountability is shared. Authority is the right to act. This means that the manager (delegator) has empowered the subordinate (delegatee) to accomplish the task. Managers sometimes fall into a trap of their own making: they delegate responsibility without giving authority. This sets up the subordinate for failure with a resultant decrease in efficiency and productivity.

Effective delegation has several benefits:

- The delegator is able to devote more time to tasks that cannot be delegated;
- The delegatee develops new skills and abilities;
- Delegation facilitates upward mobility for the delegatee;
- It builds self-esteem and confidence;
- It improves morale; fosters a sense of pride in abilities;
- It allows individuals to appreciate the roles and responsibilities of others;
- The organization's bottom line may improve.

Steps in the delegation process include:

- Define the task;
- Determine who will or is able to perform the task;
- Describe expectations;
- Come to agreement;
- Monitor results and provide feedback.

Relationships

Interpersonal

Interpersonal communication describes the exchange of information and meaning between two or more people through verbal and nonverbal interplay in a face-to-face encounter. Interpersonal communication is often informal and its success (or failure) depends on the existence of established relationships.

Professional

Professional or public communication implies interaction with large groups of people. The message sender must be acutely aware of the intent and content of the message and of the style used to convey the message. Posture, body movement, timing, and tone of voice all play a role in successful professional communication.

Team Building

The abilities to express one's ideas clearly and decisively, to listen attentively and respectfully, and to invite a range of opinions are among the communication skills that help managers build team cohesiveness through communication.

Cultural Considerations

Cultural aspects of communication also deserve attention, particularly as members of the workforce and the patient populations cared for in the health care system become increasingly diverse. While bilingual or multilingual skills are of great value in today's workplace, of equal importance is an understanding of the beliefs, values, and practices of the groups served. And, while cultural generalizations may be helpful, stereotyping is not. Any and all assumptions related to cultural practices or beliefs should be verified before they are acted on.

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflict occurs naturally in and among groups and individuals; conflict is inevitable and is a condition essential to change. Conflict may be interpersonal (within oneself), interpersonal (between the self and another person), intragroup (among members of a particular group), or intergroup (among members of two or more groups). Other types of conflict include competitive conflict and disruptive or destructive conflict. In both instances, the desired outcome is to overcome one's opponent, that is, to "win."

Conflict management occupies a significant portion of the manager's work. Some suggest that at least one quarter of the manager's time is spent in conflict management activities. The challenge for the manager is, of course, to help her/his subordinates reach a win-win outcome in which the parties to the conflict each believe they have come away from the encounter with a sense of resolution. Win-win strategies include: focusing on goals, not personalities; meeting the needs of both parties, equally if at all

possible; and building consensus. Achieving “win-win” is much easier in the abstract than in the workplace setting. Nonetheless, it is a worthwhile goal.

Decision Making

Managerial decisions fall into a number of categories. Routine decisions are those involving such things as policies and procedures and the day-to-day business of the department. Such decisions are generally within the realm of first-line managers. Adaptive decisions are more complex and arise in the presence of problems that are out of the ordinary and not fully understood. The manager may apply or adapt a decision-making process used previously to the current situation. Innovative decisions are called for when the problems are unusual, unclear, and have no precedent.

The conditions under which managers must make decisions vary. Decisions may be made under certainty (conditions and alternatives are known), under risk (only some of the conditions are known and their relative probability can be determined), or under uncertainty (risks, alternatives and/or consequences are unknown). In reality, most major decisions are made under conditions of risk or uncertainty.

Steps in the decision-making process include:

- Identifying and diagnosing the problem
- Generating alternative solutions
- Evaluating alternatives
- Choosing the decision
- Implementing the decision
- Evaluating the decision

Recognition

Well-executed reward and recognition programs contribute to overall employee satisfaction. Recognition can be intangible; for example, employee-of-the-month designation, letters of commendation, public acknowledgement of the contributions of individuals or groups. Alternatively, it may be tangible, such as bonuses, salary increases, vacation trips, and various types of gifts.

Recognition of individuals is most valued when it comes from one’s immediate supervisor, followed closely by recognition from one’s peers and one’s customers or subordinates. To be meaningful, recognition must be honest and sincere; otherwise, it is perceived as manipulative and pointless.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is related to the quality of work life (QWL) and companies now devote time and resources to improving working conditions in a number of dimensions: compensation that is fair and adequate; a physical environment that is safe and healthy; jobs that are appropriately challenging and rewarding in and of themselves; opportunities for personal and professional growth; a social environment that is harmonious; a work role that allows for balance in other dimensions of one's life; and affiliation with a socially conscious organization.

A psychological contract exists between employees and employers. The contract is composed of a set of perceptions about what employees owe their employers and what employers owe their employees. When either party believes the contract has been "violated," conflict may arise, then escalate or diminish depending on how well or quickly equilibrium is restored.

Group Dynamics

Social scientists have identified predictable stages of group development. The first stage is known as **forming**. Individuals come together and form a defined cluster. People are cautious in their communication with one another; they are still relative strangers and rely on a leader to define and direct their activities.

As the group proceeds through the maturation process, it arrives at the second stage known as **storming**. In this stage, members of the group compete for position, power, and status; informal leaders may emerge. The (formal) leader helps the group identify and work through conflict.

The third stage of group formation is called **norming**. Here the rules for working collaboratively are made explicit; structure, roles, and relationships are clarified. The leader's role is to advance relationship building.

As the group matures, it enters the **performing** stage: it is in this mode that the work of the group is most effectively carried out. The energy of the group is focused on achieving its goals in a collaborative atmosphere. The leader's role is to provide feedback on the work that the group is accomplishing, redirect group energy when necessary, and further cultivate interpersonal relationships.

A number of experts suggest that the group formation process, and thus the productivity of the group, can be accelerated under the guidance of a skillful facilitator or in the face of actual or fabricated crisis.

Negotiation

Negotiation can be thought of as a formal process; for example, the negotiations that take place at the time of contract deliberations between unions and management. Negotiation can also be thought of as a political process. The implication here is that the negotiation process is a "power play" among individuals who compete to "win" but generally compromise in the end.

Interest-based negotiation is a somewhat newer concept, the principles of which were outlined by Fisher and Ury in *Getting to Yes* (1991). Bizony (1999) has distilled the principles listed below from Fisher and Ury's work on the Harvard Negotiation Project; their value has been convincingly promulgated through the years:

- Treat people as equals, resolve issues on their merits.
- Define the issue so that the definition is acceptable to all parties.
- Focus on interests, not on conclusions or positions.
- Develop options that may meet the interests of both parties.
- Apply objective standards to resolve conflicting interests.

Discipline

Disciplinary action occurs when rules are broken. Organizations should have a fair and well-organized disciplinary process in place for the protection of all parties involved. Managers are advised to consult with their human resources department when they find it necessary to discipline employees. In this way, they assure that the rights of the employee and those of the organization are protected. Policies should provide for progressive discipline, leading, if necessary, to termination without recrimination.

Depending on the severity of the infraction, the disciplinary process may provide for immediate dismissal or for investigatory suspension with or without pay. While managers may themselves be distressed when faced with a situation that requires discipline, it is helpful for them to keep in mind the reason for the disciplinary action. The disciplinary process should be thought of not as punishment but as an opportunity to teach and encourage the person or persons involved in the infraction.

Most organizations subscribe to a progressive discipline process in which counseling and intervention are cumulative. In a union environment, disciplinary action may be "grieved" consistent with the grievance process outlined in the labor contract. The grievance process is seen as a means to give workers a voice in what goes on during contract negotiation and administration.

Employee Assistance Programs

Employee assistance programs (EAPs) may be in-house or outsourced. EAPs exist to help organizations address productivity issues and to help employees identify and resolve personal concerns such as family, financial, health, legal, alcohol and/or drug, and stress issues that interfere with their ability to function effectively in the job. EAP professionals are skilled counselors and are ethically obligated to remain neutral in their counsel.

Stress Management

Job stress disrupts psychological and/or physiological balance. It takes a toll at the personal, organizational, and societal level and is manifest in the phenomenon known as “burnout.”

Stress reduction techniques can be learned and adapted to any work setting. Their intent is to improve physical and mental well-being and to enable a person to identify and cope more successfully with stressors. There is no magic to the stress management techniques listed here; all are in the realm of common sense. Yet they are practiced all too infrequently to the detriment of many, including managers and executives in “high pressure” positions whose job demands seems to be ever increasing.

- Habituation — “routinize” tasks whenever possible; predictability means less chance of surprise; establishing routines conserves energy.
- Time block — calendar time for predictable tasks and remain on task during the blocked time. If necessary, block time for such ephemeral activities as thinking, reflecting, or meditating. These are not “time wasters,” they are tasks critical to the manager’s success in her/his position and in life.
- Time management — learning to say “no” may be the best time management technique for the busy manager! Numerous time management techniques exist; the literature and workshop offerings are replete with suggestions. It is important to remember that the use of a “Palm Pilot” or a “Daytimer” is not synonymous with time management. Taking the time to evaluate how one spends her/his time on the job is often a most revealing exercise and inevitably points to opportunities for change.
- Environmental modification — changing one’s physical or social environment may help reduce stress. Creating a quiet place in which to work, eliminating non-essential committee work, using sound, scent, color, and texture to modify one’s environment are helpful techniques.
- Regular exercise, proper diet and nutrition, rest, incorporation of relaxation techniques into day-to-day living, development of support systems, and crisis intervention plans are practical activities that reduced stress in any setting.

It is interesting that nurses are among the first to promote stress management techniques for their clients/patients but are also among the most reluctant to adopt these same techniques in their own lives.

Personnel Policies and Procedures

The availability of up-to-date, legally sound personnel policies is essential to managers and executives. Some organizations now maintain their personnel manuals in an on-line format, making them instantaneously available to managers at the time they are needed.

Personnel policies govern such crucial management functions as recruitment, conducting interviews, hiring, rewards and discipline, counseling, resignation and discharge, transfers, compensation, timekeeping, compliance with labor laws, compliance with contracts (in a union environment), orientation, and evaluation/assessment.

Most organizations conduct episodic workshops for managers to help them remain abreast of the latest regulations governing the workplace from a personnel perspective.

Performance Appraisal

The performance appraisal is often thought of as an event rather than as an ongoing process. Despite the admonition that “there should be no surprises” when the manager and the staff member sit down together to review the employee’s performance, this caution rarely holds. Performance appraisals serve an administrative purpose in that they are used for making promotion, salary, or, in some cases, layoff decisions. They also have a developmental purpose in that the assessment can be used to identify training needs, career planning, leadership potential, and so forth.

Performance appraisals can occur in a variety of ways. Here are a few of them:

Peer Review

Peer review occurs when nurses have determined the standards and criteria that constitute quality care and judge their practice against the standards. Standards are evidence based and are representative of the values of the profession. Advance practice nurses in particular engage in the peer review process and may be required to do so from a regulatory standpoint.

Management by Objectives

Results-oriented evaluations measure employee performance relative to goals or targets achieved or objectives attained (management by objectives). This type of performance appraisal is often used for those in managerial and administrative roles.

Criteria-Based Objectives

Criteria-based evaluations are those that measure or assess the employee’s performance in relation to well-defined requirements of the job. Employees either meet or do not meet the standards established for a particular position.

Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is defined by the term itself. Employees are often asked to engage in self-evaluation as part of the overall appraisal process. The employee and his/her manager then compare notes and negotiate a mutually acceptable final appraisal.

Regardless of the appraisal process used, managers are advised to keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Take legal considerations into account.
- Relate performance standards to job analysis (they should match).
- Communicate standards to staff (no surprises).
- Evaluate employee practice on performance-related behaviors, not on global measures.
- Document the process.
- Use more than one rater whenever possible (for example, the 360° process).
- Assure that an appeal process is in place.

Absenteeism

A study conducted in 2000 by the Gale Group found that personal illness (21%), family issues (21%), and personal needs (20%) accounted for nearly two-thirds of unscheduled absences from work. Stress (19%) and an entitlement mentality (19%) were not far behind. According to some analysts, there has been more than a 300% increase in stress-related absenteeism since 1995. The number of hours Americans are working, compared with their counterparts in other industrial nations, may account in part for the increase in stress-related absenteeism.

Work-life programs can be effective in controlling absenteeism, though many companies have been slow to implement such initiatives. Work-life programs with the most appeal include childcare referral, leave for school functions, flexible scheduling, emergency childcare, compressed workweek, and on-site childcare. Of those ranked highest by employees only flexible scheduling was a “match” among the programs offered by employers, with over half reporting that they had flexible-hour arrangements in place.

Work-life programs offered by a given company must be consonant with the organization’s purpose and with employee demographics. There is no “one size fits all” work-life program. However, there is general agreement that investments in well-planned work-life initiatives are less costly than ever-increasing absenteeism.

Initiatives to reduce absence include paid time off (provides employees with a bank of hours to be used for various purposes instead of separate accounts for sick, vacation, and personal time) and no-fault systems, which limit the number of unscheduled absences allowed, regardless of circumstances, and take specific disciplinary actions if that number is exceeded.

Job Enrichment

Various techniques are available to increase the intrinsic satisfaction with one’s job. Job **rotation** implies that boredom can be reduced and satisfaction increased if the employee can periodically move from one job to another, or from one task to another within a job, provided s/he has the capacity to perform the tasks associated with each rotation.

Job **enlargement** means that the employee is given additional tasks to do, not merely rotated from task to task. Job **enrichment** implies that the employee is given higher levels of responsibility or that the job itself is redesigned or restructured. Of the three approaches, job enrichment is seen as the most satisfying to the employee.

Within the field of nursing, a word of caution is in order. Scope of practice issues must be considered when and if any of the above approaches are suggested. In addition, in a union environment, the techniques described may not be acceptable or may be achieved only through negotiation.

Management Style

Managerial or leadership style is traditionally described in these terms, particularly as they relate to the manager's decision-making style: participative, democratic, autocratic, or laissez-faire. The participative manager involves his/her employees in the decision-making process; the democratic manager solicits input from his/her subordinates; the autocratic manager makes decisions on her own and announces them to others; and the laissez-faire manager decides by not deciding.

Few managers subscribe exclusively to one model and are more likely to be described as having a contingency style, which means they adjust their approach to the needs and demands of the situation. Managers can and do identify their preferred leadership style, but this is generally done as a developmental task that allows them to strengthen desirable skills required in their jobs.

Supervision and Delegation

Delegation pertains to the concepts of accountability, responsibility, and authority. Delegation is the reciprocal process in which responsibility and authority for a given function is transferred to another individual who accepts the authority and responsibility. Responsibility implies an obligation to carry out a task; accountability means accepting ownership for the results or lack of results. In delegation, responsibility is transferred; however, accountability is shared. Authority is the right to act.

It is important for nurses/nurse managers to understand their legal responsibilities when delegating tasks to and supervising other staff members. The nurse is liable for the reasonable exercise of his/her delegation and supervision activities. This means s/he must be aware of the knowledge, skills, competencies, and scope of practice of staff members when delegating tasks and is obligated to supervise effectively. It does not mean the registered nurse is responsible for the tasks performed by others. That responsibility rests with the staff member to whom the task was delegated.