

Fostering Engagement Is Vital to Improving Workforce Retention - Health Leaders Media

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Executive Summary

This article addresses declining employee engagement and elevated turnover rates within the U.S. healthcare workforce, drawing on a 2024 Press Ganey report. The central argument is that trust deficits and disengagement — rather than compensation alone — are the primary drivers of staff attrition, and that hospital CEOs bear responsibility for rebuilding social capital and organizational culture. Key findings from the analysis, which surveyed 2.3 million employees across more than 400 health systems and 15,200 locations, include: overall engagement declined by 0.02 points on a five-point scale in 2024 after a brief recovery in 2023; disengaged employees are 1.7 times more likely to leave; advanced practice providers and physicians registered the steepest engagement declines; and Gen Z workers exhibited a 38% turnover rate, the highest of any generational cohort. Millennials and Gen Z scored below the national average engagement score of 3.97, at 3.85 and 3.81 respectively. The article concludes that leaders should prioritize manager development, generationally segmented engagement data, and visible responsiveness to frontline feedback as mechanisms for improving retention outcomes.

Key Insights

1. Disengaged employees are 1.7 times more likely to leave their roles, with early-tenure and younger-generation workers showing the highest vulnerability to turnover.
2. Advanced practice providers and physicians recorded the largest engagement declines in 2024 (-0.08 and -0.06 points respectively), signaling alignment gaps between clinical staff and organizational leadership.
3. Gen Z workers exhibit a 38% turnover rate — the highest of any generation — and prioritize career development, equity, manager relationships, and work-life balance over compensation.

Practical Takeaways

- Segmenting engagement data by role, tenure, and generation enables organizations to identify distinct dissatisfaction patterns and apply targeted interventions rather than uniform responses.
- Investing in frontline manager capability-building is presented as a lever for both cultural cohesion and performance, particularly for retaining younger-generation employees.

Critical Analysis

Strengths: The dataset is notably large (2.3 million employees, 400+ health systems), lending statistical weight to the engagement and turnover figures cited. The generational breakdown adds granularity often absent from sector-level workforce reports. **Limitations:** The article is entirely based on a single proprietary report produced by Press Ganey, a vendor that sells employee engagement measurement tools to healthcare organizations — creating a direct commercial interest in emphasizing the importance of engagement monitoring. No independent corroboration or academic citation is provided. The article is structured as a press release summary rather than independent journalism, and executive quotes are drawn exclusively from Press Ganey leadership. The prescriptive language in the 'How CEOs can respond' section mirrors service offerings typical of the vendor's product suite. Caution is warranted in treating the framing as neutral analysis.

Organizational Practice

Healthcare organizations are described as using employee engagement surveys segmented by role and generation, conducting real-time feedback through rounding, huddles, and digital tools, and investing in frontline manager development as retention strategies.

Strategic Implications

The data points to a structural generational shift in healthcare workforce expectations, where engagement drivers for younger cohorts diverge meaningfully from those of older generations — suggesting that uniform retention strategies may produce diminishing returns. The declining engagement among physicians and advanced practice providers, if sustained, carries implications for care delivery stability. The emphasis on manager-level trust as a primary engagement lever indicates a potential shift in where PMS interventions are being targeted — away from enterprise-level metrics toward team-level dynamics.

Validation Status: passed
