



5 Ways to Keep Radiology Staff Happy That Won't Break the Bank

According to a June 2017 story from Radiology Business, radiology's back, baby.

A recent survey by the physician recruitment firm Merritt Hawkins revealed an uptick in radiology hiring, and it's expected that employment of radiologic and MRI technologists is projected to grow 9 percent from 2014 to 2024, faster than the average for all occupations.

Growing demand means that good radiologists and technicians will be more challenging to find – and more critical to keep. So it's no surprise that [staffing issues](#) are a key issue faced by many radiology directors.

"My biggest challenge is keeping people happy," says Ryan Paul, imaging supervisor at Atlanta Heart Specialists, who directly manages 21 staff members. "Even hospitals are facing unprecedented turnover and attrition rates right now with staff retiring. And frustration and burnout is becoming more common."

An expensive problem

Losing a valued employee easily [costs five figures](#). In fact, a CAP study found average costs to replace an employee are:

- 16 percent of annual salary for high-turnover, low-paying jobs (earning under \$30,000 a year). For example, the cost to replace a \$10/hour retail employee would be \$3,328.
- 20 percent of annual salary for midrange positions (earning \$30,000 to a \$50,000 a year). For example, the cost to replace a \$40k manager would be \$8,000.
- Up to 213 percent of annual salary for highly educated executive positions. For example, the cost to replace a \$100k CEO is \$213,000.

Considering the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the annual wage for a radiology tech is nearly \$58,000, losing a good employee is an expensive problem.

Happy employees, happy patients

Employee satisfaction also affects patient satisfaction. Patients' [number one complaint in radiology](#) is the lack of patient-centered care. If your staff isn't happy, your patients probably aren't happy either. Having the right people in place from the start can help improve your patient satisfaction. If your staff is happy to come to work every day, they are more likely to be motivated to give the best patient care and customer service.

How can you avoid costly replacement? Do these five things to hire the right people and keep them happy – for the good of your facility, your staff and your patients.

1. Hire well

Keeping employees happy starts before they're on your payroll. Hiring the right people who align with your culture, overall goals and existing staff will make it that much easier to keep them happy as time goes on.

- **Screen candidates based on technical skills. Hire for soft skills**
While technical expertise is important, soft skills like communication skills, social graces and empathy are just as – if not more – important. And they're hard to teach, so hiring an employee with good soft skills can easily put one candidate ahead of another with similar technical skills. It might seem like common sense, but hiring the right people can go a long way in making patients happy.
- **Develop partnerships to discover untapped talent**
Cultivate trusted resources – such as a university or recruitment agency – to hire reliable technologists and radiologists. Be clear on your expectations, including technical and soft skills, to help them identify solid candidates for your position. And be willing to look outside your geographic area, especially if nearby states and cities are experiencing tight job markets, leaving qualified candidates available for good opportunities.

2. Be flexible and fair

Offering flexible schedules is a key point to attracting and retaining top talent. Talk to your staff and find out what's important to the them, then work out a schedule that accommodates as much flexibility as your facility can allow. Consider staggered hours or rotating shifts to evenly spread out late hours. Also look at block scheduling for holidays, with rotating holiday scheduling every year.

3. Be transparent

Good employees respond to opportunities, so be straightforward about what they can expect from your organization. Offer them a clear view of their career opportunities, from expected wage increases to potential promotions, and set timelines for when they could expect to reach those goals. Establish goals and milestones, then communicate them with each employee, either individually or through performance evaluations. Also discuss how and when they can expect to achieve these opportunities.

4. Get creative

Before the Sunshine Act, it was easy to obtain dinners, gift cards, promotional items and even vacations that you could pass on to qualified staff members. Now finding room in tight budgets can feel

impossible, but there are ways to incentivize employees without affecting your bottom line. Even a small gesture can go a long way in keeping a good employee happy.

- Offer stipends for employees who go above and beyond their duties, such as going to local association and societal meetings, or become cross-trained among equipment and modalities.
- Hand out gift cards for smaller successes, such as an excellent score on a patient survey, to acknowledge their effort.
- Offer extra PTO for employees who hit a tenure milestone, such as 10 years. A few extra days off can be more valuable than a few extra dollars in their paychecks.
- Look at a rewards program through a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO), which can give employees access to discounts and benefits to national retailers. It also pays to seek out local partners who might be interested in offering your employees discounts or rewards for using their services or shopping in their location.

5. Offer training and educational opportunities

Good employees like to stay up to snuff on the latest trends and skills, and offering them the opportunity to do so – and even linking it to their career goals and rewards – is a great way to keep them motivated. Purchase educational items that will help them fulfill their career goals, bring them opportunities to learn new technologies or modalities.

Keeping employees happy and productive is critical to your facility's success. Focusing on a few clear strategies to retain the best employees will have long-term benefits for you, your facility and your patients.

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- John McLaughlin, US Oncology