Succeeding Recruitment: Generation Y’s Next Best Thing

Last month I addressed the topic of the Baby Boomer generation failing retirement, which is probably a very good thing for us right now. Keep the wisdom at work! Now we need to look at the impact of the other end of the generational spectrum, Generation Y, what they have to offer, and what the effect is of our collective inability to hire more of them. The educational implications are great.

As we all know, there is good news and there is bad news from the view of preparing the next generation of nurses. We have more qualified applicants for schools of nursing than we know what to do with. We also have more qualified graduates than we know what to do with. As a result, health care organizations that may have had unfilled vacancies in the past now may have none. Recruiters have the luxury of selecting the best qualified prospective employees. Many organizations have created the expectation of hiring only bachelor’s prepared nurses or have instituted a policy that if a nurse doesn’t have his or her bachelor’s degree in nursing within 3 to 5 years, termination, demotion, or some other form of disincentive will occur. Meanwhile, new graduates, eager to begin the practice they were prepared for, are finding challenges in employment. Gone are the days when a new graduate could choose the exact desired clinical area and hours. Now many new graduates are unable to find positions in a wide geographic area. (Although positions still exist in many organizations throughout the country, they may not be in the setting of choice, have the shift of choice, or be in the locale of choice.)

Let’s flash forward a few years. Based on all of the statistics and analyses, we should still anticipate a nursing shortage existing. Now, however, some of the wisdom workers have decided that being employed full-time or maybe even part-time is no longer desirable. Now we have openings. So, we hire new graduates. We enroll them in a residency program so that they stay with us. Of course, the demands for health care have increased because now we have the Affordable Care Act in place. So, we need even more nurses. That still may sound okay until we think about the fact that we have the older nurses and the younger nurses in place and a gap, which was created over the last several years when we hired few graduates. Maybe they took related positions so that they could maintain some of the skills. Maybe not. How will we manage educating the established work force, the emerging work force, and what I would call the “lost work force”? The demand for those who work in ongoing professional development will likely increase. We have always had the difference of what was needed between the new-to-the-area learner and the established expert. But now, we may have the “return-to-the-work force” nurses, except that they were never really in the work force in the first place.

I hope we are thinking ahead to how we will continue to meet the continuing demands of professional education throughout nurses’ careers. The challenge is getting bigger.

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The author discloses that she has no significant financial interests in any product or class of products discussed directly or indirectly in this activity, including research support. doi:10.3928/00220124-20110523-01