



TRAIN TO RETAIN: How to Build a Strategy Around Training



Recruitment and retention pose formidable challenges for home-based care operations, and every aspect of the employee experience — from onboarding to career pathing — offers new opportunities to mitigate the impact of today's staffing crisis. Training is a key focal point, and with the pervasive integration of innovative technology across the industry, many providers are turning to training platforms as a way to drive tangible recruitment and retention results from day 1.

Given the interconnectedness of employee satisfaction and patient care, training technology platforms have emerged as an increasingly effective solution. Notably, Home Health Care News' State of Home Care Training 2023 survey revealed that over 60% of participating organizations are presently utilizing a training platform. As that number continues to grow, providers can get the most out of their platform by building a training strategy that:

- Leverages technology to enhance internal training
- Integrates seamlessly with existing technology infrastructure
- Engages staff

Enhancing training with technology

Vetting new technologies and selecting a platform that will deliver the greatest value is overwhelming — even more so when resources are severely limited. In today's operating environment, however, the stakes of technology decisions have never been so high. But there is a lot to gain from finding a partner that can enhance existing training programs with technology while also having a vested interest in the technology's long-term success.

Partner is the key word, as training is an ongoing process that is deeply ingrained in an organization's DNA. Private duty services, home health and hospice, and medical solutions provider Aveanna, which serves 40,000 families throughout the United States, implemented a new training platform at the height of the staffing crisis in 2022, finding that not only was the platform an effective tool, but the partnership it offered was paramount.

"There is ownership on our end with the hands-on skills assessments and other elements of training, but the partnership and flow has been extremely beneficial for us at Aveanna," says Elias Lee, regional director, recruiting, Northeast Region.

Aveanna's training partnership with Boston-based CareAcademy has elevated its ability to mix technology while keeping the fundamental aspects of its internal training program in place. This has been helpful for the organization to scale and deliver higher quality care with its growing team, Lee says.

Seamless integration with existing training programs

In today's home care environment, a well-integrated training technology solution not only streamlines the onboarding process for new staff, but also ensures continuous professional development for existing team members, promoting skill enhancement and retention, Lee says. By complementing traditional training methods with cutting-edge technology, organizations can maintain a sense of familiarity for their staff while introducing the advantages of digital learning, such as enhanced accessibility, interactive modules and real-time progress tracking.

Aveanna was able to achieve this seamless integration by first piloting the platform in its Pennsylvania territory, and then subsequently rolling it out to other areas of the country. Given the nuanced training needs from state to state, the organization required a proactive approach to implementation, further stressing the importance of the partnership dynamic.

“We have transformed our approach to training through the integration of customized technology and practical hands-on skills, which has been a valuable departure from exclusively in-person methods that might lack user-friendliness,” says Lee. “It has enabled extensive onboarding training, and even the initial orientation can be completed from home. Candidates are also required to attend an in-person session three days prior to their official hiring, and this hybrid approach has created a seamless blend of virtual and physical learning to improve the convenience and effectiveness for our trainees.”

Engaging staff with training technology

In the current home care hiring environment, providers are not just competing with each other, but also with other subsectors of the health care industry, and different industries entirely. In turn, pay rate is a critical factor, and training offers career pathing opportunities, additional certifications, and new skillsets to increase caregivers' earning potential. When prospects and employees are empowered to increase their compensation, and the process is streamlined and accessible, there is a positive impact on both recruitment and retention.

Advancement opportunities are not the only way to engage prospective and existing employees, and Aveanna provides incentives to complete training through the platform, bolstering its ROI even further. Aveanna's training approach encompasses a variety of paid programs tailored to different roles within its organization. Nursing staff, for instance, benefit from skill enhancement programs to care for clients with tracheostomy and ventilator needs. However, the most compelling incentive Aveanna offers caregivers is the swift completion of a streamlined training program, which typically takes three weeks or less, Lee says.

This accelerated timeline is a significant motivator, and it empowers staff to swiftly work toward competitive hourly pay rates, depending on the market. The appeal lies in the program's condensed nature, facilitated by its video-based format, making it easily digestible and efficient.

"This training proficiency translates into more harmonious pairings between caregivers and our families, which serves as a major driving force for completion and advancement," says Lee. "Additionally, we extend educational incentives, encouraging individuals interested in LPN and RN programs to pursue further development, thus climbing the professional ladder. Our training incentives predominantly align with long-term monetary pay rate increases, positioning participants in an improved stance by honing their skills, whether as aides or nurses."

Building a training strategy that drives measurable ROI

Training technology significantly contributes to Return on Investment (ROI) by streamlining training processes, improving efficiency and enhancing employee performance. For Aveanna, these success metrics revolve around several key aspects, notably the efficiency of its timeframe goals and the actual work hours accumulated by certified individuals.

"Integrating this platform with our hands-on training approach has been a seamless and effective combination," said Lee. "Discovering a technology like CareAcademy has enhanced our operational efficiency and strategic scalability as we expand not only in Pennsylvania, but also in other markets. This partnership enables us to consistently deliver high-quality services and collaborate closely with our clinicians, elevating the standard of hands-on training."

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