

# What Does My Staff WANT from Me?

Here are ten useful staff management suggestions.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

*To Our Readers:* There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to [lynn@soshms.com](mailto:lynn@soshms.com) which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.

## Topic: Staff Wish List

Dear Lynn,

Here's a question for you. What does my staff WANT from me? I can only give so much and still it seems not enough in their eyes. I'm out of answers.

"What do they WANT from me?" It's a question I've heard doctors ask again and again when faced with their own increasing staff dissatisfaction and turnover; yet I'm not really

sure how many are willing to take the necessary steps towards a resolution. Recent studies show that employees don't leave because of their

good about themselves and therefore motivates them to increase their productivity. Find ways to help them become more productive by concen-

**Recent studies show that employees don't leave because of their work; they leave because of their "bosses." Ouch.**

work; they leave because of their "bosses." Ouch. If you are serious and really want to know the answer to that burning question, here are ten useful staff management suggestions to help you get started.

Think of it as a staff wish list:

**1. They want to be productive!** Seeing results and feeling good about their work output makes them feel

trating on better education and increased skills with the potential to delegate more meaningful and rewarding tasks.

**2. They want a work environment that encourages open communication.** They want the opportunity to openly discuss with you certain problems that arise, share concerns, offer suggestions for improvement, and

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ask for guidance when needed. They want to be heard, but more importantly, they want you to listen.

**3. They want consistent/truthful feedback on their performance.** They honestly want to know how they are doing, and if it does not meet your expectation, they want an opportunity to do it better. The best way to give feedback, good or bad, is through an annual employee performance review. This allows evaluation on various behaviors and skills.



The best way to help someone learn is to follow this simple process: demonstrate and explain HOW; clar-

might otherwise tend to go unnoticed.

**7. They want fair and competitive wages for the work they do.** Wages are a significant means employees have to measure their worth. They will determine their own work value by their pay and benefits. At the time you hire an individual, you should provide them with a written comprehensive job description and along with that, a salary commensurate with that description. Pay employees fairly for what they do. And always remember that you get what you pay for!

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## Staff are aware of how you treat your patients and wonder why the respect stops there.

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Remember, if a criticism is necessary be sure to address the behavior, NOT the person, and do it in private. And remember, your employees should know when they are doing a good job; not JUST when they are doing poorly. Praise loudly. Criticize softly.

**4. They want to be treated with respect.** The Golden Rule always comes to mind and will never steer you wrong when dealing with people on any level. Staff are aware of how you treat your patients and wonder why the respect stops there. They see when you communicate to your patients that you place great importance on your ability to connect with people and then hide away in your office to avoid handling internal problems that arise. Treat every person the same way you wish to be treated. It's as easy as that. It was actor Tom Hardy who said, "I was raised to treat the janitor with the same respect as the CEO." Every job has dignity. Words to live by.

**5. They want clarification of what is expected of them and an honest effort to be trained properly.** How can they possibly know what to do if you will not take the time to properly teach them?

ify the importance and purpose and explain WHY; encourage questions to be sure they understand; give them time to try it themselves; observe their methods; monitor their progress and then when you are confident in

their ability, allow them to go solo. By taking the proactive approach to train properly from the start, you minimize mistakes going forward.

**6. They want awareness and appreciation for a job well done.** Appreciation is the #1 reason people stay at their jobs; and recognition of their work is the most powerful motivator! March 4th is Employee Appreciation Day. Mark your calendar and celebrate by doing something special. Does this one day a year mean that is the only time to offer recognition? Is Mother's Day the only day you should appreciate Mom? Make it a point to praise staff daily and don't be afraid to applaud the things that

**8. They want (and NEED) to be managed by someone who leads by example.** They are more inclined to believe in you as a person and an employer if you practice what you preach.

**9. They want to be given the opportunity to accomplish tasks on their own, without being micro-managed.** We were all employees once. Stop and think about the BEST boss/manager/teacher/coach you

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## Set a standard starting wage for each position, not each person, with increases based on their individual growth and reviewed performance.

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ever had. Rattle off the many qualities that made them special. Similarly, there are reasons why you were dissatisfied with those who didn't exhibit those traits.

**10. They want honesty and accountability for mistakes.** They want reasonable rules and unswerving policy applied to everyone, not just a select few. They want fairness across the board, no favoritism, no discrimination.

### Topic: Wage Determination

*Dear Lynn,*

*Can you please outline for me (and perhaps others in my situation)*

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# THE CONSULTANT IS IN

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*Staff Wants (from page 122)*

*how much I should be paying my staff? Just needing some direction.*

While I would love to give you a dollar amount, as you know, external components of wages are driven by the regional cost of living, i.e., population centers, local economies, and employment demands. There are also many internal factors used to determine compensation, few of which are static. Since employee wages are clearly one of the practice's biggest expenses (and the most controversial), encourage a mutually-equitable wage structure that embraces the following considerations:

- Set a standard starting wage for each position, not each person, with increases based on their individual growth and reviewed performance. Only YOU or the practice manager know the value each employee brings to the practice. (If not, you should.)
- The financial health of the practice. What can it afford? Is it thriving or barely surviving?
- Wage efficiency. Does higher pay yield a better outcome? Do you get what you are paying for?
- Payroll dilution. Are you paying one high paid employee excessive overtime? If so, will a new lower wage hire help reduce this while the "extra pair of hands" increases productivity?
- Benefits. Healthcare, vacation, retirement plans, etc. should all be taken into account when calculating compensation.
- Payroll ratio—Your gross annual staff (payroll, taxes and benefits)\* divided by your gross annual receipts should be in the vicinity of 22-25% (\*Include outside billing company; do not include associate wages)

One final note: because each practice is unique unto itself, it is unfair to staff and to yourself (and in fact even unlikely) that comparing wages with your colleagues will result in a standard wage that reflects the analytics of your practice. Using the external and internal components mentioned, it is prudent to set your own base wage and proceed from there. **PM**



**Ms. Lynn Homisak**, President of SOS Healthcare Management Solutions, carries a Certificate in Human Resource Studies from Cornell University School of Industry and Labor Relations. She is the 2010 recipient of *Podiatry Management's* Lifetime Achievement Award and was inducted into the *PM* Hall of Fame. She is also an Editorial Advisor for *Podiatry Management Magazine* and is recognized nationwide as a speaker, writer, and expert in staff and human resource management.

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