



The Heart of Care:

**Strategies for
Recruiting, Matching,
and Retaining Top
Caregivers**

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It's no secret that the top priority across the home care industry is caregiver recruitment and retention. Whether your business works with independently contracted or employed caregivers, finding and retaining top talent poses a challenge when attempting to fill your desired number of roles, especially with the encroaching threats to finding qualified home care personnel.

Why do we have a caregiver shortage?

Let's peel back the curtain on how we got here.



Demographic changes.

The US has a continually aging population, driving drastically higher demand for caregiving services. 10,000 Americans are **turning 65 every day**, almost all of whom prefer aging in place. This created significant imbalances between people requiring care and available caregivers in their area who can do the work. What's more, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted challenges with institutional care and reinforced the importance of home care and honoring preferences of older adults and their families, for fear of additional lockdowns and other measures outside of their control.

Economic challenges.

Caregiving work is associated with low wages and limited benefits, driving potential caregivers to entry-level careers in other industries or to pursue higher education pathways to become nurses and staff in other care settings.

Activated Insights (formerly Home Care Pulse) found that the average caregiver turnover rate in **2024 was 79.2%**, a marked increase from the pandemic, when caregiver turnover dipped as a result of compounding factors like more communication, hazard pay and compensation arrangements, and more.

Recognition shortages

Home care can often feel isolating to caregivers who work one-on-one with clients. Not having peers, supervisors, or coworkers at a single workplace intermingling together can feel uneasy at times, especially when it comes to safety or something emergent arises. With that dynamic, it's important for home care agencies to place a **key emphasis on recognition and rewarding** caregivers for a job well done. It's a necessary way to establish culture in a distributed workplace. Caregiving plays an important role in how society functions and it needs to be revered as such by more people.

What matters most to caregivers

When you understand how caregivers work, you can then tailor your recruiting and retention processes around those important factors.

Firstly, let's take a look at the process so you know what to look for.



Breaking down the recruiting process.

You don't just want caregivers who are going to come in and fill in the gaps. You want people who embody your agency's mission, vision, and values—and intend on growing and developing their careers with you.

Here are some things you can look for to identify those right-fit caregivers:

Pull reports from the last 90 days in your agency (or a large enough sample of data that is representative of "average" business growth) that show you:

- Total client hours by week
- Total caregiver hours by week
- Extract what your top client needs by skillset and location

Use this data to identify average patterns and how you can adequately meet client needs while reducing overtime. This can help you recruit caregivers in the right location, understand and anticipate training needs to meet clients where they are (while promoting continuity of care), and increase caregiver satisfaction.

You'll emerge from this exercise with a list of specific towns or cities that you should recruit in, skills to look for or train for in applicants, and reduce unnecessary labor costs from overtime.

Now that you have the logistics figured out, here are some interview questions that may help you weed out the right-fit applicants from the not-so-good fits.

Can you describe a difficult situation you experienced with a past client and how you managed it?

- If they haven't been a caregiver before, ask how they've handled past personal or professional challenges in other settings.

What type of care are you comfortable learning and providing to clients?

- Understanding each applicant's comfort zone is important while also gauging their aptitude for learning new skills.

Can you share an example of how you have handled or how you would handle changing your care approach to meet unique client needs?





What makes good versus great caregivers?

Ask yourself, "Who are my top performers? What makes them successful in their role?" Use these traits and insights to rewrite and edit your job descriptions and requirements on their traits, skills, and performance. Focus on what makes them successful in their role, and use that as a baseline to weed out applicants who wouldn't fit your company's culture.

Let's say, for example, that some of your preferences are:

- Time management
- Problem-solving
- Empathy
- Good communication
- Patience

Here is an example job description that you can use that explicitly calls out these traits and applicants will likely see these qualities in themselves.

Job Description: Caregiver at John Doe's Home Care Agency
John Doe's Home Care Agency is seeking compassionate and skilled caregivers to join our team. We are looking for individuals who are dedicated to improving the quality of life for our clients through personalized care and support.

Responsibilities:

- Assist clients with daily living activities, including bathing, dressing, and grooming
- Prepare nutritious meals and help with feeding when necessary
- Provide medication reminders and assist with medication administration as directed
- Perform light housekeeping tasks to maintain a clean and safe environment
- Offer companionship and emotional support to clients
- Accompany clients to medical appointments and social activities
- Communicate effectively with clients, their families, and healthcare professionals
- Develop and implement care plans tailored to each client's needs

Qualifications:

- State certification in Home Care Aide training program (preferred)
- Previous caregiving experience (preferred but not required)
- Strong time management skills to efficiently handle multiple tasks
- Excellent problem-solving abilities to address unexpected situations
- Genuine empathy and compassion for others
- Outstanding communication skills, both verbal and written
- Patience and ability to remain calm in challenging situations
- First aid and CPR certification (a plus)

Key Qualities We Value:

- **Time Management:** Ability to prioritize tasks and manage time effectively to ensure all client needs are met while prioritizing your own well-being
- **Problem-Solving:** Resourcefulness in addressing challenges and finding creative solutions
- **Empathy:** Genuine care and understanding for our clients' well-being
- **Communication:** Clear and effective communication with clients, families, and team members
- **Patience:** Ability to remain calm and supportive, especially in difficult situations

At John Doe's Home Care Agency, we believe in providing the highest quality care to our clients. If you possess these qualities and are passionate about making a difference in people's lives, we encourage you to apply and join our dedicated team of caregivers.



The caregiver role

One of the important parts of hiring the right caregivers is transparency. This doesn't just mean sharing your rates upfront, but it also means:

Being honest about client needs

Don't undersell the level of care that clients need or how a caregiver should prepare to work with each client. The clearer and more specific you can be, it'll help to manage expectations and improve continuity of care

Go through client care plans with the caregiver.

Yes, each caregiver should take the time to read care plans on their own time, but when your team is creating their schedule, that's an ideal time to walk caregivers through client needs, location, and preferences to ensure alignment. That way, if there is an issue, their schedule can be fixed live and their expectations are managed right there and then.

Share how your communication works.

How do caregivers seek support? How should caregivers call off? How often do you do recognition programs and what do you need to do to get there? By communicating clearly and regularly, you can increase caregiver satisfaction and retention from the start. Remember: retention starts at recruitment.

Gauge caregiver schedules before they start working

Communication is critical to the quality of a caregiver's experience as their availability may change frequently. By sending out regular availability checks through text and email, you can always have a pulse on when caregivers are available and unavailable, and adjust their schedules accordingly.

Agency management systems should include scheduling features that help you make faster decisions when it comes to caregiver-client matching. Some factors include:



Distance



Familiarity



Skills

LEARN MORE IN THIS TEMPLATE:

The Magic Behind Caregiver Scheduling

Having enough health care personnel to care for your clients is the most important aspect of the home care industry. As discussed earlier, it's also the biggest challenge facing the home care industry. Scheduling is an excellent tool for caregiver recruitment to combat these challenges.

Offer Caregivers a Variety of Schedules

Agency owners should experiment with various types of schedules to see which is best for local caregivers. Some different types of schedules include:

- ✓ **Week-by-week schedule:** New caregivers are assigned to assist various clients and shifts each week.
- ✓ **Forever schedule:** New caregivers are assigned to work with the same clients on the same shifts.
- ✓ **Weekend schedule:** New caregivers are assigned to work every weekend or every other weekend.

You can also offer different programs for new caregivers, which will widen your pool of prospective candidates. These include PRN, traveling positions, on-call shifts, and senior living facility partnerships.



How to increase caregiver happiness and retention

Now that you have a roster of new caregivers, here are the keys to keeping them long-term.

Consistent Scheduling

Consistent scheduling is crucial for caregiver satisfaction and work-life balance. It allows caregivers to plan their personal lives and reduces stress associated with unpredictable work hours. Consider implementing:

- Fixed schedules where possible
- Advanced notice for any schedule changes
- Opportunities for caregivers to choose preferred shifts
- A fair system for distributing desirable and less desirable shifts

Competitive and Reliable Pay

Financial stability is a key factor in caregiver retention. Offering competitive pay and guaranteed hours can significantly increase job satisfaction. Consider:

- Guaranteed 40-hour weeks for select, trusted caregivers who accept all shifts within their availability windows (and not have to worry if they didn't get exactly 40 hours)
- Competitive hourly rates based on experience, certifications, industry standards, and local cost of living
- Performance-based bonuses, reward programs, and incentives
- Clear overtime policies and fair compensation for extra hours



Two-Way Communication

Open and effective communication between caregivers and management is essential for a positive work environment. Here are some ways that you can meaningfully connect with caregivers and gather feedback on their experiences:

- Regular check-ins with caregivers to address concerns and gather feedback
- An open-door policy for caregivers to voice issues or suggestions
- Opportunities for caregivers to mentor others (another opportunity to gather feedback that caregivers might not share with you or office staff directly)
- A system for caregivers to easily communicate with each other and share experiences
- Clear channels for reporting emergencies or urgent matters

Standardized Caregiver/Company Processes

Standardized processes create consistency and reduce confusion, leading to increased efficiency and job satisfaction. This can look a bit different for each agency, but can resemble:

- Clear, written protocols for common caregiving tasks
- Standardized onboarding and training programs
- Consistent policies for time off requests, shift swaps, and other administrative tasks
- Regular updates and training on any process changes



By focusing on these four key areas, home care agencies can create a more supportive and satisfying work environment for caregivers, leading to increased happiness and improved retention rates.

How you can grow your care network

Whether you're a new or established business, you can always find new ways to get in front of the right caregivers, clients, and referral sources. Here are some ways that you can do that:

Strong relationships to bolster client and caregiver referrals

Let your clients and caregivers do the hard work for you. When you treat caregivers and clients well, they will share how their experiences have been. This can create an inbound talent and consumer growth engine for your business without you having to raise a finger.

Automate manual tasks that take away from human-to-human interaction. This gives you and your team the bandwidth to develop strong relationships with your caregivers and clients. By effectively using technology, you can wish each of your caregivers a happy birthday and provide real-time praise when you hear complements from a client.

And on the other side of things, you can initiate a courtesy call program where you and your team call clients on a regular cadence just to check in and see how things are going. If it doesn't make sense for your agency to do this, you can hire a company like Activated Insights to initiate customer and caregiver satisfaction calls and surveys on your behalf.



Improve your marketing to reflect a positive culture and talent brand

Sometimes you have to put collateral together in a pinch, as you're still working on finding out what kind of brand you are. Take the time to work on your brand identity, like your mission, vision, and values, and infuse that language into your collateral, website, and social media



When it boils down to the core offering, most home care agencies offer similar services. The difference lies within how it's executed:

- ✓ By a company with the best customer experience and service?
- ✓ By a company with the best caregivers who are trained in dementia?
- ✓ By a company founded by a caregiver or former clinician?

There's a number of ways to define and position your agency in a highly competitive market like home care. And once you have that down, you can find and attract caregivers who live out and share those values alongside you. And provide services to clients in need of caregivers and team members like yours.

This will help referral partners and sources feel at ease about sharing their clients with you, and trusting you with their care.

Improve communication

In home care, communication is actually the number one reason for turnover. This doesn't have to be the case with your agency. With a distributed workforce, communicating is of utmost importance to ensure your business' success. Here are a few ways you can implement in your agency today:



Create a real-time feedback process.

Whether it's a slack channel or through your agency management system, find a way that works best for your team to receive feedback in real-time. And what's more, review the feedback often and work with your office staff to come up with solutions to their concerns—and share them back with the caregiver.

Conduct regular check-ins.

90-day turnover for caregivers is an important yet preventable metric, and to combat this, create a 180-day check-in program. Schedule regular cadences between yourself and your team to touch base with caregivers bi-weekly during a caregiver's first 180 days with your agency, to ensure that they feel heard and have a place to share their honest thoughts.

Reinforce accessible communication channels.

Offer multiple ways for caregivers to get in touch with your agency, whether that's by phone, email, text, etc... Reinforce these channels early and often, at every chance that you get. And more importantly, make sure to be responsive on the channels that you choose to open up to them.

With one or more of these strategies in place, you can improve communication with your caregivers.



Curious how CareTime can support your caregiver retention and recruitment strategy?

Our tools are built to make life easier—for you and your caregivers. With seamless onboarding, a caregiver-friendly mobile app, and powerful scheduling functionality, CareTime helps you keep your team happier, more productive, and more likely to stick around.

Contact Sales:

📞 321-392-6422

Book a meeting here:

Or visit us at www.caretime.us to learn more and schedule a personalized walkthrough.

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