# Improving Employee Retention

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Employee turnover adversely affects patient care and practice profits, but there are steps you can take to hold on to top performers.

By Steven Austin Stovall, PhD

How much will you pay for your next new hire? According to Jay Shorr, managing partner of practice management consulting firm The Best Medical Business Solutions, "it costs 25% of an employee's annual salary to properly train and indoctrinate him into your organization, and it takes approximately three months before you can turn a new hire loose and feel comfortable he is ready to work on his own, fully comprehending your organization's operations."
Susan Vasko, MD, co-founder of Columbus Aesthetic and Plastic Surgery in Columbus, Ohio, recognizes the critical role a long-term employee plays in a business, especially a cosmetic practice. "We have a very sophisticated clientele and they have many choices in seeking a plastic surgeon," she says. "We have a very large variety of procedures that we offer—both surgical and nonsurgical—so the person answering the phone must be well trained and knowledgeable." For Dr. Vasko, the advantage of an experienced employee is that he can be "skilled in converting an inquiry into an appointment." This is something a revolving door of new hires cannot readily accomplish.
There are many reasons why an employee leaves an organization, some of which you have no control over. Family emergencies or obligations may take staff members away on a short-term or long-term basis. Spouses take jobs in other states, or an employee may wish to stay home for the first few years of a new baby's life. These are unavoidable circumstances. But for those areas that you can control, it is critical that you maintain solid managerial practices.

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