

National Disability Workforce Project

Pilot Site Report

Proactive Recruitment

Oakdale Services Tasmania

Workforce issues targeted:

What we set out to do

We set out to implement strategies that would help us avoid the following...

Panic hiring – what is it? It's when we receive a resignation with little notice, dismissal or when a staff has unexpected leave and there is no one to take their place.

We have to rush to advertise and interview and hope that we get suitable candidates. If we do hire someone, there is then a rush to get them inducted and "buddied up" so they can begin their new position as soon as possible. This leaves everyone a little flustered and unsettled as is not a preferred method of employment. It can take up to 4 weeks before the new recruit is ready to fill the position. It is quite a stressful process for all concerned

Current staff working extra shifts – This does take a toll on staff when it is consistent. It may be that staff are tired from working overtime or it may be that they find it difficult to organise extra childcare or it may impact socially, where they have to give up a regular activity for a time. Whatever the reason it has a negative impact and cannot be sustained for long without consequences.

Team leader stress – our team leaders (coordinators, house managers, Level 5's) have a high work load. When they are trying to fill rosters and they don't have enough staff, it puts much extra pressure on them. Apart from the time it takes to find someone to work, they have complaints coming from staff who really don't want the extra shifts, but work because there is no one else.

Clients missing out on programs – we are loathe when this occurs, but it is sometimes unavoidable if we have insufficient staff to assist clients to access their programs and/or activities. This is the most worrying of all problems with staff shortages — as we all know.

Needing to change training or other plans – this usually affects managers and team leaders. Commitments and appointments often need to be re-scheduled or cancelled in order to attend interviews and organise inductions and buddies for new staff. Much better for all concerned when we have the bonus of time to organise these events.

Our assumptions

- *We would be paying supernumerary staff for an indefinite period*

We are finding that due to the constantly changing needs of our staff, we are able to use the new recruits and so are not paying them as supernumerary at all. Casual staff who wish to go onto a permanent line are offered the opportunity when a line becomes available which occurs on a regular basis. We don't have a high turnover of staff but their needs change due to family, health, study and other reasons.

- *Chances of attracting staff who requested casual work would be low*

We have recently employed 5 staff who requested casual hours only. The reason for this is they are full time students and who cannot commit to permanent part time hours due to the nature of their study (e.g. nurses and prac placement).

The strategies we trialed

- We have always had good relationships with RTO's and TAFE. This has been built up over many years through networking and frequent contact. We will continue to build on these relationships and will increase the amount of students we take as prac placements.
- We have trialed 2 information days for secondary schools and encouraged feedback from the students asking if they would be interested in working in Disability. Feedback from these students was not encouraging, as there was minimal expression of interest in pursuing this field of work. We wonder if this is a workable option. We need more discussion around this before committing resources to it.
- Our Technical and Further Education (Polytechnic) is intending to take out a one page ad in all of the secondary school newsletters to encourage students to try working in disability as a career. *We have offered to be involved in this.*
- The continuous interviewing and recruiting method is proving to be one of the best for hands on staff. We do require applicants to have certain skills and clearances before we will consider them, but formal qualifications is not one of them as we can teach those.

How we engaged people in this project

- We informed Managers, Coordinators and Team Leaders about our involvement with the project and the process required from the start and asked for their support and encouraged their involvement.
- We communicated regularly with the team leaders and kept them formally informed through Management Meetings and informally through daily contact.
- They have started to accept the project and are becoming more enthusiastic toward it.

What we concluded

- ***It is not as costly as we thought it would be*** (thought we would need to keep people employed at 20 hours per week for many weeks.) This has not been the case, however, as we have been using these recruits to cover unexpected sick leave, long service leave etc.
- ***It has saved time.*** To spend a day interviewing people, which is how we used to employ, meant involving the Operations Manager, the HR Manager, a Coordinator or Team Leader and an admin assistant. The cost of wages alone was quite significant.
- ***The stress levels*** on the team leaders has reduced as they are pretty sure HR can find someone to cover the shifts.
- ***It has helped to remove the gap in the rosters*** which used to happen when an employee resigned. We would need to ask existing staff to work extra shifts to cover the gap until the new recruit started, which could be up to 3 – 4 weeks depending on whether our recruitment day was successful.

- ***The majority of staff are pleased*** that they are not asked to work extra shifts as much. Most of them don't mind working extra shifts now and again. It's when they are repeatedly and consistently asked to cover shifts that they become tired, then stressed and sometimes sick that they complain.
- ***The need to advertise has reduced dramatically.*** We have not advertised for staff since October last year. It's not the cost of advertising that bothers us. Rather it's having our name in the positions vacant section repeatedly that may cause people to believe we may not be the best place to work because of a perceived high turnover.
- ***The satisfaction level of the new recruits*** is good because they know that if they complete their probation period successfully, they will eventually be offered permanent employment if they want it. Some organisations only employ casuals and as such have a high turnover rate because people need to have permanent work and also to feel valued and feel a part of the whole.
- ***It has worked better than we thought it would.*** Thought it would supplement our recruitment process, but has in fact replaced it and will now be called our **"Proactive Recruiting Plan"**