



Recruiting Qualified Frontline Workers to Meet Patient Needs in the Aftermath of a Pandemic

Using technology and on-site recruiters helps hospitals maintain proper staff levels.

RESULTS/OUTCOMES

Project Full Force resulted in improvements that expedited the employment funnel at hospitals with the highest vacancy rates. Here are results beginning in 2022’s first quarter through 2023’s first quarter:

Number of New Job Applicants:
Increased by 76 percent. The number of people applying for EVS positions at these hospitals rose from 3,460 to 6,080 over a similar timeframe.

Number of New Hires:
Increased by 41 percent, rising from 950 to 1,336.

Number of Job Offers Made:
Increased by 22 percent, from 1,315 to 1,599.

Increase of Job Offers/Job Accepted Ratio:
Rose from 72 percent to 84 percent.

“This project has been extremely effective at reducing EVS vacancy rates at one of the largest non-profit hospitals in Texas. One of the biggest reasons was access to ideas and initiatives brought to use by Project Full Force that worked at other systems around the country. We tried several different proposed solutions and constantly tracked our progress through a log of job openings and the progress of new hires.”

— Samira Neese, Director of Human Resources and Training, Crothall Healthcare

CHALLENGE



Following the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals and their outsourced service providers both struggled with severe staffing shortages among frontline workers, which made recruiting for these crucial positions even more difficult.

To boost hiring and maintain proper staffing levels for its Environmental Services (EVS) teams at hospitals nationwide, Crothall Healthcare took action. In 2021, it established Project Full Force, a team of executives and managers charged with finding and implementing solutions.

It started by focusing on approximately 80 health facilities, many with vacancy rates of 25 percent or higher in their EVS staffs. In each case, the goal was to reduce the vacancy rate to 10 percent or less. Of the 80 facilities in the first focused wave, 57 achieved a vacancy rate of less than 10 percent for 8-10 weeks.

For example, five hospitals in one of the largest non-profit systems in Texas participated in the program. While initial vacancy rates among them ranged from 13 percent to 20 percent, with the help of Project Full Force, rates dropped to 7-8 percent in less than one year.

SOLUTIONS

Led By Amie Falvo, Senior Project Manager for Environmental Services, Crothall gathered information on a variety of hospitals and their EVS staff vacancies. The Crothall team took several measures to help the hospitals with high vacancy rates attract applicants and fill positions. These included:

Creative Technology Solutions to Attract New Applicants.

By using industry-leading, web-based applications, the number of job applicants and new hires increased significantly.

Approximately 30 percent of all newly-hired employees applied for a job by using a particular web-based feature. When a potential candidate pressed a single button, Crothall recruiters received their contact information.

The recruiter contacted the potential candidates, inviting them to apply and scheduling interviews. Some hospitals that had no job applicants began receiving interest from 50-100 persons per week from this feature.

In the first two months of 2022, Crothall's EVS teams in this program received more than 25,000 responses and hired 500 new employees. At the end of January 2023, this technology accounted for 64% of applications submitted, 38% of offers extended, and 39% of new hires for the accounts in this program.

“The Project Full Force recruiter has been extremely valuable in her assistance for Memorial Hospital Belleville-Shiloh’s Patient Observation program. With her help, the Crothall team at Memorial was able to expand the Patient Observation program across our entire organization in a very short period of time, and we were able to start our Patient Observation program at Memorial quickly. In addition, I believe Project Full Force allowed us to free up some onsite resources to focus on training new Patient Observers and get them ready to be placed on our various Nursing Units and EDs throughout our two hospitals.”

—John C. Ziegler, MBA, FACHE,
Vice President of Operations-Support,
BJC HealthCare Memorial Hospital - Belleville-Shiloh

Added Recruiting, Onboarding Staff.

During the “Great Resignation” period following the pandemic, many hospital EVS teams did not have full staffs and fulfilled their duties by hiring temporary labor and paying overtime to regular frontline workers. To address this issue, Crothall hired professional recruiters focused solely on these positions who were able to find more qualified candidates and offer them jobs more quickly.

Two new recruiters focused on key hospitals with the highest percentage of vacancies. The recruiters move around the nation helping hospitals with the high vacancy rates that don’t have a recruiter on site. In many cases, the recruiters were able to screen candidates in the pipeline faster than the onsite operations teams. They also contacted local businesses to set up job fairs and create partnerships. This allowed the onsite teams to be able to focus more of their attention to their operational tasks rather than recruiting. Project Full Force recruiters were also able to tackle recruiting large new teams for new business in Patient Transportation and Patient Observation.

Innovative Solutions for Starting Pay.

Despite the need for qualified EVS workers, hospitals of all sizes continue to face significant pressure to keep labor costs low. Crothall worked closely with some hospitals to test ways to attract more candidates while also keeping costs low.

One solution was to make part-time positions attractive. For example, a pilot program at one hospital paid a higher pay rate for part-time positions than for full-time positions.

These part-time jobs attracted candidates who already held full-time jobs elsewhere searching for supplemental income. For these candidates, the lack of medical, dental, and other benefits was not a deterrent. The hospital opened up 10 of these positions in October of 2022 and received a significant number of new applicants.

Crothall also worked with several hospitals to provide bonuses as an incentive for referrals and new workers who stayed with the hospital for a certain length of time. These were some of the most successful programs, rewarding workers with an incentive to attract and retain talent.

Regular Communication to Assess Progress.

All hospitals attended biweekly meetings to review current vacancies, number of candidates in process, as well as the number of employees that left their jobs.

The meetings enabled faster resolution of any problems, such as a low flow of applications. Collaboration also improved. It was beneficial to learn about ideas and initiatives that worked at other hospitals. Team were also able to review “Best Practices” on the Crothall portal.

“With a targeted focus and strategy, we’ve been able to leverage our most impactful applicant attraction strategies, analyze performance and market data for continued strategy investment, and establish best hiring practices to share with the larger organization. The program has been a differentiator during the unprecedented labor market challenges in recent years and has helped our operators attract and hire talent at higher rates.”

— Alexandra Miller, Director, Talent Acquisition, Entry Level Talent, Compass Group USA



“As we continue to navigate a challenging labor market, it became clear that our approach to assessing, recruiting, and retaining staff needed to change. Amie Falvo and her team on Project Full Force created a laser focus to find qualified candidates at hospitals experiencing double-digit vacancies among EVS employees. By applying her tool box of recruiting and retention methods, we’ve significantly reduced those vacancies, and in turn, helped hospitals provide better care for their patients.”

— Tom Racobaldo, CEO, Crothall Healthcare

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