

Invest Personally and Professionally in Your Organization

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What differentiates an “outstanding” from a “mediocre” employee? While factors like dependability, attention to detail, and pleasant demeanor might be the first come to mind—these are *basic traits* that should be demonstrated by *all members* of an urgent care team. Rather, what makes a person *outstanding* goes to his or her *emotional investment* in the practice.

Emotional investment entails understanding and *believing in* the urgent care center’s purpose, strategies, and vision for where it’s headed in the future; having a *sincere interest* in serving the center’s patients, clients, and colleagues; and demonstrating *loyalty* to the practice. Employees who are “invested” likewise:

- Make suggestions for improving the operation;
- Put in extra effort and extended hours without being asked;
- Encourage colleagues and direct reports;
- Volunteer for new or special projects; and
- Speak positively of the center, its services and people—both within and outside of the center.

The last point entails abandoning negative or pessimistic feelings. Typically when employees question or doubt their leadership and colleagues it’s because they lack information and perspective. Most negativity and pessimism is unwarranted and based on fear of the unknown or some sense of injustice. When management is transparent; accessible to employees; communicates its vision and strategy; involves team members in decision-making; and acts ethically and fairly in all of its dealings...negativity flees and investment increases.

Loyalty—caring about one’s commitment to the practice—is perhaps the aspect that many employees have lost in a job market that is increasingly competitive for skilled clinicians and experienced staff. As conventional manufacturing industries in the United States have matured and downsized due to globalization and technological innovation, we read a lot in the press that business is not loyal to its workers. Lost loyalty leads to lost productivity, lost pride, a lost sense of security, and a lost sense of importance. Cultivating loyalty occurs by investing in the hiring and onboarding process; focusing attention on the processes, systems and training that support day-to-day operations; providing career paths to promotion; empowering employees to make decisions; and recognizing employees for their contributions.

While emotional investment is important, professional development should not be neglected. Encourage team members to attend workshops, networking groups, and conferences to sharpen their skills and deepen their knowledge. Such activities can teach team members where their careers can take them and the skills needed to get there. Representing their practice in networking settings can also reinforce the individual’s identity as a member of the team while also providing an opportunity to learn and introduce best practices to the center. To the extent that professional development of team members benefits the organization, it should invest financially in these types of activities.

The desire of every urgent care operator should be a team who daily pours its heart and soul into their jobs and who professionally develop themselves. But except for the occasional “rare jewel,” such doesn’t happen on its own. Management has to keep its pulse on employee attitudes, seek to understand and respond employee needs, and make appropriate investments in its people.