

Innovative programs can solve healthcare labor challenges

Transcript

DAVID TYLER:

Hello, I'm David Tyler, the national managing principal of Grant Thornton's Healthcare practice, and I'm excited to be joined today by my friend, Mandy Tilton, who's the chief nursing officer at Bayada, a large home health agency and other associated healthcare provider organization. And we are going to be talking about something that's near and dear to virtually every provider organization's heart these days, which is workforce issues. We're talking about that and both the clinical and nonclinical content, but really focused on the nursing and the clinical care providing setting. So, Mandy, thanks for joining us today.

AMANDA TILTON:

It's my pleasure. Thank you for having me.

DAVID TYLER:

Absolutely. Can you start by just telling us a little bit about Bayada?

AMANDA TILTON:

Sure. Well, as you mentioned, Bayada is a pretty diverse organization and there's a lot to tell. Super interesting -- Bayada was actually founded in 1975 by Mark Bayada in the Philadelphia area. Recently, in 2019 though, the company transitioned to a not-for-profit organization.

And the company is quite large. We have a presence in many different locations. Today, we have over 350 offices where we're able to serve clients in 23 states, and even internationally, too, with locations in Canada, Ireland, India, Germany, the UK, New Zealand and South Korea. And so

with all those locations, we have over 25,000 employees. And if you can believe this, we cared for over 143,000 clients last year.

DAVID TYLER:

That's impressive and first, on behalf of all those patients and their families, thank you for the work that you all do. It's really, really important. And I know that the backbone of all that work are your employees. They take care of people every single day. And a recent Grant Thornton study found out that among healthcare workers, there are three top drivers of stress. And those are personal debt, medical issues and mental health. I've got two questions for you related to those three. One, is that consistent with Bayada's experience? And two, have you done anything to address these drivers with their clinical staff?

AMANDA TILTON:

Absolutely. Well, thanks for those important questions. Those top three drivers certainly do impact our employees and our organization like they do just about everywhere else. These are hard-hitting, important topics. It's important to call out that especially the last three years, with the presence of COVID-19, have really put an unprecedented challenge on our healthcare system, and the individuals that drive that healthcare system, the caregivers and clinicians -- employees

At Bayada, we're super-focused on caregiver wellness, and I can give you some examples of that. So, for example, we promote work-life balance or alignment by offering flexible scheduling and we ensure that our employees find cases

that work for them. They care for clients who are close to their home and who meet the skill set that those employees have. We're able to use some technology to help with this. So, it's not all done by pen and paper. There are some really helpful things that we include.

Additionally -- I'm really proud of this -- we offer clinicians and caregivers comprehensive training. So that allows them to always increase their skills so they can continue to care for clients who have different or maybe more acute needs.

And then, let's talk a little bit about rewards, too. We cannot always make this work easier. Healthcare in itself is complicated, and sometimes our patients are very, very ill. But we can offer rewards and recognition to thank them for their hard work and help them to really feel fulfilled.

Some of our examples are, recently (this one is one of my favorites), we launched an all-in-one digital reward and recognition platform that we call "Bayada Celebrates." So, this platform allows our employees to connect with each other in a social media-like way which, of course, is how we all are connecting these days. And so, we can instantly thank them, recognize them or reward them for hard work that's done.

And one other thing I think is critical to call out because we're doing this right now in our organization is we have this really cool program called "Contest for Clinicians." And with this program, employees are able to be recognized and recognize one another. And when they do this, they're automatically entered into a contest with drawings where we give away more than \$100,000 in awards and recognition.

DAVID TYLER:

That's exciting. And it's one of the things that keeps a workforce happy. And if you can do that, retention is a lot easier than recruitment, as we all know. It sounds like there are a lot of innovative things going on at Bayada right now. Do you have other examples you'd like to share with us?

AMANDA TILTON:

I do. I have so many examples, so I'll try to stick to just a few.

One -- again, a newer program that is very exciting here at Bayada -- is our "Advance to LPN" program. And again, that just started this year -- super new for us. But this program actually allows for our home health aides to go to nursing school and we, Bayada, pay for the bill in real time.

While tuition reimbursement is a great thing, and we offer that too, sometimes (and I know from personal experience) it's just actually getting started that is the hard part. So this

program removes that barrier for home health aides who want to advance to become LPNs or licensed practical nurses.

And another really exciting one, too, speaking along the lines of training and advancing nursing skills, is our nurse residency program. We are actually accredited by the American Nurse Credentialing Center and that's really important. It shows that a third party has validated the expertise that we have in offering this program. So our nurse residency program allows new nursing graduates to come, train in our state-of-the-art simulation labs, and practice skills in a safe environment. And then from there, we help them slowly and effectively transition into independent practice.

So both examples are really, I think, neat ways that we're helping individuals transform their lives, and I called this a two-fer, because in helping others become nurses and advance their nursing skills, our clients are actually the true beneficiaries.

DAVID TYLER:

Yeah, I think that's super exciting and super impressive. The notion that you are willing to invest and employ to help them advance themselves and at the same time, upskill your workforce and put people in a better position to serve your patients is really an impressive fact. I think that's really cool. Are there any other employee retention initiatives that you are looking to roll out or have recently rolled out with Bayada?

AMANDA TILTON:

Absolutely. We refer to this journey, this retention journey, as "hire-to-retain." And really, our goal there is to create a full portfolio of options that will help meet any individual who is employed by us wherever that person is. And I should say that we actually have been referring to this almost more as "pre-hire-to-retain" because we want people to feel connected from the very beginning of their journey with us here at Bayada.

In this kind of portfolio or venue of options, we infuse the voice of the clinician and caregiver in everything we do. I have the personal pleasure of leading many different committees and advisory boards where our clinicians and caregivers contribute to the design of anything that is going to be client- or caregiver-facing.

And so, instead of what you may see organizations do where they would have leaders create something and give it to caregivers and clinicians, we actually involve them in grass-roots development, which is really fulfilling and also ends up

with a really useful product. Because if you design something for yourself to use, of course, that's going to make it a little bit more user-friendly.

DAVID TYLER:

That's exactly right.

AMANDA TILTON:

Yeah, it is. It's a lot of fun, too. So not only do they get to develop work products that make sense, but they experience joy along the way. And I realize I didn't touch on your ask, or your question, about mental health. And I want to make sure that we address that, too, because it's so important, especially for employees and healthcare settings these days. We're really focused, again, on understanding how we can help individuals and individual employees be successful.

I read an article recently that shared information that was interesting. The question was posed to travel nurses, so a little different population than ours, but to travel nurses. They were asked, "What would be required for you to return to a hospital setting?" I found the three requirements to be really interesting. They were -- better compensation, flexible schedules and better patient ratios. And for me, I thought it was interesting that we do offer these naturally in the home health care setting.

For example, our nurses, our caregivers, our clinicians, have the opportunity to deliver one-on-one care to clients. And for me, I just think that's amazing. I always attribute it back to the nursing process that you learned in nursing school where you can create a plan for an individual. You implement that plan, you watch the progress and then determine what needs to be changed along the way. That is so fulfilling and rewarding to caregivers and clinicians. We get to see the entire experience of our clients, which I think really is one of the benefits of that one-to-one care.

And then, additionally, flexible scheduling -- that's really what we're all about. We have such a variety of different types of clients that we care for in different needs that we can offer all sorts of different work schedules to our employees. So, two examples of some of the things that we're doing to help make the work that we do a little easier or, at least, align a little bit better with individuals' lifestyles.

DAVID TYLER:

I think that's so important. One of the things that we sometimes lose sight of, as people that look at macro-healthcare industry trends, is the nature of a caregiver-patient relationship. At the end of the day, those are problems to be solved -- staffing and retention and recruitment are all problems to be solved. But at the end of

the day, within healthcare specifically, you can find altruism at the heart of every clinical care worker. And if we can better align the reason that people get into being a clinical worker, a nurse, an LPN, a nurse's aide, a physician, if we can better align the reason they got into that business to begin with, with how they go about delivering that care, we'll be all better off regardless of the setting. And I applaud your efforts to try to align those things within Bayada.

AMANDA TILTON:

Thanks so much, David, I couldn't agree more. It's interesting when you train to become a caregiver or clinician or nurse, you learn a lot of technical skills and you learn a lot of people skills and how to care for others. But what is often overlooked is how to care for yourself. And I mean, I'm a firm believer that you have to care for yourself so you can give people the best of you and not just what's left of you. And we're really focused on creating that type of culture and environment at Bayada.

I can actually give you one insight, something that we're piloting next month. So this is, I guess, kind of groundbreaking news here. We're going to be launching what we're calling "renewal retreats" for our caregivers and clinicians. And these retreats have many objectives, but one is actually to provide our caregivers and clinicians with tools and with the plan to be successful when they do find themselves in stressful situations. (We're) really excited that we're able to partner internally with some of our experts and our behavioral health practice and that sort of thing to help prepare, in advance, our caregivers and clinicians to manage these things that, arguably, we're all challenged with.

DAVID TYLER:

The notion that employee self-care would be different than any other care setting, in regards to prevention being dramatically better than treatment, I think is a really great recognition by Bayada, and to do something about that is really, really impressive. I have a keen appreciation for that.

Can you talk a little bit about some specific examples of things that you do to reinforce the culture within Bayada as a senior leader within the company?

AMANDA TILTON:

I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to do that. So here at Bayada, our culture and the way we live, really in the way we care for our clients and one another, we refer to as the "Bayada Way." So, the Bayada Way is all of the things we've mentioned so far. It's caring for others. It's following our hearts and listening empathetically and actively to one

another. But two specific ways we do that are tangible approaches to ensuring that we keep our culture alive and well and front-of-mind.

First of all, we have a weekly “key action of the week” exercise. So every Thursday morning across the globe, across the U.S., teams come together to discuss a key action to really deep-dive into one of our core values and share real-life examples of how that is taking place, as well as take time to reflect and revisit all the examples of the ways that we’re doing that.

And then secondly, maybe one of my favorite things (I know I’ve said that a few times, but we have so many exciting programs going on), is our Heroes Award. So quarterly, we celebrate different home health aides, behavioral analysts, nurses, therapists, who have really just gone out of their way to demonstrate the Bayada Way in caring for our clients. Every quarter we select winners and roll up the winners and ultimately, once a year, bring a few selected heroes to our National Awards weekend celebration. It’s really a beautiful thing.

I think when we treat one another the way that we treat our clients, a lot of magic can happen I’m really proud to be a part of the work to make all of this come to life and a proud member to be here. I would just like to thank you for giving me a few moments to share about the great work that we’re doing.

DAVID TYLER:

That’s terrific, and thank you for your time on behalf of all your employees and particularly your nurses and clinical employees, I know they appreciate you as an advocate for them. Thanks again for your time, Mandy.

AMANDA TILTON:

My pleasure. Thank you.