

Nursing Satisfaction: What Matters Most At Work

ascom

Three Things Hospitals Can Do To Relieve The Nursing Shortage



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“Ascom communication and collaboration solutions are innovations for the right place at the right time: there’s greater need across systems with pressures exacerbated by the global pandemic and the digitalization of care still in the early stages in many countries. We design and are investing deeply in our Ascom Healthcare Platform and software solutions to give customers a global, open, and flexible architecture to expand upon and integrate with their existing systems and applications. All of this supports our mission of enabling better outcomes.”

Nicolas Vanden Abeele
CEO, Ascom

Foreword

COVID 19 spurred a massive disruption in our healthcare system in the U.S. beginning in 2020. This type of lasting change is not always easy to spot because it's cushioned by the incremental changes preceding and following it. When we look at it in context, we can better fit this time of great change into history's industrial revolutions. In this Fourth Industrial Revolution, the [World Economic Forum](#)¹ outlines how technology advancements underpin transformation by merging the physical, digital, and biological worlds in ways that create huge promise and potential peril. We believe technology holds more ability for good than its potential misuse. Never before have we had the opportunity to transform healthcare for all by using technology to reach the goals of the Quadruple Aim.

As a respiratory therapist, I understand the pressures nurses are under each day in normal circumstances, but now that the job has intensified, clinical workflow solutions can't wait. Intelligent workflow technologies are now as essential as bandages and

medications. The good news is we have these kinds of solutions today. Now that some of the big advancements in imaging and electronic medical records are universal, we must focus on using technology to benefit the care providers and patient through improving workflows, collaboration, and communication. While only a [small percentage](#)² of hospitals in the U.S. have implemented these solutions in a holistic way, ample opportunity exists to improve workflows for clinicians and the patients for whom they provide care.

Given the extensive shifts in the healthcare environment today, we wanted to know directly from nurses what detracts them from the nursing profession and how do we keep them in it. What influences their choice of where to work? What role does technology play in their employment choices, and how does it help them provide care? We asked more than 500 U.S. nurses in a survey of professionals from acute care environments to gain more insight in these areas.

We learned that as hospitals build their brands and compete for nursing talent, they must consider the rapidly changing working environment nurses are operating in and address it by continually keeping their pulse on the drawbacks and attractors – both at the industry level and in their workplace. Technology designed for clinical workflows consistently ranks high for addressing some of the key challenges nurses identify as negatives in their jobs. In addition to increasing the time nurses directly spend with patients, technology can aid in proactive care, giving clinicians a practice “safety net” to anticipate, recognize, and intervene before a sentinel event occurs.

I'm excited that technology holds the potential at a system, patient, and nurse level to reduce inequalities, increase security, and strengthen communities at a level unlike previous industrial revolutions—if we design a model that combines the right technology tools, policies, and practices.



Kelly Feist
Managing Director,
Ascom North America



Summary of overall findings and what hospitals can do to respond



Nurses jobs are getting tougher all around. They demand higher pay to make the job worth it.

1

Put equal weight on increasing salaries to attract and retain talent.



Hospitals are in a talent war. A hospital's technology could determine the winners.

2

Implement a technology strategy that targets nursing satisfaction.



Technology's biggest benefit for nurses is allowing them to spend more time with patients and focus on preventative care.

3

Invest in the technology prioritized by nurses.

More complexity drives higher expectations

Nurses have challenging jobs, and now they're facing new and more forces, and it comes at an inopportune time with critical imbalances in supply and demand. [The US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)³ projects 203,200 average annual openings for registered nurses between 2021 and 2031, with employment projected to grow six percent (as fast as average as all occupations).

The [American Association of Colleges of Nursing](#)⁴ attributes the national shortage of nurses due to four factors:

- Demand outpacing supply of nursing school graduates
- Not enough nursing school faculty members
- The growing [rate of retirement](#)⁵ with half of the registered nurse (RN) workforce over 50 years old and 1/5th stating they plan to retire in the next five years
- The aging population driving more demand for nursing services

With such forces at work in the workplace, hospital administrators must address how to attract and retain nurses in their facilities and in the industry by mitigating the most-pressing constraints.



Top drawbacks from the nursing profession

In the *Challenges On The Job For U.S. Nurses* survey, Ascom determined that nearly one-third (30.97 percent) of nurses say their top drawback from a nursing career is having to care for more patients, while having to care for sicker patients ranks as the third top drawback.

Today, hospital staff members are treating the type of patients in the intensive care unit (ICU) a decade ago for their conditions now on general medical-surgical floors. The industry-wide nursing staffing shortage and having fewer experienced nurses to manage critical-care patients who need skilled care compounds this issue.

We attribute nurses' demand for higher, more competitive pay to make the job worth doing to these factors.



“So many patients are becoming critically ill and there are not enough ICU beds, that they are going to the floors where you didn’t have the immediate backup and access to the physicians when there were sudden changes to a patient’s status. This is very intimidating for new nurses. If this didn’t change, many nurses were faced with a very early career decision of staying and risking their license or leaving and moving on to do something else.”

Kate McCarthy
RN, BSN, CCRN



“Nurses feel unable to give the quality of care that they would want for their families. They have too many patients and do not have the support staff that were promised when transitioning to primary care. They should have only four patients for primary nursing and support staff.”

Nancy Coney
RN, BSN, RHIA, CCDS

Top Five Drawbacks From Staying In Nursing

30.97%

Having to care for more patients.

21.7%

Having pay that’s too low for the job.

11.83%

Having to care for sicker patients.

10.85%

Having to work too long of hours.

8.48%

Having more unpredictability and disruption than before Covid-19.

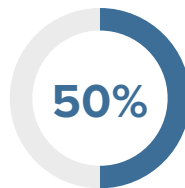
The burden of documentation

Documentation adds to the rising challenges on the job. Nearly 50 percent of nurses say reporting and documentation requirements have decreased their enthusiasm and engagement a lot to a great deal. This deluge of [requirements for documentation](#)⁶ has become a source of frustration for many nurses. In [prior research](#)⁷, Ascom identified that nurses, nurse assistants, or technicians manually measure as many as four to six vital signs per round, record each result on a chart, and then enter all of the data into the electronic health record (EHR), which could take up to three hours per shift.



“There was a time when you cared for the patient and then documented that care. The redundancy of charting requirements and frequency of charting has flipped that paradigm so that you are nursing a computer and getting to patient care when you can – at least that is the temptation. So much of the joy of caring for people as a nurse is in the connection and interaction with them as they heal. Increasingly, this isn’t even really known by the newer professionals and certainly not a recognized expectation.”

Andrea Rush
BSN, R.N.



50% of nurses say reporting and documentation requirements have decreased their enthusiasm and engagement a lot to a great deal.



COVID-19: a tipping point

The COVID effect on nurse burnout is real and measurable. A majority (65.48 percent) of nurses say industry and workplace factors, such as more unpredictability, increased concerns for safety and wellbeing as well as legal liability, and potential criminal prosecution for mistakes, have been exacerbated a lot or a great deal in the past two years since COVID began. In fact, nurses rank facing more unpredictability on the job, as one of the top five drawbacks to their profession.

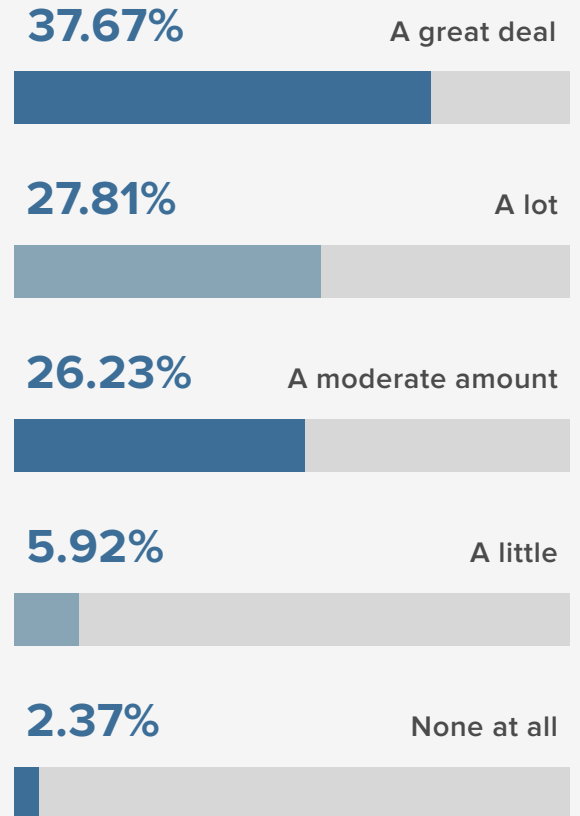
Nurses want more from their workplace to make the job worth doing. This expectation can come in the form of traditional benefits like higher compensation as well as softer benefits, like greater flexibility in working hours and having mechanisms in place to make their job easier by delivering care more intelligently, efficiently, and collaboratively.



“The pandemic and the stress associated with it on top of the general stress of more patients per nurse with more complex diagnoses and higher acuities has made the profession less desirable. The cognitive workload and stress is taking its toll on the level of care for patients and exhausting nurses and support staff.”

Laura Shafer
BSN, RN-C, CWON

How have the factors in the industry and workplace exacerbated for you since the start of the global COVID pandemic in 2020?



How nurses pick their next employer

Hospitals must recognize and address shifting nurse expectations for the workplace and monitor for new ones, quickly. After understanding the drawbacks from nursing careers today, we looked specifically at what's most important to nurses in deciding where to take a job. In short, what can hospitals do to attract nursing talent and win in this tight talent market?

The good news - many of the top factors that nurses say influence their job selection are factors hospitals can have an ability to control, in many cases. Just like nurses indicate the importance for greater compensation at the industry level, at the hospital level, 35.2 percent of nurses say higher pay is very important, ranking it as their number one factor in their choice of employer.

[The Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)³ reports the 2021 average pay for a RN about \$77,000 USD. Many hospitals are turning to generous sign on bonuses or hiring travel nurses to fill gaps; however, they should look at increasing salaries for existing nursing staff to remain competitive.

Much like the industry, the number and types of illnesses patients have play a strong role in nurses choice of where to work, along with flexibility in schedule. Interestingly, a hospital's reputation outranks benefits other than pay, and this may reflect the multi-dimensional aspect of decision-making. Having the right tools and technology to do the job is also important, ahead of having measures in place promoting wellbeing and safety, and training opportunities.

Factors Influencing Employment Selection

Having pay that's too low for the job you're doing	35.2%
Number of patients to care for and types of illnesses they have	34.49%
Flexibility in schedule and hours	12.83%
Reputation to organization	4.4%
Benefits other than pay	3.2%
The right tools/ technology to do the job	3.02%
Measures in place promoting well-being and safety	2.61%
Confidence in leadership	1.81%
Having a defined career path	1.8%
Having adequate training opportunities	1.21%

Hospitals can win talent with technology

Nearly 60 percent of nurses say that a hospital's suite of technology tools is an important factor in deciding whether to take a job at a particular hospital, and 88 percent report that technology tools is at least somewhat important in deciding where to take a job.

As nurses are expected to do more with less, they see technology as part of their essential tools to do the job. In fact, nurses report that they're better at their jobs thanks to technology. Of respondents surveyed, 47 percent say that technology is significantly enhancing and supplementing their skills as a clinician 'a great deal' or 'a lot', and more than 96 percent say technology is enhancing their clinician skills in some way. Nurses are now choosing to work in places that invest in the technologies that help accelerate their workflows.

Senior Vice President of Professional Services for Ascom Americas, Robert Wittwer has experienced many technology projects in his 20 years as a nurse, and he stresses that by shifting thinking from technology installation to implementation, organizations will get the greatest value possible out of their solutions.



"Healthcare technology is evolving faster than what many hospital systems are prepared for. Facilities put themselves in the best position to succeed when they create a technology plan that gives their nurses practical support and develop leadership that will drive new improvements."

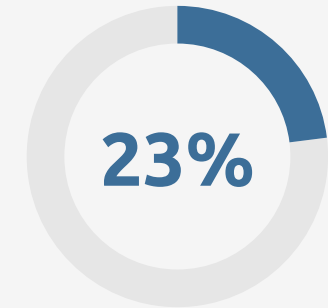
Huyen Cam
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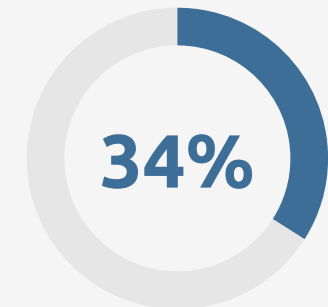
"The more successful technology projects we've seen do five things well: they bring the right set of stakeholders to the table early, view technology solutions as implementations not installations, define the strategy and objectives the technology should achieve, think long-term, and prepare for organizational adoption. When you have all of these components working together, you're much better able to capture the benefits technology can bring to your organization."

Robert Wittwer
Senior Vice President of Professional Services
Ascom Americas

How important are a hospital's suite of technology tools to you in deciding whether to take a job there?



Extremely important



Very important

Technology choices matter

Enabling direct care through spending more time with patients and making care preventative are the most valuable benefits of clinical technology today, according to nurses in the survey.

While there are lots of different digital tools to help nurses, more than one-third of nurses say nurse call is the #1 technology tool they need to do their job well. Despite the prevalence of nurse call technology in hospitals, the newer, intelligent features of today's devices, like Ascom's intelligent alarm filtering, lets nurses manage patient requests in more efficient ways than before while reducing alarm fatigue. As the capabilities for systems increase to handle more integrations from monitoring devices and provide smarter alarming features, the recognition and value nurses attribute to it should increase. This is why we believe it ranks #1 in the results.

Following strongly in second is predictive analytics. Early warning scoring and calculating sepsis protocols are two ways in which intelligent software is being used now to predict which patients are at risk for admittance to the ICU. According to [research](#)⁸, the ability to detect clinical deterioration and manage it quickly can reduce the number and impact of adverse events like "cardiac arrest, unplanned admission to intensive care units (ICUs), prolonged hospital stay or death." As patients arrive sicker, often with multiple co-morbidities, being proactive and preventative matters more. Reports show [up to 17% of all hospitalizations](#)⁹ were affected by one or more adverse events, and of those, up to 70% were potentially avoidable. Imagine

if technology could be the catalyst to reducing even a fraction of those events. Monitoring technology combined with intelligent filtering engines can help meet some of the most pressing challenges acute care environments face.

As hospitals work to meet the goals of the Quadruple Aim, shifting the emphasis to preventative, proactive care through continued surveillance and monitoring has taken on extreme importance. By integrating vitals data from different sources and calculating an early warning score (EWS), technology can not only identify at risk patients but also alert nurses to take action when it's needed.

Nurses say collaboration and secure communication involving text, audio, or video call or messaging with physicians is important to do their jobs well. Also, collaboration and communication solutions, such as sending messages for activities like two sets of eyes confirmation, patient care technician assist and lab transport, are important to doing their jobs well. They likely see these as baseline technologies in performing care.

Nurses identify clinical decision support as rounding out the top five most important technology tools and solutions. These include multi-factorial notifications versus simplistic low blood oxygen saturation (SPO2) technologies to help them make better decisions about prioritization of care for patients. By reducing the manual process of calculating each vital statistic and looking at it in a holistic way through technology, they can more quickly spot trends.

Most Important Technology Tools and Solutions

33.6%

Nurse Call

22.29%

Predictive Analytics

18.04%

Collaboration and Secure Communication

14.43%

Collaboration and Communication Solutions

11.85%

Clinical Decision Support

What nurses want from technology

Nurses want technology to do three main things:

- Help make them more efficient, by reducing their steps, redundancies or time spent,
- Help them focus more on direct patient care,
- Do more by integrating more information from patient systems into one centralized source.

These objectives are exactly what the right technology does best – free up nurses to focus on higher value activities that advance patient care. We believe that when technology augments the human-centric work nurses do, the healthcare profession gets better. Innovations like smart alarming can make nurses more efficient by only requiring them to respond to matters that are urgent and material to patient health and satisfaction, while routing other requests to other staff or batching them into nursing rounds to optimize the workflow. In a previous study we conducted with customers, we found 20 to 25 percent of [customer alarms](#)¹⁰ were non-actionable, and without smart alarming, a nurse would have to answer it and go to the patient’s bedside to determine the status.

This increase in efficiency gives nurses more of what they want - more direct interaction with patients and a holistic picture of what’s happening with their patients. In our study, we found that workflow optimization technology could help reduce [preventable codes](#)¹⁰ by up to 10 percent. Technology’s ability to automate, integrate, and analyze helps nurses “do more with less” as they respond to the changing demands of the workplace. Ascom clinician Huyen Cam knows from his experience as a respiratory therapist that technology-assisted nursing has become the baseline expectation among nurses today, and hospital administration must create a strategic plan for implementation and adoption.

Desired Changes For Workflow Technology Solutions



32.87%

Reduce steps or redundancies and time spent



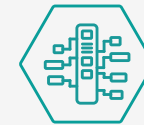
28.4%

Focus more on direct patient care



26.56%

Do more - integrate more information from patient systems into one centralized source



6.57%

Flexibility - have the capability to reconfigure/change to fit new ways of working



4.58%

Avoiding mistakes – smart barcodes, cameras, etc.

1.56% Other

Conclusion

Hospitals in the U.S. are facing a disruption on all fronts – more and sicker patients with 33 million admissions in 2020, according to the [American Hospital Association](#)¹¹, and an inadequate supply of nurses without the years of experience in skilled nursing. These constraints impact hospitals ability to provide the necessary and best care for patients. Nurses - the front line in patient care - recognize and value the role technology can play in helping them help patients. In addition, it can play a pivotal role in providing a critical safety net for their clinical practice, and they are choosing employers who make it a priority. Hospital administrators should seek their input and prioritize technology implementations that solve the most routine and important workflow issues nurses face on the job.

Hospitals that invest in the right technology, strategy, and tools will come out ahead in reaching the goals of the Quadruple Aim – reduced costs, better outcomes for patients, and higher patient and nurse satisfaction.

The effects of this improvement will reverberate across health systems as technology moves from treating to preventing further illness in acute care environments as well as fostering overall wellness.



About the survey

The data in this report is based on a survey Ascom conducted of 507 nurses in the U.S. in July 2022. All of the respondents are full or part-time nurses with the majority working in acute care/hospital settings. Demographics include approximately 61 percent of respondents being female and 38 percent being male.

*Percent weighted values per ranking per criteria used to calculate ranking question results. Due to rounding, not all calculations total 100 percent.

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About Ascom

Ascom is a global solutions provider focused on healthcare ICT and mobile workflow solutions. The vision of Ascom is to close digital information gaps allowing for the best possible decisions – anytime and anywhere. Ascom's mission is to provide mission-critical, real-time solutions for highly mobile, ad hoc, and time sensitive environments. Ascom uses its unique product and solutions portfolio and software architecture capabilities to devise integration and mobilization solutions that provide truly smooth, complete, and efficient workflows for healthcare as well as for industry and retail sectors.

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