

**CASE STUDY**

for Post-Acute HR Leaders

# How Tabitha Health Revised Culture to Improve Staff Engagement

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Creating a cohesive culture to improve employee experience

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# Overview

## The challenge

Staffing shortages in post-acute and senior care settings are a persistent challenge, exacerbated by rising rates of staff burnout, low employee engagement, and high turnover. The negative experience of many employees also hurts patient and family experience, reducing overall community confidence in post-acute and senior care settings.

## The organization

Tabitha Health, based in Lincoln, Nebraska, is a non-profit provider of a range of senior care services including home health, hospice, senior living, skilled nursing, and other rehabilitation services.

## The approach

In 2017, Tabitha Health's leadership revised and aligned core company values with the organization's mission and incorporated core values in job postings and performance review grids to unify company culture. Specifically, Tabitha Health revamped their hiring and employee review process to attract and retain employees that matched Tabitha's mission of delivering faith-based care to older adults in Nebraska. While Tabitha Health's leadership has been committed to building strong company culture since 2010, the changes implemented in 2017 formally integrated core values into staff experience.

## The result

Tabitha Health reports high employee engagement, net promoter scores, and employee satisfaction as are result of the cultural realignment. This was helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic as staff were more trustful of Tabitha leadership.

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# Approach

## Tabitha's three-pronged approach

**01** Update existing company culture to align with the mission

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**02** Formally integrate revised values into staff workflow

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**03** Design hiring and orientation around the realigned values

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# 01 Update existing company culture to align with the mission

## Concerns around employee engagement jumpstart cultural realignment

Low employee engagement and high turnover are common challenges impacting post-acute and senior care providers across the country. Faced with similar challenges, Tabitha Health sought to improve employee retention and staff experience by updating organization culture to reflect their mission and staff values.

## Audit of current practices revealed gaps between mission and reality

In 2017, Tabitha Health’s leadership created a cross-discipline team of clinical and operational leaders from across the organization. Across a one-year time period, the cross-discipline team conducted one-on-one interviews with staff, collected staff feedback through company-wide surveys, and visited different Tabitha Health offices to understand the status quo of employee engagement and broader company culture. The year-long assessment revealed that while some aspects of organizational culture mirrored Tabitha’s mission and values, other aspects did not. As a result, Tabitha Health set out to better align their culture with their mission and values. To do this, the cross-discipline team began by updating their core values to closely align with organization mission, vision, the values that mattered to the staff, and leadership’s aspiration of who they wanted to be as an organization.



We redefined our values on what we heard was important to the team, and who we aspired to be.

**Katie Lechner, COO**  
Tabitha Health



UPDATE EXISTING COMPANY CULTURE TO ALIGN WITH THE MISSION

## Revised values reflect Tabitha’s mission and focus on service and accountability

As a part of the cultural realignment, Tabitha Health developed the LIVE2CARE culture. The LIVE2CARE motto laid out the core pieces of Tabitha’s employee priorities.

In addition, Tabitha Health specified eight core values that employees are encouraged to embrace. The new core values, selected and modified from an existing set of 10 value statements, focus on care, service, and employee accountability.

### LIVE2CARE enumerates vision

Love our jobs

Invite optimism

Vision success

Embrace Tabitha’s Purpose

Core values

Accountability

Relationships matter

Exceed expectations

### Deep dive on core values

*Care:* Extend unwavering Christian compassion

*Connect:* Build relationships rooted in love, because love matters

*Customer centric-identity:* Clarify, and anticipate needs to exceed expectations

*Collaborate:* Create an atmosphere of teamwork

*Cultivate:* Nurture an environment of innovation and growth

*Courage:* Demonstrate confidence, boldness, and determination

*Commit:* Devote our time, talent, and treasure

*Celebrate:* Recognize and encourage all accomplishments big and small

# 02 Formally integrate revised values into staff workflow

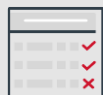
## Subset of cross-discipline team reeducated the entire organization

Once the revised core values were determined based on employee feedback, subsets of the cross-discipline leadership team visited different Tabitha Health offices to reeducate staff on the revised core values. These trainings, conducted over a one-month period, improved staff understanding and alignment with Tabitha’s culture, increasing staff engagement.

### Purpose of organization-wide training sessions



**Level-set** on new Tabitha Health values



**Establish expectations** for staff performance



**Improve employee excitement** about being a part of Tabitha Health

## Employee feedback and reviews were redesigned around defined values

To further align the operational components with the defined values, leaders updated employee performance review processes to reflect the core values. Specifically, managers were asked to identify, with concrete examples, if employees were champions, supporters, or detractors of the organization mission in their assessment.

The updated performance review grids provide a formal opportunity to ensure that employees are held equally accountable to meeting Tabitha Health’s core values and other professional duties of their role. These value-based reviews formalize leadership and staff accountability to Tabitha’s mission, vision, and core values. As a result, staff who don’t practice the core values are more likely to leave the organization through disciplinary action or voluntary termination.

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FORMALLY INTEGRATE REVISED VALUES INTO EMPLOYEE WORKFLOW

Filtering out frontline staff who don't align with the culture can be a difficult tradeoff in post-acute settings given the limited market supply of staff replacements. But Tabitha Health ultimately saw a boost in employee engagement and retention. Employee turnover also decreased after the new values were implemented and misaligned staff left the organization.



We made it very clear and showed our leaders examples of how it was more 'painful' to work with a bad apple than work short a person. Honestly, it was pretty easy once people saw how much time they actually got back without the [culturally misaligned] person there.

**Katie Lechner, COO**  
Tabitha Health



# 03 Design hiring and orientation around realigned values

## Job descriptions emphasize core values to attract the right audience

Tabitha Health updated the hiring and onboarding process to exclusively hire employees who are aligned with Tabitha Health’s LIVE2CARE core values. To better filter for culturally-aligned staff prior to the interview phase, Tabitha Health incorporated the core values language in job descriptions. This helps attract staff that are aligned with Tabitha Health’s vision.

## Interviews assess candidate cultural alignment

Tabitha Health also incorporated online behavioral assessments as a first step in the interview stage to determine a candidate’s cultural fit. In addition, they updated interview questions to test how well a candidate’s personal values, goals, and prior experiences aligned with Tabitha Health’s mission, vision, and employee culture.

## Orientation reflects company culture to ingrain the right values from the start


Tabitha Health created the following programs to create a successful and engaging experience for new employees:

- **Culturally-aligned orientation.** The revamped orientation process educates employees on Tabitha’s history, services, and LIVE2CARE culture.
- **Preceptor program.** New hires are paired up with experienced nurses and aides to provide one-on-one clinical training, support, and feedback.
- **Ongoing new hire surveys.** Leaders frequently survey new staff to provide a pulse check on the success of onboarding processes.

# Results

## How we know it's working

As a result of Tabitha Health's cultural realignment, employee satisfaction and engagement improved significantly. Specifically:

- **Staff net promoter scores during the Covid-19 pandemic mirrored pre-pandemic levels.** During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, Tabitha Health surveyed employees on how likely they were to recommend Tabitha Health for their loved ones. While many other post-acute and senior living organizations reported decreased in employee trust, retention, and satisfaction during the pandemic, Tabitha Health employee responses during the pandemic mirrored pre-pandemic net promoter scores.
- **Reduced staff turnover.** In 2018, Tabitha's employee turnover rate was 40% while national turnover levels at similar sites of care was 68.5%. In 2020, Tabitha Health's turnover rate remained at 40%. As of May 2021, Tabitha Health's turnover rate was 31%.
- **Increased employee retention.** Through the revamped hiring and onboarding process, employee retention during the first 90 days also increased compared to the national average. 

# Supporting artifact(s)

## Old core values

*Character:* I will always be in character while doing the work of Tabitha.

*Compassion:* I will extend unwavering Christian Compassion toward everyone.

*Connection:* I will build relationships rooted in love, because at Tabitha, love matters.

*Customer Service:* I will anticipate each customer's needs, always looking for ways to exceed their expectations.

*Collaboration:* I will cooperate with others to create an atmosphere of teamwork.

*Communication:* I will accept responsibility for excellent communication and will be constantly aware that what I say and do is a reflection of Tabitha.

*Commitment :* I will do what I say, when I say, because Tabitha's success depends on my ability to make and keep commitments.

*Contribution:* I will offer my time, talent and treasure to Tabitha.

*Courageous Vision:* I will support Tabitha's ongoing efforts to continually improve and am willing to offer ideas and be accepting of change.

*Continuum:* I will understand who Tabitha is and what Tabitha does in order to support and promote One Tabitha.

# Supporting artifact(s)

## Current core values

*Care:* Extend unwavering Christian compassion

*Connect:* Build relationships rooted in love, because love matters

*Customer centric-identity:* Clarify, and anticipate needs to exceed expectations

*Collaborate:* Create an atmosphere of teamwork

*Cultivate:* Nurture an environment of innovation and growth

*Courage:* Demonstrate confidence, boldness, and determination

*Commit:* Devote our time, talent, and treasure

*Celebrate:* Recognize and encourage all accomplishments big and small


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