Pharmacy Technician Career Ladder Development

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Presenter

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Disclosure

The Presenter has nothing to disclose.
Pharmacist and Technician Objectives

1. Investigate the development of a pharmacy technician career ladder
2. Evaluate advancement opportunities for pharmacy technicians
3. Describe the implementation of a pharmacy technician career ladder within the organization
What is a Career Ladder?

° A series of progressively higher positions that can be attained in one’s working career
° Conceived of as a ladder to be climbed toward greater responsibility and financial success¹

Benefits of a Career Ladder

- Formal process
  - Criteria
  - Path
- Well-trained staff
- Value to the employee
- Motivation
- Attract talented employees
- Retention

Technician Turnover Rate

- Pharmacy Staffing Survey 2013³
  - Average turnover rate for pharmacy technicians was 14.4%
  - As a comparison: pharmacist rate was much lower (5.6%)

Pharmacy Technicians in a New Light

Pharmacy Forecast⁴

In at least 50% of health systems, specialized pharmacy technicians will assist pharmacists in providing patient care (e.g., by conducting medication reconciliation, taking medication histories, extracting data from health records).

Career Ladder Challenges

- Longevity
- Task or Performance
- Training and Availability
- Timeline
- Competencies
- Multi-site/System
- Transfers
- Lack of Roles

5 Williams EA. Technician Career Ladder Optimization and Leadership Development. ASHP Leadership Conference. 2018
What do I need to start a pharmacy technician career ladder?

Or to improve an existing career ladder?
Components of a Well-Developed Pharmacy Technician Career Ladder

- Levels / Advancing job profiles
- Variety of defined responsibilities
- Formal advanced and specialized roles
- Informal advancement opportunities
- Workforce buy-in
Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center

- Memorial Hermann Health System
- 444-bed, tertiary care, community hospital in Houston, TX
- Services
  - Heart & Vascular Institute
  - Advanced Primary Stroke Center
  - Bariatric Center of Excellence
  - Center for Advanced Orthopedics
  - Medical/Surgical Intensive Care Units
  - Women’s & Children’s Services
- 40+ Pharmacy Technicians
First step: Evaluate current job profiles at the institution
Existing Job Profiles

- Pharmacy Resource Specialist (PRS)
- Technician III
- Technician II
- Technician I
- Technician Trainee
Other Job Profiles to Consider

- Lead Technician
- Pharmacy Technician Manager/Supervisor
- Technicians with specialized training
  - 340B Coordinator
  - Financial Analyst
  - Systems Analyst
  - Pharmacy Buyer
  - Inventory Specialist
  - Pyxis Coordinator
  - Quality Assurance Coordinator
  - Controlled Substance Auditor
  - Employee development/Educator
  - Medication Area Inspector
Job Profile Distribution

Tech Trainee       Technician I       Technician II       Technician III       PRS
Second step: Understand what makes each role different and evaluate additional defined responsibilities.
Job Description

Tech Trainee
- Entry Level Certification within 6 Months

Tech I
- Active Certification New Hires

Tech II
- Tech I Requirements
- 2-5 Years of Experience
- Advanced Competencies

Tech III
- Tech II Requirements
- 5+ Years of Experience in Tech II role or equivalent
- Professional Involvement
- Advanced Responsibilities

PRS
- Tech III Requirements
- Specialized Responsibilities
- Subjective Criteria

New Hires
- Entry Level Certification within 6 Months

Certification within 6 Months

Active Certification New Hires

Tech I Requirements
2-5 Years of Experience
Advanced Competencies

Tech II Requirements
5+ Years of Experience in Tech II role or equivalent
Professional Involvement
Advanced Responsibilities

Tech III Requirements
Specialized Responsibilities
Subjective Criteria
Competency Versus Responsibility

Job description based on task driven (competency) versus role driven (responsibility)

- Task
  - An assigned piece of work often to be finished within a certain time
- Role
  - A function performed in a particular operation or process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task/Competency</th>
<th>Role/Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sterile Compounding</td>
<td>IV Room Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyxis Replenishment</td>
<td>Pyxis Coordinator/Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tech-Check-Tech</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
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Remember that Bell Curve!

° Seasoned Technicians
  • Pitfall: a department full of Technician IIIs and Pharmacy Resource Specialists (or other leadership roles)
  • Importance of distinguishing between task driven versus role driven criteria
  • An excellent employee does not necessarily mean a strong leader\(^5\)

\[^5\] Williams EA. Technician Career Ladder Optimization and Leadership Development. ASHP Leadership Conference. 2018
Third step: Create or define advanced and specialized roles within the organization.
Medication History Technician

° Duties
  • Reviewing patient medication histories

Controlled Substance Surveillance

° Duties
  • Managing diversion strategies and controlled substance use
  • Performing audits and investigations related to controlled substance use
Pharmacy Based Immunization

- Duties
  - Administering vaccines to patients

Specialty Pharmacy Technician

- Duties
  - Managing high cost medications therapy for patients with complex disease states
USP <795, 797, 800> Coordinator

° Duties
  • Responsibility over regulation knowledge and implementation
  • Workflow analysis to bring institution into compliance

Quality Assurance and Regulatory Compliance

° Duties
  • Quality assurance roles – keeping abreast of all regulations from any inspecting body (e.g. TSBP, The Joint Commission, CMS, Health Department)
Business and Clinical System Analysts

° Duties
  • Preparing pharmacy budget and reviewing drug utilization trends
  • Analyzing cost saving initiatives
  • Managing computer information systems for pharmacy

Pharmacy Technician Manager

° Duties
  • Supervision of other pharmacy technicians
  • Scheduling
  • Workflow/queue assignment and development
Career Path Versus Career Ladder

- Different advanced and specialized roles make the traditional career ladder difficult to implement
- Focus more on career path (individualized approach) over a career ladder (applicable to all approach)
  - Adaptive progression
  - Versatility
  - Balance and flexibility
  - Leadership and “soft skill” development
  - Idea of career lattice

Career Ladder
follows a hierarchical structure that governs the way information flows in organisations, defining career success as a linear climb to the top with increasing expertise in skills possessed by employees as they progress to different roles.

Career Lattice
is meant to represent multiple paths to advance an employee’s career. It provides opportunity and flexibility to switch job roles entirely, and make cross-functional movements to different roles that are not necessarily a level higher or even in the same domain.
Career Lattice

- Work on leadership development over teaching new skills and competencies:
  - Applicable to any career path
  - Focus on attitude and behavior
  - Soft skill development

- Support the education and training to develop different skills, competencies, and abilities for new and expanded roles:
  - Reimbursement for advance certifications
  - Develop and justify new roles

- Build the skills and competencies as development plans for the role:
  - Finance
  - HR and other administrative roles
  - Other healthcare professions (e.g. nursing, radiology, respiratory therapy, etc.)

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5 Wagner J. Technician Advancement & Leadership in a System without an Established Career Ladder. ASHP Leadership Conference. 2018
Fourth step: Identify and model advancement and professional development opportunities
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Professional Involvement

ashp

tshp

AAT
American Association of Pharmacy Technicians™

NPTA
National Pharmacy Technician Association
Subjective Criteria

° Leadership development
  • Leadership series
    • Crucial Conversations
    • Emotional Intelligence
  • Project management
  • Meeting facilitation
  • Interview process
  • Preceptorship

° Attitude and behavior
  • 4 Conversations by Rod Brace
Fifth step: Buy In
Hospital Leadership Buy In

- Regulatory advancement
  - California – Medication History Program

- Best practices from other hospital sites
  - Unit-based technicians
  - Controlled substance diversion
  - Inventory management

- Value
  - Position justification
  - Variance/error avoidance or mitigation
  - Studies of comparison (e.g. medication histories)
Employee Buy-In

° What is the purpose of all of this if none of the employees pursue advancement?

° Involve
  • Focus groups in the development
  • Solicit feedback from all
  • Be transparent for new hires with the ladder/development

° Incentivize
  • Pay (mostly out of our control, but work with HR)
  • Reimbursement for advance certification or tuition
  • Career planning and mentorship
Key Takeaways

1. Career ladders can be utilized to provide structured career advancement opportunities for technicians.
2. Career ladders are robust and should be evaluated and adjusted periodically to ensure they are meeting intended goals.
3. An excellent employee may not be a strong leader. It is important to focus efforts on developing leadership skills as technicians move up the ladder.
4. Technician leadership and advancement can occur without a ladder.
Pharmacy Technician Career Ladder Development

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CE Codes

Pharmacist: 2jsQ

Technician: PpiK