

Retention Equation = Community + Connection + Career

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Goal

Improve first-year New Graduate Nurse (NGN) retention by:

- Fostering community
- Strengthening connection
- Supporting early career development

Background

Nursing is experiencing a critical workforce crisis, with growing reliance on NGNs.

Nationally, 18 to 20% of NGNs leave their first position within one year.

Early attrition among NGNs leads to workforce disruptions, diminished staff engagement, and significant financial and organizational strain.

Nurse leaders need to move beyond continuous recruitment towards innovative approaches to support long-term retention.

To meet this challenge, a team of nurse leaders developed a strategic plan aimed at improving NGN retention within the first year of practice.

The innovation integrated three interdependent pillars:

- Community
- Connection
- Career growth

Process

Forming Community

Immediate peer relationships fostered by:

- Cohort-based onboarding
- Pre-hire mobile app to network, ask questions, receive support
- NGN Residency Program

Fostering Connection

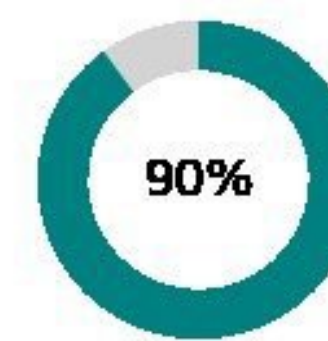
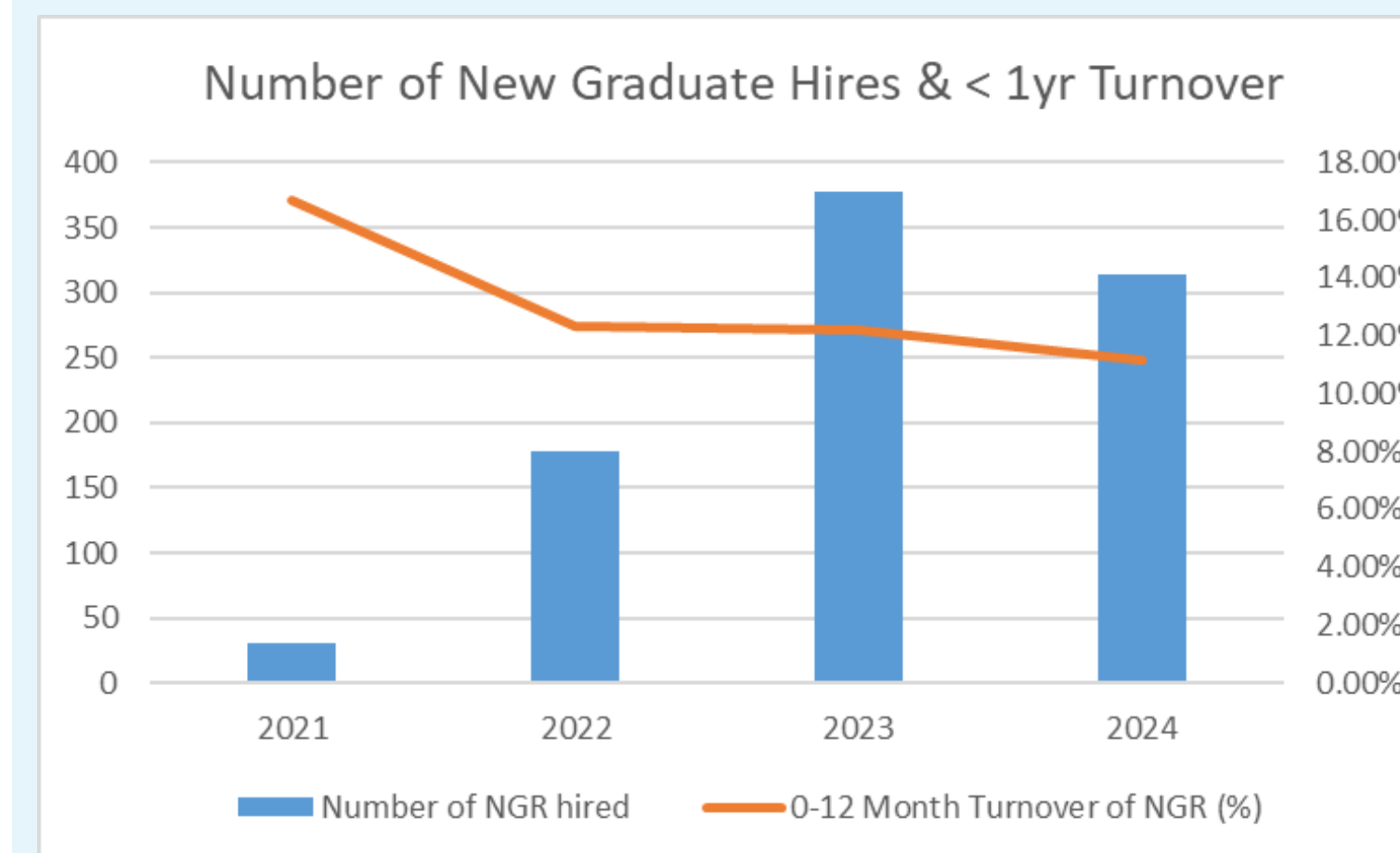
- Combined clinical education with team-building (simulation escape rooms, scavenger hunts, problem-solving, leader introductions)
- Activities promoted collaboration, confidence, and a sense of belonging

Facilitating Career Growth

- Career development introduced early and throughout the residency
- Leaders supported individualized growth plans, encouraging engagement in:
 - ✓ Governance
 - ✓ Mentorship
 - ✓ Specialty certification
- New pathway to specialty practice aligned retention goals with NGN career aspirations:
 - ✓ Connected NGNs with nurses in specialty practice
 - ✓ Facilitated shadow experiences

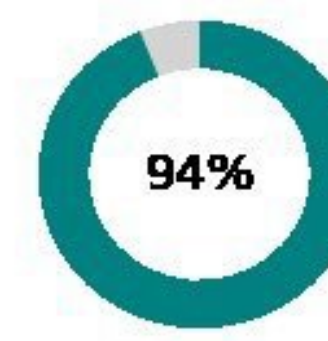
Results

- First year turnover of NGNs decreased by two percentage points in the first year (12.2% to 10.2%) following implementation.
- Additionally, **88 nurses** transferred from Med/Surg to specialty units in FY 25, keeping talent in the hospital.

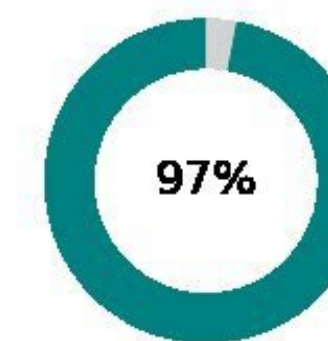


Participants agreed:

The pre-hire mobile app fostered a sense of community.



Structured team-building activities promoted a sense of belonging.



Structured team-building activities provided insight into the culture and values of our organization.

Conclusions /Recommendations

Intentional investment in community-building, connection, and career development can improve first-year NGN retention.

Organizations looking to strengthen retention can adopt similar strategies by:

- **Embedding community-building** into the onboarding process
- Designing **intentional team-building activities** to foster peer connection and support
- Providing accessible **professional development** and **career progression pathways** for NGNs

Together, these elements create a **practical and scalable retention framework** that organizations can apply to support NGNs and sustain a **stable, engaged nursing workforce**.

Contact Information and References

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