ANALYSIS OF LAB STAFF RETENTION AT ABC HOSPITAL: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

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Executive Summary

ANALYSIS OF LAB STAFF RETENTION AT ABC HOSPITAL:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

By Julie M. Ward

Over the past five years, employee turnover within ABC Hospital Lab has more than doubled in comparison to the national turnover rate with 39 people transitioning through the lab during this time frame. Lab management wanted to discover what could be done to retain employees for longer than two years thereby reducing the turnover rate. Before solutions could be developed, it was critical to understand the factors causing the increasing turnover rate. Five questions were asked around the topics of underlying reasons employees had for leaving, generational culture factors, leadership style impact on staff, and merger opportunities.

To uncover the reasons why employees were leaving, surveys were distributed to former and current employees with a total survey return rate of 33 percent. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with six of 11 tenured employees. Former employees identified two major factors used in their decision making process to leave the lab; their relationship with the manager and the workplace culture. It was inconclusive if reasons for leaving were different based on length of employment. Current employees also identified two factors the literature identifies as
STAFF RETENTION

impacting employee satisfaction; respect for each other and working well as a team. Generational cultural differences were identified as factors impacting the rate of turnover.

This research yielded three recommendations to successfully retain staff at ABC Hospital Lab, which could be applicable to other departments within the organization. The first involves tailored leadership training to help the manager interact with her team in a more productive manner that is conducive to building a positive workplace culture. The second recommendation involves training for effective behavioral-based interviewing of prospective employees instead of the warm body theory. The third recommendation is for the sponsorship and facilitation of customized teambuilding workshops for the lab team to work on respect and working together.
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Chapter 1: Problem Definition

Background

Staffing is an integral portion of any organization. Merriam-Webster (n.d.b) defines turnover as either the number of persons hired within a period of time to replace those leaving or the ration of this number to the number in the average force maintained. In the healthcare industry, the turnover rate was at 18.9 percent in 2015 (Bean, 2016).

ABC Hospital (ABCH)\(^1\) is a community directed healthcare system serving the people of western Michigan. Originally established in the early 1900’s, ABCH has transformed over the years to become a 25-bed critical access hospital offering a complete range of basic medical services including home health care programs, rural health clinics, rehabilitation services and specialty clinics which include cancer treatment, diabetes management and occupational medicine.

In 2012, ABCH merged with ABC Health Systems (AHS) to eventually become one of 12 hospitals within the system. The merger caused massive uncertainty and stress for the majority of ABCH staff members. During the final stages of the merger, a new electronic health record (EHR) system that included a new laboratory information system (LIS) was implemented. According to the ABCH lab manager, the new system required weeks of intensive training and overtime for a majority of the staff (personal communication, May 8, 2017). As with any

\(^1\) The hospital at the focus of this research wished to maintain confidentiality by remaining anonymous. Throughout the research, it will be referred to as ABC Hospital (ABCH) and the network it is part of will be referred to as ABC Hospital Systems (AHS).
organizational change, disruptive effects on staff members were apparent; with the most notable effect being stress (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016).

Prior to this point, staffing in the laboratory was relatively stable according to employment records. The laboratory operates under a 24/7/365 model. In 2012, the staffing schedule was based on a combination of eight and twelve hour shifts for medical technologists and eight hour shifts for phlebotomists. There were enough people employed and trained to cover all shifts of the 2012 schedule with minimal to zero overtime, allowing for vacations, sick leave and training one new staff member at a time.

Staffing consisted of medical technologists and phlebotomists reporting to the supervisor. As shown in Figure 1.1, the supervisor reported to the director of laboratory services, who reported to the chief executive officer who reported to the president of the hospital.

**Figure 1.1, ABCH Lab organizational hierarchy, 2012**
There were 12 medical technologists with more than 100 years of tenure between them. The phlebotomists numbered 18, with more than 75 years of tenure altogether. The rate of turnover was at 10.2 percent. By the time of the merger, management had turned over three times in five years with a technical supervisor being replaced by a manager, only to be replaced with a supervisor (ABC Hospital, 2017a). With only one person in this level of management, that is a 100 percent turnover rate.

Three months after the merger was finalized, management once again changed. A medical technologist was promoted to manager and the demoted supervisor elected to stay on as a medical technologist. The newest manager hired a supervisor to lead phlebotomy staff. See Figure 1.2 for the most current hierarchy.

![Figure 1.2, ABCH Lab organizational hierarchy, 2017](image)

After the last management promotion, the rate of turnover for phlebotomists and medical technologists began to increase. Within one year, six tenured staff members had left employment. In less than five years, 39 new staff members cycled through a staff typically
consisting of 30 teammates. Of the original 30-member team from 2012, only eight were still employed by the laboratory. This was a five-year record high turnover rate of 36.2 percent (ABC Hospital, 2017a).

In the lab department, the training program for new employees was designed around a three-month time frame to ensure each new employee is ready to work independently, whether it is an entry level phlebotomist or a mid-level medical technologist. With 39 employees entering and exiting the department, this totals 117 months of training which took place over four and a half years (ABC Hospital, 2017b). The math indicates at least two people on the staff were in training during this time frame.

On any given day, with a 24/7/365 operation, the day shift may only have had 8 people scheduled to work. If two people are training, that indicated that six are scheduled to work with a shortage of two people. While working with less people, the remaining staff was also expected to train two new employees on top of that. It was important to understand how these factors impact the labor turnover rate at ABCH lab.

Research Problem

Research was conducted with the examination of historical employment documents from ABCH as pertains to the laboratory department employment records. This information was helpful in determining labor turnover rates, retention rates and the cost of turnover along with other related historical data. Since the employees at ABCH laboratory have already performed staff satisfaction and Gallup Poll surveys over the past five years, the information from those surveys was reviewed.

The Human Resources (HR) generalist from ABCH worked closely with the researcher to perform surveys obtaining current staff opinions on why people stay and why people leave. The
HR generalist performed one-on-one “stay” interviews with current ABCH laboratory staff that have been employed for longer than two years with the laboratory.

The primary focus of this research examined the following problem: How can ABC Hospital Lab retain entry level and mid-level employees for more than two years? In order to answer this primary research question, the following series of sub-questions were investigated:

- What are the underlying reasons why staff members leave the laboratory and are the reasons different for new hires versus tenured staff?
- How does the employee’s generational culture play a role in turnover?
- How does the leadership style of laboratory management impact staff?
- Did the merger lead to opportunities, gained or lost, that impacted staff turnover?
- What can ABC Hospital Lab do to entice new staff members to stay longer than two years?

**Research Audience and Rationale**

The intention of this report was to help the ABCH Lab department retain entry and mid-level employees. As such, this report was shared with the senior leadership team consisting of the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Nursing Officer, Senior Human Resources Business Partner, Compliance officer, and Director of Quality, Safety and Risk. It was also shared with other lab managers within the AHS.

This topic was deserving of research because the ABCH Lab department went through a significant period of staff turnover at all levels. Lab workers continued to go through a cycle of working short staffed, with over time while trying to train new staff members that repeats itself about every six months. This cycle led to overstressed workers leaving employment in record times.
This research study concluded with recommendations to the executive leaders. Recommendations included proposals to effectively increase both entry level and mid-level staff retention. Understanding the motivations behind staff turnover allowed for better understanding of the changes that needed to occur.

**Research Study Scope/Delimitations**

The target population for this research was current ABCH laboratory staff and human resource records of the ABCH laboratory dating back to 2012. It included both entry level (phlebotomy) and mid-level (medical technology) staff members. It did not include staff from other departments within the hospital, nor did it include laboratory staff from other hospitals within the ABC Health System. Health care organizations outside the ABC Health System were not included. This research did not include clerical or supervisory staff data. It did not focus on information from before 2012, as this is the year when major changes within the ABCH laboratory department began.

Some of the conclusions of this research may have seemed applicable to other laboratory departments within the AHS network. It is important to understand the results of this research project could not be projected beyond the target population of the laboratory staff at ABCH. Conclusions were only drawn about the subjects included within the scope of this project.
Chapter 2: Review of the Related Literature

Introduction to the Literature

There are tens of thousands of articles, reports and studies surrounding the topics of turnover, cultural generations and leadership styles within healthcare. While there are not many available references focusing specifically on the hospital laboratory environment, the concerns within different areas of healthcare can be applied to the hospital laboratory. This chapter presents a partial analysis of available references focusing on turnover, generational culture impacts on employment trends, and leadership style influence on turnover.

These sub-topics are very intertwined, with each topic impacting the other. Due to the extensive amount of literature available on each sub-topic and the inter-relatedness of the information, this chapter has been organized according to the three sub-topics. It is important for lab and hospital management to realize what underlying reasons exist for staff leaving or staying with an organization. Leadership styles are explored to determine impact on staff turnover. Finally, the impact the employee’s generational culture on employment trends is explored.

Presentation of the Literature

Turnover.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for the U.S. Department of Labor defined turnover as the total separations from employment including quits, layoffs and discharges, and other separations due to retirement, death, disability, and transfers to other locations of the same firm. In this definition, quits are considered voluntary separations initiated by the employee. Thus, according to the BLS (2017), a quits rate serves as an employee’s willingness or ability to leave a job.
In April 2017, there were 23 million people employed in education and health services in the United States. Since then two percent of those have quit their jobs (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). It can be predicted there were more employees thinking about quitting their jobs.

A major topic of research has been focused on turnover predictors, or why employees leave an organization. These factors include personality traits, coworker and supervisor relationships, and performance (Shipp, Furst-Holloway, Harris, & Rosen, 2014). Branham (2012) proposed four categories of unmet worker needs that explained turnover using post-exit survey reasons from the Saratoga Institute (see Table 2.1). Those categories are lack of hope, lack of trust, lack of worth, and lack of competence (Branham, 2012, p. 25). All of the reasons listed in Table 2.1 fall under the larger category of job satisfaction.

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<tr>
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<th>Lack of Trust</th>
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<td>Limited advancement opportunities</td>
<td>Lack of respect or support by supervisor</td>
<td>Inadequate compensation</td>
<td>Boring job duties</td>
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<td>Supervisor’s lack of leadership skills</td>
<td>Scheduling conflicts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Favoritism by supervisor</td>
<td>Lack of recognition</td>
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**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction is a factor in employment turnover. According to Mobley (1977) employees consistently disengage and withdraw from their current employment position because they are dissatisfied with their job. Many studies regarding job satisfaction look at a single point in time. A study by Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, and Bliese (2011) supported the theory that job satisfaction changes over time. Liu, Mitchell, Lee, Holtom, and Hinkin (2012), also proposed job satisfaction to be a dynamic factor instead of the static view...
most researchers have adopted. With this theory in place, Chen and colleagues (2011) determined that a decrease in job satisfaction correlates with increased turnover while increased job satisfaction results in decreased turnover.

Various researchers have identified a link between job satisfaction and a healthy work environment (Aiken & Patrician, 2000; Cho, Ketefian, Barkauskas, & Smith, 2003; Cohen, Stuenkel & Nguyen, 200). In the most general sense, the term “work environment” refers to the climate of any workplace (Christmas, 2008, p. 316). Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013) state “50 to 70 percent of how employees perceive their organization’s climate can be traced to the actions of one person: the leader” (pg. 18). Leadership styles are made up of different characteristics, which impact job satisfaction.

Turnover is a process impacted by many things including job satisfaction, which is impacted by other factors such as leadership styles and co-worker interactions. In the clinical setting, Aiken et al. (2001) list important leader characteristics including visibility, accessibility, open discussion and strong relationships with staff. The lack of these traits will lead to negative job satisfaction while the presence of them will have a positive effect (Aiken et al., 2001). According to Moneke and Umeh (2013), the primary factor determining job satisfaction is leadership behaviors.

**Leadership style impact on staffing.**

The definition of leadership is highly debated. Rost (1993) uncovered 221 distinct definitions and conceptions of leadership. In the end, the purpose of leadership is to maximize subordinate performance to achieve organizational goals (Yukl, 1998). This correlates with McColl-Kennedy and Anderson’s (2002) assertion of leadership style importance in achieving organizational goals.
One popular perception is happy employees are more productive. This goes back to the connection between leadership style and employee effectiveness. Keeping in mind the purpose of leadership, its effectiveness is maximized when leadership meets the needs of employees (Shu, 2015). It is also impacted by employee perceptions of leader style; in their 2002 study, McColl-Kennedy and Anderson demonstrate employee perceptions of leadership style can positively or negatively influence an employee resulting in changes to performance. There may be some truth to the theory of happy employees are productive employees.

Spiker and Brown (2000) claim the relationship between an employee and his or her manager determines how long the employee remains with the organization or even how productive that employee is. Goleman (1995) discussed the need for emotional intelligence in the workplace, emphasizing the need for good leaders to recognize their own and others’ emotions. Clearly, whatever the style of leadership, the relationship a leader has with subordinates will make a difference in productivity and retention.

With all of the different ideas surrounding leadership, it is relevant to recognize the correct definition of leadership is dependent upon the individual and the situation (Bass, 2008). There are as many different leadership theories as there are definitions of leadership. Transformational and transactional leadership share common elements such as expectation, recognition and rewards; they also have significant differences. The two theories of leadership style, transactional and transformational, are explored in further detail.

**Transactional leadership.** This type of leadership is defined by the inclusion of three different dimensions of leadership style: contingent reward, active management-by-exception and passive management-by-exception. Contingent reward is based on the factors of economic, tangible and emotional exchanges. Active management-by-exception provides corrective action,
or punishment, by recognizing deviations from the norms. (Walumbwa & Wernsing, 2012).
Passive management-by-exception waits for mistakes to occur before providing corrective action (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003).

Transactional leaders focus on meeting the needs of short-term objectives, which rarely go beyond the needs of the department or unit (Rodrigues and Ferreira, 2015). This leader offers employees the chance to concentrate on clear organizational objectives, minimize workplace anxiety and fulfill their own self-interests while providing monetary rewards (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012; Srithongrung, 2011).

In this carrot-and-stick method of leadership, Jensen et al. (2016) stated incentive structures are used to increase employee goal attainment. Transactional leadership is a foundational part of job satisfaction that is a basic element in the employee-employer relationship. Kleinman (2004) proposed active management by exception was a transactional dimension with a positive influence on staff retention, but did not include the other dimensions. Callier (2017) proposed transactional leadership, as a whole, does not have an effect on turnover.

**Transformational leadership.** Transformational leadership strategy refers to the process of convincing employees to rise above their own self-interests for the sake of the organization (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Walumbwa and Wernsing (2015) proposed transformational leadership to be a “process of inspiring people to achieve shared goals through recognizing individuals’ needs, stimulating creative thinking, and aligning values between individuals and groups” (pg. 2). Jensen et al. (2016) articulated three behaviors relevant to transformational leadership: articulate the organizations vision, share this vision with employees and sustain the vision long term. Transformational leadership is more about inspiring the workers to do more as opposed to using tangible rewards for their efforts.
Transformational leadership, over time, evolved into four different components. They include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. These four components are exhibited by transformational leaders in varying degrees to meet organizational goals through subordinates (McCleskey, 2014). This leadership style has been proven to have positive influence on both employee and organizational performance (Diaz-Saenz, 2011). As a result, when job satisfaction increases, employee turnover decreases. Caillier (2017) proposes that transformational leadership has a negative effect on turnover.

**Cultural generations.**

A cultural generation can be defined as the average span of time between the birth of parents and that of their offspring (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a). Arsenault (2004) cited Strauss and Howe as defining a generation as a group formed from factors that include attitudes, values and beliefs about lifestyles, gender roles and more that does not change as a function of age. These generational differences have been the recent focus of studies, but lack empirical research validating the significance of the generational differences (Arsenault, 2004; Barley, Ladd & Morris, 2007; Jurkiewicz, 2000)

There are slight differences in the years spanning each generation and even the naming conventions of each, depending upon which research is used. Elizabeth Thomas (2010), recognized four generations working side by side; the Veterans, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials. This has significance in the way each generation will interact with each other.
Each generation has its own values, attitudes and expectations. In the workplace, this creates distinct and specific expectations and requirements for each generation. These attributes can also lead to conflict and decreased job satisfaction, which may lead to turnover.

**Veterans.** Born between 1922 and 1945, Veteran employees grew up through the Great Depression, World War II and the rise of labor unions, which molded their core values into dedication and sacrifice. Veteran employees are characterized by the values of delayed reward, duty before pleasure, honor, patience and hard work (Salahuddin, 2010).

They see work as a responsibility, requiring respect (Haynes, 2011). They have an individual work style, preferring clear leadership expressed through command and control with formal communication from leaders (Hammill, 2005). Veterans desire discipline in the workplace, more so than the following generations and have a strong work ethic (Murphy, 2010).

**Baby boomers.** Baby Boomer employees were born between 1946 and 1964. They lived through Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement and the assassination of several public figures. According to Salahuddin (2010), despite these events, these employees grew up in an era that was more optimistic and positive than that of the Veterans as the economy started to expand. Baby Boomers have core values oriented around optimism, team work, work and personal gratification (Salahuddin, 2010).

They share similar work ethic traits with Veterans, but they prefer to work in teams (Hammill, 2005). Wanting to be involved in the decision-making process, Baby Boomers respond better to a consensus leadership style (Murphy, 2010). They desire the personal touch from their leaders, preferring communication in person rather than in a memo (Hammill, 2005).

**Generation X.** The generation of workers born between 1965 and 1980 grew up in an era much different than that of the previous two generations. With parents experiencing free love,
soaring divorce rates and abortions, Generation X is the smallest generation of the four. They were raised as latchkey kids in single parent homes, experiencing the Challenger disaster and the first computers. Their core values can best be described as diverse, informal, self-reliant and pragmatic (Salahuddin, 2010).

According to Murphy (2010), these employees believe work is a contract. They are self-reliant, wanting to do things their own way (Murphy, 2010). As such, this generation of employees question and challenge coworkers. They view all within the workplace as equals with a tendency to ignore the rules. The Generation X employees desire direct and instant feedback on performance (Hammill, 2005).

**Millennials.** Employees born between 1981 and 2000, also known as Generation Y or Nexters, grew up with a computer in the house, bullying on the school ground, the Columbine School shooting and the Oklahoma City bombings. This generation grew up with a soccer mom mentality, bringing back the concept of the child being the most important person. This shaped their core beliefs into optimism, civic duty, achievement, morality and diversity (Salahuddin, 2010).

Millenials have a participative approach to work. This group views work as a means to an end, where they desire to achieve a balance between work and personal life (Hammill, 2005). Being goal and achievement oriented, these workers have high expectations of work and are motivated by creative people (Murphy, 2010).

**Generational culture and leadership styles.**

The differences that make up each generation represent a new aspect to workplace diversity that can be detrimental or beneficial to job satisfaction. Generation X and Millennial employees expect more choice availability within the work place than Veterans and Baby
Boomers. Veterans and Baby Boomers prefer clearly defined power relationships while Generation X and Millennial workers expect to have a very personalized relationship with supervisors (Sujansky, 2004). The older generations could view the newer generation as spoiled, needy, selfish and unmotivated, while the newer generations could look upon older workers as rigid, demanding, and set in their ways. Salahuddin (2010) discussed the impact the different generations had on leadership style; outlining the four generations with some of the concepts listed in table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
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<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>Direct, commanding, no equality among team mates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Participative, consensus style, lack the skill to implement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>Fairness, competence, challenging others ideas, lacking people skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>Too new to tell but lean toward transformational, participative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cultural generational differences require much from a leader as they strive to bring the different employees together as a cohesive team. As mentioned in previous sections, leadership style, or how a manager performs his or her duties, impacts job satisfaction and eventually turnover.

**Determining leadership style.**

There are many models describing precursors to leadership effects, with one of the most researched theories being Bass’s full range (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) leadership theory (Antonakis & House, 2014). One of the best known and best validated measures of leadership style based on the full-range theory is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). This assessment
measures transformational leadership on the four characteristics of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation and the three characteristics of transactional leadership which include contingent reward, active management-by-exception and passive management-by-exception (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

On a more basic level, leadership styles are based on communication styles. How a person communicates with others will act as the foundation for all further transactions. A leader should also assess what their communication style is. There are many different ways to do so. A very popular, long-lived assay is the Everything DiSC model.

First proposed by William Moulton Marston in 1928, his theory explains the behavioral differences lead by normal human emotions and how a person’s behavior might change over time. It focused on psychological phenomena that could be observed and measured. Marston theorized behavioral emotional expression could be categorized into four primary types labeled Dominance, Inducement, Submission, and Compliance (Everything DiSC, n.d.).

This tool has many uses including leadership and executive development, teambuilding and conflict management. It is used to improve a person’s self-knowledge of behaviors and tendencies in order to improve interactions with others. The Everything DiSC model is very popular with many different organizations, from healthcare to sales. (Everything DiSC, n.d.).

**Summary of the Literature**

Turnover in staff employment has been researched intensively over the years, with a vast majority of research focused on turnover predictors. One of those predictors is job satisfaction. This is an important facet of work life for most employees and it changes over time. As job satisfaction increases, turnover decreases. Many factors affect job satisfaction, including
management leadership style and workplace culture. With job satisfaction being an ever-evolving condition, there is always an opportunity improve job satisfaction in employees.

In addition, cultural generations have an impact on job satisfaction. The differences in each generation can lead to antagonism and negative perceptions. The differences could lead to cooperation and education. As the four generations come together in the workforce, it impacts job satisfaction and workplace culture, which can lead to changes in turnover.

Leadership style has a large impact on job satisfaction. The way a leader behaves during the course of his or her interaction with employees is going to impact how an employee perceives job satisfaction. Researchers have argued that transactional leaders do not affect turnover rates and transformational leaders decrease turnover rates.

There are various underlying reasons why staff stay or leave an organization. Turnover is affected by many things, including job satisfaction, generational views and leadership style. Each aspect of job satisfaction is intertwined with one another. Leadership style impacts each cultural generation differently, which impacts the workplace culture leading to an impact on respect and teamwork. It is a continuous loop of cause and effect that can lead to a downward spiral negatively impacting turnover. Understanding why staff leaves is necessary in order to modify the behaviors of leaders that make them leave.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research Approach

After a merger with a major health care system and a change in management, employee turnover at ABC Hospital Lab had increased to more than twice the national average. Since 2012, newly hired employees were leaving before reaching the two-year employment anniversary. This research was intended to determine the cause of employee turnover at ABC lab and offer recommendations to decrease the turnover rate.

The research was a cross-sectional study designed around a defined population involving lab employees in a five-year time interval. It utilized aspects of qualitative studies, empirical research and evaluation studies. Qualitative studies focused on the meanings and interpretations of the participants through interviews, observation or verbal interactions. Empirical research is the study of actual practices or the actual impact of practices or policies based on direct observation, use of statistical records, interviews or experimental methods. Evaluation studies are based on determining the effectiveness or utility of processes, personnel, and equipment (Georgia State University, 2017).

Data was collected in a variety of methods, which include face-to-face interviews and online surveys. Because of the importance of maintaining respondent anonymity, the researcher partnered with the Human Resources department at ABCH to conduct face-to-face interviews to provide qualitative data. The Human Resources department also provided empirical data from former employee records regarding demographic data and available exit interview data. The collected data was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the ABCH lab team’s ability to retain staff members for more than two years.
Of importance to the research was the management’s style of leadership. The manager of ABCH lab has participated in at least two different workshops to determine leadership style over the past five years. The results of these workshops were used during this research.

**Data Collection Approach and Procedures**

**Data collected.** There are several types of data that were collected. Some of the data was nominal as it was needed to categorize individual responses into specific categories based on responses to survey questions. The questions intrinsic to this research and the corresponding data needed are listed in Table 3.1.

The surveys included in this research were very audience-specific. The Stay survey was directed at individuals employed at ABCH lab with less than two years of experience. This survey contained multiple choice questions designed to determine factors affecting the individual’s employment experience.

The Exit survey was directed at individuals that were employed between 2012 and 2017 and left employment voluntarily. During this timeframe exit interviews were not always performed by Human Resources and were not performed at all by lab management. Available information from exit interviews in Human Resource files from this timeframe was provided to the researcher. Due to the low number of exit interviews on file, former employees were identified from Human Resource files and invited to participate in an online, anonymous survey containing open-ended questions to determine reasons for leaving.

The Stay interview was directed at individuals that are employed at ABCH lab with more than two years of employment. The interview questions were developed in collaboration between Human Resources and the researcher. They were designed to determine factors
In addition, the manager of ABCH lab has participated in at least two workshops over the past five years that were focused on determining her leadership style and areas for improvement. The reports from these workshops were used to correlate leadership style impact on the current employee work experience and how it may have been a factor in prior employee work experiences.

Table 3.1 Linkage between research questions, data necessary and method collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Primary and Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Data Needed to Answer Question(s)</th>
<th>Data Collection Sources and Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary: How can ABC Hospital Lab retain entry level and mid-level employees for more than two years?</td>
<td>Number of employees who left employment since 2012</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the underlying reasons why staff members leave the lab and are the reasons different for new hires versus tenured staff?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reasons why staff left</td>
<td>• Information from HR including tenure and birth year range.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employment age of leaving staff member</td>
<td>• Surveys of voluntarily exited employees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How does the employee’s cultural generation play a role in turnover?</td>
<td>• Age of current and exited employees</td>
<td>Redacted information from HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does the leadership style of lab management impact staff?</td>
<td>• Style of current leadership</td>
<td>DISC survey results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did the merger lead to more or less opportunities that impacted staff turnover?</td>
<td>• Added opportunities</td>
<td>Recent 360 review of current manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What can ABC Hospital Lab do to encourage new staff members to stay longer than two years?</td>
<td>• Open-ended question is included to obtain current and prior employee perceptions regarding solutions.</td>
<td>An open-ended question is included on the survey in order to collect ideas regarding employee retention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data collection procedures. Data was collected using both anonymous surveys and face-to-face interviews. Data was collected from examination of Human Resources records for current and former ABCH lab employees.

Target population. The target population for this research study involved both current and former staff of ABCH laboratory and is the same as the sample population; it was a very specific cross-section of individuals. It does have the potential to be applied to a larger target population; that of all lab employees in the ABC Health System. This suggested target population was estimated to be approximately 3,000 individuals. This assumed that 11 of the 12 labs within the system have an average of 30 employees and the remaining lab has 140 employees with an annual turnover rate of 20%, which was just slightly higher than the national average. The time interval for the study covered five years. This did not include any staff members employed by the lab but working in another location.

Sample details. The sample population for this research included all employees, current or former, of ABCH lab within the time span of 2012 to 2017. In this research, the target population and the sample were the same. This was specific to the research question, which focused on turnover at one particular hospital lab. The overall concept could have been applied to larger populations.

Potential vulnerable populations included children under the age of 18, incarcerated persons, pregnant women and others. The sample population did not contain children under the age of 18. It might have included pregnant, disabled or incarcerated persons. As the surveys and interviews are strictly on a voluntary basis, no potential harm was foreseen with conducting this survey.
Contact information for the participants was in the form of e-mail and last known physical address. The researcher did not have access to the e-mail or last known physical address of former employees. This was obtained and handled by the HR department through a review of employment files. A permission letter from the organization consenting to conduct surveys and interviews with their collaboration was obtained.

**Instrumentation.** The surveys and interview questions that were used to collect data have been created for this research. As such, each instrument was not tested for validity and reliability. They were not pre-tested for use in this study. There were three different instruments and each is included within the appendices.

The Stay Survey (Appendix D) is a series of questions with Likert-like scaling to provide quantitative analysis and two nominal questions to determine length of employment and cultural generation identity. The Exit Survey (Appendix E) and the Stay Survey (Appendix F) are both a short series of open-ended questions to provide qualitative analysis and the same two nominal questions as the Stay Survey. A representation of the organizational permission letter is shown in Appendix A. Samples of the consent forms are provided in Appendices B and C.

**Procedures.** Surveys were conducted using the online survey service, Survey Monkey. The online surveys were anonymous. The surveys were sent by the Human Resources department to all participants in the sample population by email to last known email address on file, using a link to the survey in the email. In addition, HR sent a letter to all non-employed participants to the last known physical address on file inviting them to participate in the anonymous survey. Participants were not asked to provide any personal information and encouraged to not add any personal information to the open-ended questions to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.
Surveys were distributed to 48 individuals from the employee files at ABCH Lab. This included all current employees with less than two years of employment and all former employees dating back to 2012 when the turnover rate started to increase. It included employees who left voluntarily. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with six participants of the sample population, who are current employees with more than two years of employment at ABCH lab.

The reason for conducting the survey through an online website was at the request of ABCH Human Resources, to preserve the anonymity of the participant. The researcher is the manager of ABCH lab. Approximately half of the participants are currently under direct supervision of the researcher. The rest of the participants were under direct supervision by the researcher during their time of employment. With the use of anonymous surveys and HR as an intermediary, this removes the possibility of retaliatory action on the part of the researcher toward participants. Human Resources conducted the face-to-face stay interviews developed in conjunction with the researcher to current employees. With former employees, HR mailed an invitation to participate in the survey to the last known physical address on file. The invitation included a link to the web-based survey.

**Timing.** The participants were given equal time to answer the questions of the survey. The time set aside for the survey was approximately two weeks, considering the number of participants that were invited to help find answers for the research questions. The face-to-face interviews were scheduled for 30-minute time blocks for each participant.

**Data Analysis and Synthesis Approach**

The data collected from surveying current and former employees allowed the researcher to uncover information on why ABCH lab staff members leave employment. It also provided
information on team dynamics affecting current staff. The data collected provided the direction for a proposal on how to retain staff.

This cross-sectional study of lab employees at ABCH hospital over the span of five years between 2012 and 2017 provided qualitative and empirical data. The data was organized by coding each part of the survey or interview and grouping according to the nominal data. Descriptive statistics was used to describe survey responses to the Likert-like scale questions. Table 3.2 below is an example of descriptive statistics derived from the web-based Stay Survey.

The leadership style data included information regarding the primary style of the manager. In-depth analysis of this leadership style was compared to survey and interview results. It was used to determine if a correlation between leadership style and employee turnover exists.

Methodological Limitations

There were some limitations of this research that could negatively impact it, leading to inaccurate results. First, the sample size was small and inclusive of lab employees at ABCH. This might lead to inaccuracies in conclusions as it is not representative of all lab employees. The second limitation was this research takes place in one hospital, so the results will not be helpful at other hospital labs within the health system or the larger population of hospital lab employees within Michigan. The final limitation with this research was the role of the researcher. As manager of many of the participants, some of their responses will either be inaccurate or they will not respond at all for fear of reprisal even though the process is anonymous.
Table 3.2, Example of descriptive statistics table with fictional answers to the web-based Stay Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Example Raw Data</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>St. dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How likely are you to search for a new job in the next 30 days? (Extremely likely = 1, not at all = 5)</td>
<td>1 5 5 4 4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, are you satisfied with your job, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with it, or dissatisfied with it? (Extremely satisfied=5, extremely dissatisfied=1)</td>
<td>1 5 4 3 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you consider quitting your job? (Extremely = 1, not at all = 5)</td>
<td>4 1 2 1 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often did you feel your contributions were recognized? (Always = 5, never = 1)</td>
<td>2 5 3 1 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My supervisor and I have a good working relationship. (strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1)</td>
<td>2 5 3 2 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees treat each other with respect. (Strongly Agree =5, strongly disagree = 1)</td>
<td>2 5 3 3 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a typical week, how often did you feel stressed at work? (Extremely often = 1, Not at all often = 5)</td>
<td>5 1 3 5 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do the members of your team work together? (Extremely well = 5, not at all well = 1)</td>
<td>1 5 3 1 4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

The data presented within this chapter originated from either a face-to-face interview conducted by the HR Generalist or two surveys that contained multiple choice and open ended questions. The data is presented in both visual form with the use of charts and tables as well as in narrative form to offer more detailed evaluation of the findings.

The primary focus of this research was to answer the question of how ABCH lab can retain entry level and mid-level employees for more than two years. A series of sub-questions provided targeted areas for investigation. Those areas included underlying reasons why staff leave or stay, generational culture implications, impact of leadership on staff and how the merger in 2012 impacted turnover.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Of the 11 staff members eligible to participate in a face-to-face interview, only 6 were available during the time frame allocated for interviews by the HR Generalist. This was due to the combination of the time constraints of the HR Generalist conducting the interview and the availability of the employees during the HR Generalist’s time frame. The surveys were sent to 48 individuals. Table 4.1 outlines the response rate of current and former employees to the anonymous survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Title</th>
<th>Number Invited</th>
<th>No. of Responses</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay Survey (Current Employees)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave Survey (Former Employees)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face Interview (Current Employees)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why individuals leave or stay.

Results from the leave survey. A survey went out to 25 individuals containing five multiple choice questions, one open ended question and two demographic questions. One respondent, considered a new hire, had worked in the lab for less than two years; the other six were tenured employees with more than two years of experience.

The survey questions were designed around major reasons why individuals leave employment to address the primary research question regarding how to retain employees. The initial question in the survey allowed respondents to choose the reason why they left employment. The next three questions addressed compensation, work culture and management relationship. Question 5 asked about the employee’s overall experience at ABCH Lab. Question 6 was an open-ended request for advice on retaining staff. Questions 7 and 8 were demographic questions to determine length of employment and cultural generation of the respondents.

Question 1 had 10 possible answers, including one that was open-ended, for a total of eleven choices. Respondents were able to choose more than one answer for this question. Data distribution for Question 1 covered five of the possible 10 responses; no-one chose the open-ended option. The two answers with the most responses were “better opportunity” and “unhappy with management”.

The data was marginally supportive indicating management may have played a factor when employees were making decisions. The other answers, such as better opportunity or relocating, were reasons beyond the control of the hospital and could not be altered or improved upon to convince employees to stay. The primary focus of the stay survey was on compensation, culture and management to determine if these factors were part of a person’s reason for leaving.
Workplace culture was clearly indicated as an underlying factor in the decision making process, as shown in Table 4.2.

### Table 4.2, Leave survey results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leave Survey Questions</th>
<th>Not a factor</th>
<th>Minor Factor</th>
<th>Major Factor</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much of a factor was your compensation package in your leaving the lab?</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much of a factor was your relationship with your manager in your leaving the lab?</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much of a factor was our workplace culture in your leaving the lab?</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another aspect influencing reasons why employees left ABCH lab was the relationship with management at the time. This data supports reviewed literature indicating workplace culture and relationship with management do influence an employee’s decision to stay with an employer.

**Results from the stay survey.** Surveys were sent to 23 currently employed individuals with ABCH Lab. The survey was designed to pinpoint conditions that may contribute to an employee wanting to leave the lab. Questions 1 and 3 were concerned with employees actively looking for other employment. Question 2 looked at overall job satisfaction. Questions 4, 6, 7, and 8 focused on workplace culture. Question 5 asked about management relationship. Question 9 was an open-ended request for advice on what needs to change while Questions 10 and 11 were demographical to designate length of employment and cultural generation of the respondent. The first eight questions were Likert-scale based, with one being the least positive result and five being the most positive result, which allowed for the use of mean and standard deviation results. The survey questions and corresponding data are represented in Table 4.3 on the next page.
To determine why employees leave, it is also necessary to know why employees choose to stay. Surveying current employees provides valuable information on what factors are used when making the decision to stay. It also provides information on what aspects of the job could be improved, which would help retain employees.

Question 3 focused on how often a current employee considered quitting. The question had an average answer of 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.78. This indicates employees do not consider quitting on a regular basis. Question 1 relating to how likely an employee would search for a new job correlates well with a mean of 3.9 and a standard deviation of 1.17 (see Figure 4.1). Both questions indicate current staff may be willing to stay employed with ABCH Lab.

**Figure 4.1, Correlation between thinking of quitting and searching for a new job**

![Q1 and Q3 Correlation chart](image)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Answer Possibilities</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>total responses</th>
<th>average score</th>
<th>standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 How likely are you to search for a new job in the next 30 days?</td>
<td>extremely likely very likely moderately likely slightly likely not all likely</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your job?</td>
<td>very dissatisfied dissatisfied neither Satisfied very satisfied</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 How often do you consider quitting your job?</td>
<td>Extremely often Very often somewhat often not so often not at all often</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 How often do you feel your contributions are recognized?</td>
<td>Never once in a while half the time most of the time always</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 My supervisor and I have a good working relationship</td>
<td>strongly disagree Disagree neutral Agree strongly agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6 Employees treat each other with respect</td>
<td>strongly disagree Disagree neutral Agree strongly agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7 In a typical week, how often do you feel stressed at work?</td>
<td>Always most of the time half the time once in a while never</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 How well do the members of your team work together</td>
<td>not at all no so well somewhat well very well extremely well</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The intent behind Question 4 was to develop an understanding of how well employees felt valued at work. Employees that feel recognized for their contributions are not as likely to look for work elsewhere. The results of this question are located in Figure 4.2, with an average score of 3.4 out of five and a standard deviation of 1.01. This is about halfway between “most of the time” and “about half of the time.” Statistically speaking, 95 percent of the respondents feel their contributions are recognized somewhere between just shy of never to always. This is an extremely wide distribution. As referenced in the literature review, employee recognition directly impacts staff retention. There is the potential for the area of employee recognition to be improved upon by both management and co-workers.

**Figure 4.2, How often did you feel your contributions were recognized?**
Questions 6 and 8 were designed to gauge the workplace culture, using respect and teamwork as two barometers. Literature supports the supposition these two aspects form positive workplace cultures when done often and effectively. On average, respondents thought employees did not treat each other with respect, with an average response of 2.8 on a five point scale with a standard deviation of 0.89. Interestingly, respondents also thought the members of their team did not work well together, averaging 3.4 with a standard deviation of 0.87 (Figure 4.3). The implication between the two questions is respect and teamwork are directly related to each other.

Figure 4.3, Relationship between respect and teamwork

Question 5 likewise pertained to workplace culture. Manager relationships with employees directly impact the culture in the workplace. However, this question had a favorable
response with an average rating of 4.0 although the data dispersal was wide at 1.12 standard deviations. Question 7 was concerned with stress in the workplace, which also has an impact on the culture.

Question 2 was intended to gauge overall level of current employee satisfaction with ABCH Lab. With a positive average response of 4.0, plus or minus 0.87 standard deviations there was little dispersion across the range of available responses. Question 7 tackled the subject of stress in the workplace. Coincidentally, levels of stress were inversely related to job satisfaction. The less stress an employee felt, the more satisfied they were with the job.

Within the stay survey, respondents indicated they remain because they are satisfied with ABCH Lab, they have good relationships with their manager and they feel like their accomplishments are recognized. However, there are serious concerns regarding the apparent lack of respect and teamwork that is perceived by the respondents. These two perceptions around respect and teamwork will continue to erode at the culture of the workplace, leading to continued high turnover. It is important to determine how these two factors of the job can be improved upon to retain staff.

For both surveys, any responses made to the open-ended comments were withheld by the HR Generalist pending review for anonymity. The results of these questions were not available to the researcher by the project deadline. Research on these open-ended comments will be conducted once they are made available by HR.

**Results from the face-to-face interview.** As a condition of participation, HR partnered with the researcher in order to conduct face-to-face interviews with current employees the researcher manages as part of her team. Six entry level and mid-level employees with more than two years of experience were asked five open ended questions by the HR Generalist. The HR
Generalist then redacted any information that could have identified the respondent, giving the redacted information to the researcher. The intent of these questions was to determine common factors, such as compensation, teamwork, or patient care amongst tenured employees as to why they stayed at ABCH Lab.

Question 1 delved into what employees looked forward to when coming to work. Three of the six answers referenced looking forward to working with co-workers, with no other detail as to why they looked forward to working with their teammates. By inference, the people involved in the workplace culture influence a person’s willingness to work at an organization. Interacting with other people is an aspect of staff retention.

Questions 2 and 4, while asking about separate topics, had answers that were as unique as each individual responding to the question. Question 2 asked what the employee would change about their job with responses that ranged from staffing to pay to training. Question 4 asked about motivating or demotivating factors for the employee which resulted in answers that ran the gamut of possibilities. Motivators included respect, self-improvement, positivity, pay and wanting to make things better. De-motivators encompassed denied time off requests, others that do not work as hard, gossiping co-workers, focusing on the negative and not having control over what is happening. Due to the individuality of each answer, conclusions could not be drawn for either question. Potential changes and motivating factors are determined by each person and thus cannot be directly used in a plan targeted toward a group of people.

Question 3 asked about things that would make the staying employee’s job more satisfying. Four employees claimed more pay would be satisfying, although they also claimed to be pretty satisfied with their job. This may create the suggestion that pay is not a primary reason
for leaving the organization. One person preferred more feedback, which ties in to earlier data and literature suggesting validation is a primary factor in staff retention.

Question 5 asked about the temptations that would induce an employee to leave. Four out of the six employees responded with higher pay as a reason to leave. One mentioned moving as a reason to leave. One person claimed changing the current position’s hours would be a reason to consider leaving. The interesting perspective about this answer is the qualifying statement the person added that “they had done my time and earned the right to not work weekends.” This suggests a feeling of entitlement by the employee which also suggests a lack of respect for co-workers that have not “done the time”. This creates a negative workplace culture for new employees, which does not encourage them to stay any length of time as stated by earlier literature.

**Role of generational culture in turnover.**

Both surveys contained a question that asked for the individual’s cultural generation based on birth year. There were four year ranges identifying a respondent as a Veteran (1922 - 1946), a Baby Boomer (1946 – 1964), a Generation X-er (1965 – 1980) or a Millennial (1981 – 2000). Overall, the respondents were primarily from Generation X, with the Millennial Generation the second highest category, followed by Baby Boomers and no respondents from the Veteran generation (see Figure 4.5).

In a further breakdown of results, 43 percent of respondents that left the company were either from the Baby Boomer or Generation X eras. According to the literature, these cultural generations value personal relationships with their leaders along with immediate feedback. In correlation with the previous analysis on underlying reasons, it would have been easy to draw a parallel conclusion that generational culture did have a role in turnover.
On the other hand, of the currently employed respondents, 50 percent were from Generation X and 50 percent were from the Millennial Generation. Again, Generation X individuals value personal relationships with their leaders, but the Millennial Generation regards work as a means to an end. These respondents have chosen to stay employed at ABCH Lab.

The two surveys contradict each other in regards to generational role; with people in which generation acting against perceived expectations of the generation. Three employees in Generation X chose to leave employment while four employees in the same generation chose to stay employed. Due to the small number of respondents to both surveys, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the effect of generational culture on turnover rates. However, the diversity of the generations and the interaction with both co-workers and manager could be involved in turnover.

### Figure 4.4, Cultural generations of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Generations of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of leadership style impact on staff.

In early 2015, the manager of ABCH Lab had been in her current position for approximately two and a half years. Those two and a half years were her only experience in supervision. During that time, the turnover rate of the lab had jumped from approximately ten percent to 40 percent.

Recognizing that workplace culture starts at the top of an organization, the manager took a DiSC® Survey to determine what her leadership style was. This model is a simple tool assessing individuals to provide information about workplace priorities and preferences. It has been in use for more than 30 years. DiSC® styles are broken into four categories: dominance, influence, steadiness and conscientiousness with examples of various traits in Table 4.4. This program is concerned with helping each person understand their own style and becoming more effective when working with others.

The DiSC® survey explained the manager was a combination of C (conscientiousness) and D (dominance) (personal communication, 2015). Because of this style, the manager discovered many aspects of her own personality that were causing problems with her team. She has a strong desire to control outcomes, thus struggling to share responsibility. With little patience for disorganized people, she may have taken charge of projects to finish them her own way, failing to recognize how she stepped on someone’s toes (personal communication, 2015). Within the workplace, inability to delegate causes a lack of trust with the team. They perceive the manager as not trusting them to finish a project. It causes the attitude within the culture to drop.
Table 4.4, DiSC® styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMINANCE</th>
<th>INFLUENCE</th>
<th>STEADINESS</th>
<th>CONSCIENTIOUSNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Outgoing</td>
<td>Even-Tempered</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results-Oriented</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Precise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong-willed</td>
<td>High-Spirited</td>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful</td>
<td>Lively</td>
<td>Tactful</td>
<td>Systematic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The manager tends to be skeptical, foreseeing problems that others miss. She also prides herself on her ability to separate emotion from fact. But the tendency to focus on problems makes her seem constantly dissatisfied (personal communication, 2015). This may have been intimidating for the team, causing them to be less likely to suggest new ideas for fear of rejection. Again, this type of behavior causes negative effects on the culture of the workplace.

The manager prides herself on her quality of work but shies away from public recognition. Overly emotional praise seems questionable. She does not always realize staff members would want more open praise or compliments from her. This was another behavior of management that may have caused a negative impact on the lab staff.

According to literature and the data from this project, any person’s management leadership style can have a negative or positive impact on staff. The style of the lab manager, with her tendencies toward dominance and conscientiousness, may have had a negative impact on the employees, contributing to a lack of trust, respect and teamwork.

**Merger impact on staff turnover.**
The hospital merged with ABC Health Systems (AHS) in 2012. Within the next five years, six staff members transitioned to new positions within the health care system. During this same time period, there was one factor that may have impacted staff turnover. That factor was compensation.

ABC Hospital had a union contract in place that spelled out, among other things, the levels of compensation each employee would receive over a period of time. At the time of the merger, the three year contract had been signed one year prior, leaving two more years of obligation after the merger. Other hospital labs within the health care system did not have unions. Salaries for similar positions across the system had not been standardized. This was an attractive offer to many staff members. On the other hand, the annual raise guaranteed by the presence of the union contract may have encouraged staff to stay in place.

In 2016, the union was decertified by the employees and the hospital moved to merit based increases, which is standard practice throughout the health care system. At the same time, the salaries for similar/same positions across the system have been standardized. This system has not been established long enough to determine how standardized salaries and merit-based increases will impact staff turnover.

**Approaches to staff retention.**

People leave employment for all kinds of surface reasons. The underlying cause at ABCH Lab is dissatisfaction in the workplace, as supported by this research. The dissatisfaction primarily focused around workplace culture and management style.

There are several courses of action to change workplace culture and management style, since both are deeply intertwined according to the literature. Management style often dictates the workplace culture. Focusing on this aspect of staff dissatisfaction first, there are two different
ways to change management style. Either the current manager is replaced with a person having a
different style of leadership or the current leader changes her style.

The first proposal of leadership replacement does not guarantee a change in workplace
culture. Changing leaders does not imply the new leadership style will have a positive impact on
workplace culture. On the other hand, while it may initially have a negative impact, the long
term benefits could be positive. There are too many factors involved to safely predict the
outcome of replacing the current manager.

The second proposal hinges on the current manager recognizing the need for change and
her willingness to take on the process. Positive change in the workplace culture would only be
apparent if the manager is able to be open, vulnerable to staff and able to work in opposition to
basic components of her nature. This would require constant work by the manager and
engagement from both staff members and her director to ensure forward movement.

Regardless of which proposal is taken, either will impact workplace culture. Two factors
identified earlier that influence workplace culture were the perceptions by staff of a lack of
respect for each other and a lack of teamwork. These aspects will be greatly impacted, positively
or negatively, by a change in leadership style.

Data Analysis Summary

The data analysis offered perspectives from 23 respondents related to reasons why entry
level and mid-level employees choose to leave or stay with ABCH Lab employment. Data was
collected on workplace factors, such as the work culture, that were used in the employee’s
decision making process and ideas around retaining staff. Workplace culture involving
teamwork, respect and recognition were cited often by respondents. Respondents gave
suggestions as to what they felt would retain staff.
Respondent responses to underlying reasons indicated some factors are relevant while others are not. They suggested that work culture and relationship with manager more closely corresponded with reasons why people leave employment. Of significance, more than 71 percent of respondents indicated workplace culture played a major factor in their employment decisions, with the implication the culture was negative. Respondents likely believe positive workplace culture is critical for continuing employment.

Responses involving generational culture significance are inconclusive. Nearly equal amounts of the Baby Boomer, Generation X and Millennial Generation employees either stayed or left. There were not enough responses to draw a significant conclusion.

Responses around leadership style overwhelmingly indicate there is major significance to the impact of the management style of leadership on staff. Significantly, relationship with manager received strong support as a causal factor. More than 85 percent of respondents cited this as a major or minor factor in their decision to terminate employment with ABCH Lab. Respondents likely perceive leadership style is critical for positive workplace culture.

The merger did not lead to opportunities that majorly impacted staff turnover, although there was a slight possibility the compensation packages available either at the hospital or within the health care system may have been an incentive to stay or leave. All other factors removed, the loss of six people over a five year period for a 30 member team would be normal. From the research, compensation was not a factor when most people decided to leave. Respondents likely perceive the merger as a non-issue within staff turnover.

Data analysis indicates ABC Hospital Lab should make changes to leadership style and the workplace culture in order to retain staff members longer than two years. In both surveys management style was implicated many different ways as a factor in turnover. In both surveys
and the face-to-face interviews workplace culture was also implicated as a factor negatively impacting the staff turnover rate. Significantly, two aspects of workplace culture were noted; lack of respect for each other and lack of teamwork. Respondents probably identify positive management style with positive workplace culture, which implies staff members are willing to stay.
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

There are many factors that affect a person’s decision to either remain employed or terminate employment with an organization. Some of those reasons are highly personal, such as moving to a new city or going back to school. Some reasons are highly specific to the organization, such as the direction of the company or the current compensation package. Understanding the reasons why employees leave is important. With a base understanding of why employees leave, changes in the lab can be enacted to encourage employees to stay.

The purpose of this chapter is to three-fold. It will provide a summary of the key points discussed in Chapter Two along with conclusions derived from the data analyzed in Chapter Four. This chapter will end with recommendations for the executive team of ABC Hospital.

Summary

ABC Hospital lab staffing for entry level and mid-level employees has reached a record high turnover rate in the past five years, with turnover rates beginning to increase in 2012 with new management. The purpose of this research project was to determine the underlying reasons why employees choose to leave employment. Data was collected from face-to-face interviews, on-line surveys, and data mining through ABCH Human Resources files.

In the literature review, the research introduced the topic of turnover predictors. An article from Shipp, Furst-Holloway, Harris, and Rosen (2014) proposed the factors predicting turnover includes personality traits and co-worker/supervisor relationships. These are factors of job satisfaction. Of the current employees, 79 percent of respondents stated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their job. In 2011, Chen and colleagues correlated decreased job satisfaction with increased turnover and vice versa. However, the question of job satisfaction is
a very broad subject that does not garner specific details on those factors effecting job satisfaction.

Several articles were reviewed linking job satisfaction to workplace culture and leadership style. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013) linked organizational culture to leadership styles. This is supported by the data collected in this research linking relationship with management (44.4%) and workplace culture (66.7%) as major factors in the decision making process to leave employment.

Leadership styles clearly impact employees, and there are many different theories on leadership styles. Two of the most common theories surrounding leadership style are those of transactional and transformational leadership. There are major differences between these two styles.

Transactional leadership focuses on short term goals and monetary rewards to increase employee production (Jensen et al., 2016). The researcher’s personal belief is that monetary rewards will not decrease turnover rate, which is supported by this research with 66.7 percent of respondents stating compensation was not a major factor when deciding to leave the organization. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, focuses on the goals of the organization rather than the short-term objectives of the department. This leadership style positively influences employees, increasing job satisfaction and decreasing turnover (Caillier, 2017; Diaz-Saenz, 2011; McCleskey, 2014).

The manager’s leadership style, as determined by the Everything DiSC workshop, indicates she most closely identifies with characteristics of dominance and conscientiousness. Her basic personality was getting in the way of effectively managing her team. With an emphasis on being results-oriented, strong-willed, analytical, reserved and private, the manager must work
to build positive relationships with her team by focusing on communication and positive reinforcement. According to McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2002), employee perceptions of her can positively impact an employee’s desire to stay with the organization. This is supported by data from Chapter Four indicating 64 percent of currently employed respondents feel they have a good working relationship with the manager and 71 percent do not often consider quitting their job.

Generational cultures and the way they interact with co-workers and management lead to an impact on the workforce culture and, by implication, the turnover rate. Veteran, Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial generations have different expectations in the workforce of their co-workers and their leaders (Hammill, 2005; Haynes, 2011; Murphy, 2010; Salahuddin, 2010). In an indirect relationship, this was proven in the research with the Leave Survey data. The manager was born in the Generation X era. Of the Leave Survey respondents, 78 percent cited relationship with the manager was a factor in their decision and 56 percent were from the Baby Boomer era.

Conclusions

The primary focus of this research examined the following problem: How can ABC Hospital Lab retain entry level and mid-level employees for more than two years? In order to answer this primary research question, the following series of sub-questions were investigated:

1. What are the underlying reasons why staff members leave the laboratory and are the reasons different for new hires versus tenured staff?

In chapter four, the research showed the underlying reasons why staff members left employment were due to relationship with the leader and the workplace culture. The respondents were primarily tenured staff so conclusions could not be formed if reasons for leaving were
different between tenured staff and new hires. Current employees indicated some factors negatively effecting workplace culture were lack of respect between co-workers, lack of teamwork, and lack of recognition.

2. How does the employee’s generational culture play a role in turnover?

In the data from this research project, there is the implication that generational culture also makes an impact when most of the respondents were from a different generation than the manager. The importance of this data is leadership understanding the differences between each generation and needing effective techniques for communicating with each. Bass (2008) indicated each definition of leadership is unique. What works for one employee will not work for another.

3. How does the leadership style of laboratory management impact staff?

The leadership style of management did, and continues to, impact staff. This supports the private assertion of this researcher that management style and relationship with employees makes a difference on workforce culture, leading to an impact on turnover rates. Current management style is based on a tendency toward dominant and conscientious communication and interaction. This style can have negative effects on workplace culture.

4. Did the merger lead to opportunities, gained or lost, that impacted staff turnover?

The merger that occurred in 2012 did not lead to more or less opportunities that impacted staff turnover. Salaries, which were listed as a potential reason to consider leaving by respondents in the Stay Survey did not positively or negatively change within ABCH lab due to the union contract in force at the time. The same opportunities before the merger were still available after the merger.

5. What can ABC Hospital Lab do to entice new staff members to stay longer than two years?
ABC Hospital Lab can entice new staff members to stay longer than two years by doing two things; positively change the relationship between employees and manager, and positively change the workplace culture. Positively changing the relationship between employee and manager will directly impact workplace culture, respect amongst teammates and teamwork. Changing the workplace culture can also be positively impacted by ensuring future team members are a good fit for the team. The actions ABCH can take to entice new staff members to stay longer than two years are listed in the recommendations below.

Recommendations

There are many activities leadership can take to address the turnover rate at ABCH Lab. These recommendations do not specifically address staff retention. Instead, they address the underlying causes of turnover, specifically leadership style and workplace culture, which will eventually affect staff retention. These recommendations would take at least three to six months to execute. Reduced turnover, or increased staff retention, would only be visible after successful completion of the training program. Continued sustainability of the desired new behaviors would positively affect the staff retention rate.

Recommendation one. The researcher recommends developing an individualized, mandatory development program for the lab manager. While the organization already has a program for new leaders touching on all of these topics, it is too generalized. This would focus on the lab manager’s personal leadership style, values and culture of the organization, and expectations of the lab manager’s up-line and organization.

This program of tailored development could be applied to all leaders new to the organization. The program would involve surveying the incoming leader for leadership style to determine how the leader communicates with the team. It would include two to four hour
workshops on effective communication that focus on difficult conversations and role playing.

Education on the generational cultural differences of their team and the most effective manner in which to lead each generation would be required of new leaders. Workshops and role-playing would teach the new leader about behavioral based interviewing. A transformational leader mentor would be assigned to help hold the new leader accountable in developing his or her relationship with the new team.

The current leader for this department has already performed some of this work, but it would be helpful to be part of the entire program. It would set the leader (and any incoming new leaders) up for success early on in his or her career at ABC Hospital by giving them the tools necessary to build healthy, high-performing teams.

**Recommendation two.** Begin behavioral based interviewing when filling recently vacated positions (entry level, mid-level or management). Almost every person can be trained in a skill such as phlebotomy or analyzer maintenance, but not everyone can be trained in those personality traits that make them a team player. Learning to recognize appropriate interview answers for behavioral-based interviews is important for management conducting hiring interviews.

While there are some programs within the organization already, a more robust program could be developed that involved interviewer training. A thorough understanding of which questions will get the answers an interviewer truly wants to hear would be helpful to most leaders. Again, role playing and intensive two to four hour workshops would be necessary for the new leader.

This allows all new leaders (not just the current manager) to have the tools needed to hire the appropriate people for their team. This would be in place of the warm body theory of picking
just anyone off the street because the position needs to be filled. Customer service skills can be learned but good execution of those skills and a team attitude cannot be taught.

**Recommendation three.** Another recommendation is to recognize the need for and facilitate team building workshops tailored to the department’s needs. Although there are several resources available within the organization around team-building workshops, the information is not readily available, often takes five to six months to implement and is generic in nature. Team building workshops built around the essential problems the department is facing will have much better outcomes.

This team has problems with trust and respect for each other. These two aspects have foundations in communication. Workshops identifying and focusing on co-worker communication styles would improve these techniques. The main goal of the workshops would be to improve upon trust and respect within the team.

**Future Research Suggestions**

This research gathered input from members of a specific hospital department after a five year period of high turnover rates. It was focused on the specific reasons for turnover for that department. It would have been helpful to have specific data tied to cultural generations, so a redesign of the data collection process allowing for a connection between generations and reasons for leaving may be a future consideration. Survey questions could target specific reasons, such as identifying management style or specific aspects of the workplace culture. To expand this research, further studies, that include data collection from more hospital lab departments, may provide better statistical data regarding reasons for turnover within hospital labs.
References


doi:http://www.nursingmanagement/10.1097/01.NUMA.0000424019.83292.fa


Appendices

Appendix A  Permission to Conduct Study
Appendix B  Survey Consent Form
Appendix C  Adult Consent Form for Face-to-Face Interviews
Appendix D  Web-based Stay Survey for Current Employees with Less Than 2 Years’ Experience
Appendix E  Face-to-Face Interview Questions
Appendix F  Telephone Interview Consent Form
Appendix A

Permission Letter

Removed at request of hospital.
Appendix B

Survey Consent Form and Cover Letter

Date

Dear Participant:

My name is Julie Ward and I am a graduate student at Central Michigan University. For my final project, I am examining the implications behind the turnover rate at ABC Hospital laboratory. Because you are or were an employee, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by clicking on the link below or by copying the link into your web browser.

The on-line survey will require approximately 10 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, please do not include your name. Although I supervise some of you, please note that your position is not in jeopardy if you decide not to participate in this study as I will have no way of knowing who participated and who did not. Copies of the project will be provided to my Central Michigan University instructor and the ABC Human Resources department. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information regarding how ABC Hospital lab can better retain staff members. Completion of the online questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the number listed below.

Survey link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N7LHC77
Please note that if you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the MSA Program by calling 989-774-6525 or addressing a letter to the MSA Program, Rowe 222, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

Sincerely,
Julie Ward, ward1jm@cmich.edu

Dr. Patricia Kelley, kelle1pa@cmich.edu

Thank you for your participation.
Appendix C

Adult Consent Form for Face-to-Face Interview

Study Title: ANALYSIS OF LAB STAFF RETENTION AT ABC HOSPITAL

Student’s Name and Department: Julie Ward
Master of Science in Administration
Ward1jm@cmich.edu

Instructor’s Name and Department: Dr. Patricia Kelley
Master of Science in Administration
kelle1pa@cmich.edu

Introductory Statement

My name is Julie Ward and I am a graduate student in the Master of Science in Administration degree program at Central Michigan University. Currently, I am conducting research to fulfill graduation degree requirements at CMU. You are invited to participate in this research study. Although I am currently, or was, your supervisor, you are free to decline participation in this interview without repercussions. The interview is voluntary. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

What is the purpose of this study? This study will identify issues associated with staff retention within ABC Hospital lab and develop a course of action to recommend to the executive team of ABC Hospital.

What will I do in this study? You are eligible to participate in this study because you either currently are employed by, or were employed by, ABC Hospital lab within the last five years. If you decide to participate in this research project, I will go over this consent form and then go through a series of interview questions regarding staff retention.

How long will it take me to do this? The interview will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Are there any risks of participating in the study? There are no known risks while participating in the study.
Please initial that you have read and understood this page

**What are the benefits of participating in the study?** This study will be used to determine potential courses of action to improve staff retention at ABC Hospital lab. This is an opportunity to express your opinions about the lab culture, management style or co-workers. Recommendations will be made to executive staff regarding the next best course of action to reduce staff turnover. Upon request, you may receive a copy of the project results.

**Will anyone know what I do or say in this study (Confidentiality)?** Subjects will be referred to as employees or former employees. The Human Resources department, acting as liaison to, is the only one who will know who participated in the study. Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Even the research will not have identifying information. The project may be presented at executive team meetings but no identifying information will be used. Results of this study will be available to my CMU research monitor, the Human Resources department of ABC Hospital, the executive management team at the hospital and lab managers in the Spectrum Health System.

**Will I receive any compensation for participation?** There will be no compensation for participation in this study other than knowing you are contributing to the future of ABC Hospital lab staffing solutions.

**Is there a different way for me to receive this compensation or the benefits of this study?** As an alternative to a face-to-face interview, you may choose to complete the interview questions on paper and return the answers to the Human Resources department through interoffice mail.

**Who can I contact for information about this study?**

Julie Ward, ward1jm@cmich.edu
Dr. Patricia Kelley, kelle1pa@cmich.edu

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation will not affect your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project.

Please note that if you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the MSA
Program by calling 989-774-6525 or addressing a letter to the MSA Program, Rowe 222, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

My signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above.

Signature of Subject  Date Signed

A copy of this form has been given to me. ______ Subject’s Initials

____________________________  __________________
Signature of Responsible Investigator  Date Signed
Appendix D

Why Do You Stay Survey

1. How likely are you to search for a new job in the next 30 days?
   - Extremely likely
   - Very likely
   - Moderately likely
   - Slightly likely
   - Not at all likely

2. Overall, are you satisfied with your job, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with it, or dissatisfied with it?
   - Extremely satisfied
   - Very satisfied
   - Somewhat satisfied
   - Somewhat dissatisfied
   - Very dissatisfied
   - Extremely dissatisfied

3. How often do you consider quitting your job?
   - Extremely often
   - Very often
• Moderately often
• Slightly often
• Not at all often

4. How often did you feel your contributions were recognized?

• Always
• Most of the time
• About half the time
• Once in a while
• Never

5. My supervisor and I have a good working relationship.

• Strongly Disagree
• Disagree
• Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree
• Agree
• Strongly Agree

6. Employees treat each other with respect.

• Strongly Disagree
• Disagree
• Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree
• Agree
• Strongly Agree

7. In a typical week, how often did you feel stressed at work?
• Extremely often
• Very often
• Somewhat often
• Not so often
• Not at all often

8. How well do the members of your team work together?
• Extremely well
• Very well
• Somewhat well
• Not so well
• Not at all well

9. What can this lab do to encourage new staff members to stay longer than two years?

10. How long have you worked at the company?
• Less than 1 year

• 1 - 2 years

• 2 - 5 years

• More than 5 years

11. What range is your birth year in?

• 1922 - 1945

• 1946 - 1964

• 1965 - 1980

• 1981 - 2000
Appendix E

Why Did You Leave Survey

1. What are the reasons you left ABC Hospital? Select all that apply.

- Relocating
- Better opportunity
- Changing careers
- Retiring/leaving the workforce
- Length of commute
- Direction of the company
- Going back to school
- Unhappy with management
- Compensation package
- Personal reasons
- Mutual agreement

2. How much of a factor was your compensation package in your leaving ABC Hospital?

- A major factor
- A minor factor
- Not a factor
3. How much of a factor was your relationship with your manager in your leaving ABC Hospital?

- A major factor
- A minor factor
- Not a factor

4. How much of a factor was our workplace culture in your leaving ABC Hospital?

- A major factor
- A minor factor
- Not a factor

5. Overall, regardless of your reasons for leaving, are you happy or unhappy that you worked at ABC Hospital?

- Very happy
- Happy
- Neither happy nor unhappy
- Unhappy
- Very unhappy

6. What can this lab do to encourage new staff members to stay longer than two years?
7. How long did you work in the lab?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 2 years
- 2 - 5 years
- More than 5 years

8. What range is your birth year in?

- 1922 - 1945
- 1946 - 1964
- 1965 - 1980
- 1981 – 2000
Appendix F

Face-to-Face Stay Interview for Current Tenured Employees

- What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
- If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- What would make your job more satisfying?
- What motivates (or demotivates) you?
- What might tempt you to leave?
Appendix G

RRA Approval E-mail

Dear Julie,

Your Research Review Application has been reviewed and approved. You may start your data collection. This approval will not expire as long as your topic and methodology remain unchanged. If your topic or methodology changes, please submit a new Research Review Application and supporting documents to your instructor by e-mail.

Please contact your Instructor if you have any questions. Also, be sure to check with your instructor concerning the due dates for your project.

Good luck with your project. This is the only notification you will receive. Please keep a copy for your records.

Kim Gribben

Assistant Director, MSA Program

Christina Prout
Administrative Secretary Master of Science in Administration Program
Rowe 222 | Central Michigan University | Mount Pleasant, MI 48859
☎: 989-774-6525 ☏: Fax 989-774-2575
1-800-950-1144, ext. 6525
✉: prout1c@cmich.edu
🌐: Visit us online!

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