

ADRP Annual Conference Insights

What Matters to You in a Blood Donor Center? A Workforce-Centered Approach to Staff Engagement, Retention, and Donor Service Excellence

Originally presented during the 2026 ADRP Annual Conference in Minneapolis, MN
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Executive Summary

Healthcare organizations worldwide face increasing workforce challenges, including recruitment difficulties, retention concerns, burnout, and growing operational demands. Within blood collection organizations, these challenges are amplified by mobile operations, extensive travel requirements, evolving donor expectations, and a highly specialized workforce.

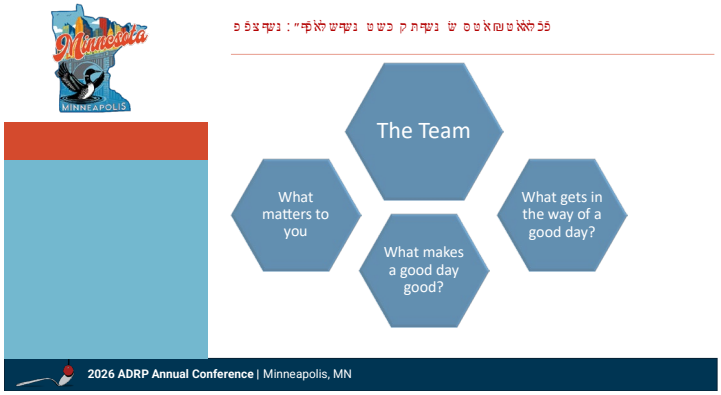
The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS) explored whether a simple but powerful question, "What matters to you?" could provide meaningful insight into the employee experience and identify opportunities to improve engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational culture.

Their findings reveal that employees consistently value many of the same things regardless of role or tenure: respect, fairness, meaningful recognition, strong team relationships, supportive leadership, and manageable workloads. The project demonstrates that structured listening initiatives can uncover actionable opportunities for improvement while reinforcing a culture in which employees feel heard and valued.

The Challenge

Like many blood collection organizations, SNBTS operates in an environment characterized by increasing service demands and workforce pressures. Staff frequently work across multiple locations, travel extensively to community collection sites, and manage competing operational priorities.

While organizations often focus on operational metrics, employee retention and engagement are increasingly recognized as critical drivers of long-term success. Understanding what contributes to a positive employee experience is essential for maintaining a stable, high-performing workforce capable of delivering exceptional donor care.

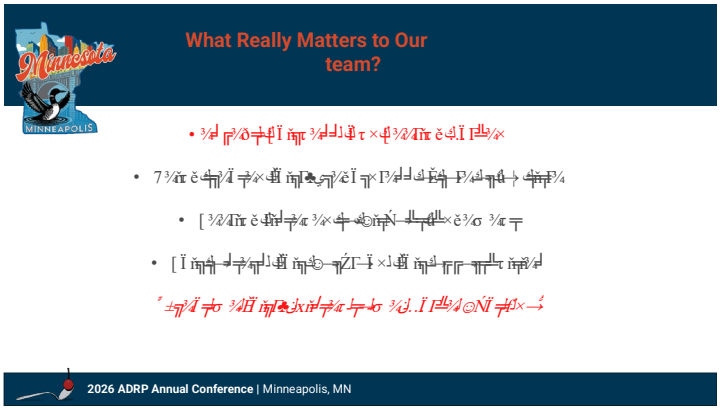


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Key Findings



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Respect and Fairness Remain Foundational

Across all discussions, employees emphasized the importance of feeling respected and treated fairly.

Staff described positive workplace experiences as environments where:

- Everyone is treated equitably regardless of role.
- Contributions are recognized.
- Feedback is welcomed without judgment.
- Decisions are communicated transparently.

These findings reinforce that organizational culture is often shaped less by formal policies and more by employees' day-to-day experiences with colleagues and leaders.

Connection Drives Engagement

Participants consistently linked positive work experiences to strong team interactions.

Employees identified successful days as those characterized by:

- Effective teamwork
- Mutual support
- Positive communication
- Shared commitment to donor care

The findings suggest that workplace relationships are not simply cultural benefits but operational assets that directly influence performance and service delivery.

Leadership and Workload Matter

Staff also identified several organizational factors that significantly influence job satisfaction:

- Accessible and supportive leadership
- Clear expectations and communication
- Adequate staffing levels



- Opportunities for professional development
- Flexible scheduling where possible
- Realistic workloads

Several themes pointed to the need for organizations to balance operational efficiency with workforce sustainability.

Strategic Implications for Blood Centers

The project highlights a growing reality within donor recruitment and collection operations: employee experience is increasingly linked to donor experience.

Organizations seeking to strengthen retention should consider moving beyond traditional satisfaction surveys toward more meaningful dialogue that focuses on what employees need to be successful.

The "What Matters to You?" framework provides a scalable method for gathering practical feedback while fostering employee ownership and engagement.

Recommended Actions

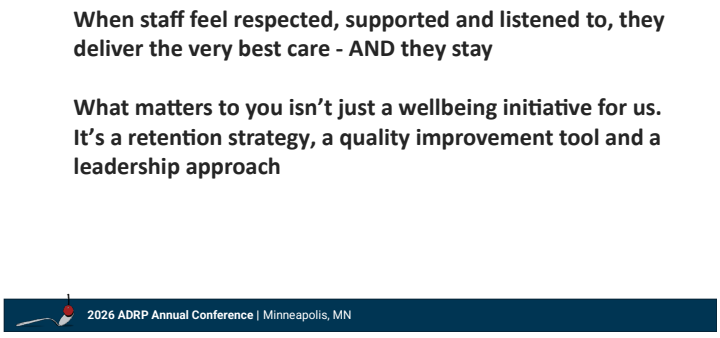
Blood centers may consider:

1. Implementing regular employee listening sessions.
2. Equipping frontline leaders with tools to facilitate meaningful conversations.
3. Developing action plans tied to employee feedback.
4. Measuring workforce experience alongside operational outcomes.
5. Creating mechanisms for employees to see how feedback leads to change.

Conclusion

The SNBTS experience demonstrates that listening to employees is more than an engagement exercise. It is a strategic approach to strengthening workforce stability, improving organizational culture, and ultimately enhancing donor service.

By understanding what matters most to staff, blood centers can create environments where employees are better equipped, more engaged, and more likely to remain committed to the mission of saving lives through blood donation.



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