

# Mapping Solutions to Solve Turnover and Retention Issues



By Claudio Manno

## Meet Masonic Homes Kentucky

Masonic Homes is a full-service senior living community with campuses in Louisville, Shelbyville, and Northern Kentucky. They provide a wide range of care and services, including independent living, assisted living, skilled care, memory and personal care, in-home care, and outpatient therapy. They also have a pediatric

daycare and preschool on their Louisville campus. Masonic employs more than 700 staff members who support thousands of residents to live their best lives.

## Addressing Barriers through Job Design

Like many employers, Masonic experienced higher turnover of hourly employees such as home care aides and certified nursing assistants during the pandemic. Employees in these roles provide direct care to older adults, either in one of Masonic's communities or in their homes. Like all essential workers, these employees faced considerable new pressures.

Chief Human Resources Officer Trasee Whitaker joined other leaders at Masonic in developing tactics to improve retention. One initiative was teaming up with KentuckianaWorks, a local workforce development collaborative, who connected Masonic with a new, cross-industry working group looking at issues of job quality and job redesign.

The team at KentuckianaWorks introduced Trasee to the National Fund's Job Quality Outcome Maps. The tool illustrates the relationships, found in organizational science studies, between business outcomes such as turnover intention and employee engagement, and the job design choices made by employers. For example, the maps show that work-life conflict is closely associated with worker burnout,



and that employees' sense of support from their organization and their supervisors is associated with improvement across a wide range of measures.

This experience, along with meetings with KentuckianaWorks and fellow employers, led Masonic's leaders to a lightbulb moment. Earlier surveys of Masonic's workforce showed issues like transportation and cell phone plans were significant barriers for their frontline employees. They realized partnerships could help them address these seemingly tangential barriers, and hopefully have a positive impact on retention.

### How Bus Passes Benefit More than Just Employees

Masonic's survey found not all employees had easy access to a car, impacting their ability to get to work on time and take care of household responsibilities. This led Trasee and her colleagues to explore a partnership with the local public transportation system, the Transit Authority of River City (TARC).

Masonic joined a program that allowed them to purchase bulk bus passes at 50% off and offer unlimited rides to the holder. Masonic provides the TARC passes at no cost to employees.

***“Masonic pays the monthly fee for the TARC pass, and any employee in the organization can get a pass for free. We know that we have employees with families that really need that resource, and they go other places, not just come to work, on the bus.”***

**Trasee Whitaker**

Chief human resources officer, Masonic Homes Kentucky

Masonic piloted the program in 2021 and witnessed instant success. The first 20 passes were spoken for immediately. In the next contract, Masonic purchased 4 times as many passes. Currently, 16% of Masonic employees benefit from this program. This has a tangible, financial benefit for employees who would normally pay \$50/month for an unlimited TARC pass.

A follow-up survey showed that 84% of respondents found the program helpful for getting to work, and 78% of respondents said it potentially aided in improving retention.

***“...I can't say that it was a methodical process. We just made it happen. The idea was sparked by the job design tool and looking at those core areas that we knew we wanted to address.”***

**Trasee Whitaker**

Chief human resources officer, Masonic Homes Kentucky

Trasee mentions that this solution, on paper, seems very simple, but it took a lot of collaboration and work on the backend to make it a reality. Investing in employees takes effort, but the impact makes it a wise investment.

### Reliable Connections Lead to Better Communication

Just like transportation, a reliable cellphone is equally important. It's not just imperative for work, but also important for day-to-day life, safety, and plenty of other things. However, phone plans are expensive, and Masonic's surveys revealed some workers relied on pre-paid, temporary phones, rather than a stable phone plan. At times, some employees would go through



short periods without phone access due to used minutes. This impeded communication, especially about scheduling, and ultimately affected an employee's work-life balance.

Leadership recognized this was another initiative where they could make a difference for employees. Masonic sought out a partnership with Verizon to offer employees an affordable phone plan. With a monthly discount, the organization could offer three-year phone plans with unlimited data to any part- and full-time employee for only \$36 a month, or only \$18 per paycheck. For ease, the plan is payroll deducted from an employee's pay check.

The Verizon phone plan is also available to employees' family members. According to Trasee, about 50 employees currently have plans through this program (82% are hourly workers), and it sponsors nearly 150 phone lines overall.

This solution benefits the workers in their everyday lives, as well as Masonic, by having stable lines of communication with its employees. In a follow-up survey, 82% of respondents said the Verizon phone plan program was useful, and 89% stated that it potentially aided in improving retention.

## Retention Increases, Capacity Follows Suit

KentuckianaWorks also connected Masonic with a third-party evaluator to assess the impact of implementing the TARC pass program and Verizon phone plan. Both programs were proven to be successful in increasing retention rates.

Since launching the TARC pass program in October 2021, Masonic has witnessed a 78% retention rate. In fact, TARC pass users have stayed with Masonic 4.2 months longer than the average length of service in 2022. Similarly, the Verizon phone plan program has yielded 83% retention in the first year since its launch.

Both of these represent a substantial improvement for the company. With this level of retention, Masonic has seen an increase in internal capacity. Trasee notes that although the quality of service remained consistent, the increased stability its workforce had been very apparent.

## Want to offer new transportation and communication options to your employees? Consider these tips

### 1. Seek out partners.

Be on the lookout for opportunities where you can gain a partner to assist with implementation. Never turn away a phone call because you never know what doors it can open.

### 2. Be realistic about what you can do.

Think about your organization's capacity, encourage employee input, assess the work, and put projects on hold if they currently aren't feasible. Focus on what you can do with your organization's current bandwidth.

### 3. Get more team members involved in the very beginning.

Having more hands on deck makes for a more manageable workload.

### 4. Use the Job Quality Outcome Maps.

Narrow down a focus on the business metrics you want to impact and identify specific job characteristics that are correlated with those outcomes.





The quick wins of these two interventions solidified Masonic’s labor force and ability to continue providing a high level of quality care. Because of increased capacity and the successes of the TARC pass program and Verizon phone plan, leadership at Masonic is gearing up to implement a flexible, electronic scheduling system. This initiative would provide their employees with more flexibility and autonomy in setting their hours. Trasee anticipates that the flexible scheduling program will launch in the near future.

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