

Travelers earn their way

In my travels, much of the talk about travelers is often about how much they are costing the hospital. Hospitals seem to constantly struggle between whether or not to spend the money to utilize travelers. This needs to be researched closer. If you consider the cost of orienting a permanent nurse and providing benefits, the expense may not be all that much. Regardless, the perception is clear.

I used to think this perception (that travelers cost too much) was just an inherent part of the system a traveler could do nothing about until I took a travel assignment that changed my mind. On this assignment, travelers were seen as an asset rather than a deficit. The talk was about how much help the travelers were and what a difference they make.

Why was this place different? At first, I thought it was the amount of the experience and knowledge the travelers had. The travelers at this facility did seem to be well qualified. However, in my experience, qualifications have rarely been the issue with regards to the perception of travelers. I realized the differences I saw had to be more than their experience. What was it? I continued to question.

Then I realized that it wasn't anything miraculous at all. It was the little things. The travelers at this facility were going over and above their line of duty in subtle ways such as: showing up to work with a positive attitude, anticipating the needs of their team, behaving in a professional manner at all times, and helping their co-workers do their jobs easier as well as their own. For example, one traveling scrub technician in the operating room would often prepare his supplies ahead of time so he could make himself available to help the nurse with her job before and after surgery with patient positioning, warm blankets, foley insertion and the like. After the patient was out of the room, he would take a few extra minutes to tidy up the room before taking his instruments out and preparing for the next procedure. This may not seem like much and that is the beauty of it. These subtle differences can shift the entire dynamics of a place, change perceived deficits into assets, and improve the image of the traveler and the travel industry.

This is something for all of us to think about next time we take an assignment. What kind of impression are we making to the facility about travelers and the travel nurse industry? The impression you make will affect your experience there as well as future travelers to come.