Survey results: How high employee turnover in medical communications affects work quality and client satisfaction

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OBJECTIVE

As publication professionals, we seek to better understand trends in employee retention and any associations between employee retention and work quality. This survey investigates the correlation between employee turnover and work quality, productivity, and client satisfaction.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

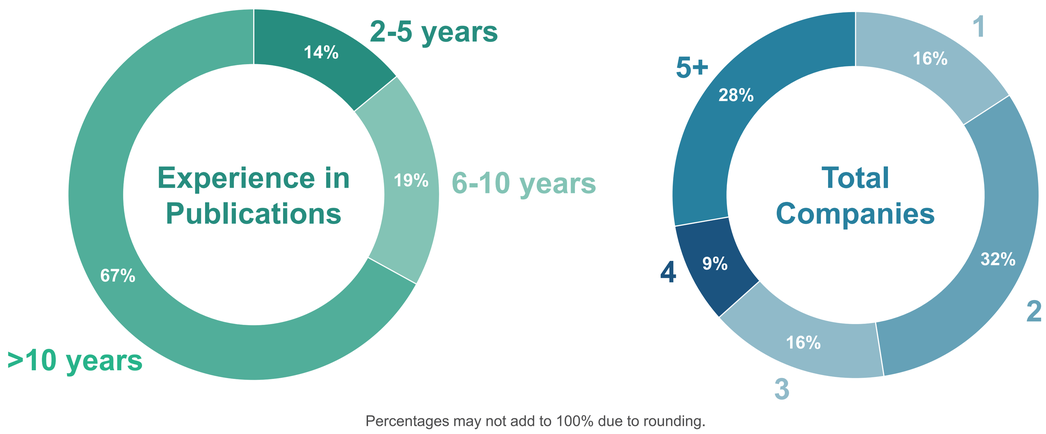
A 10-question online survey was posted on the authors' LinkedIn accounts and on the ISMPP Connect Forum from November 5, 2024, to January 6, 2025. The data below reflect respondents' opinions on employee turnover and its downstream effects.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

- The survey was completed by 57 respondents, most of whom are employed by medical communications/publications agencies (74%) or pharma/biotech/medical device companies (21%)
- 67% of respondents reported having >10 years of experience in publications, with 53% having worked for 3+ companies during this time, and 28% for 5+ companies **(Figure 1)**

Figure 1: Years of Experience in Publications and Total Companies



Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

REASONS FOR EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

- 81% of respondents listed "Issues with employee well-being" as the main factor that leads to employment change, with "Inadequate leadership" being second most common (67%); "Lack of growth opportunities" and "Better job offers" tied as the third most common factor (51%) **(Figure 2)**

Figure 2: Reasons Respondents Decided to Leave a Company[a]

	Respondents (n)
Issues with employee well-being (work-life balance, work schedule, etc)	46
Inadequate leadership (unrealistic expectations from senior leaders, lack of support)	38
Lack of growth opportunities	29
Better job offers (compensation, paid time off, benefits)	29
Team culture and dynamics	22
Employee turnover/staffing issues	14
Job responsibilities not aligning with expectations (position not aligning with what was discussed at interview stage/initial job description)	13

[a]As multiple selections were allowed, Respondents (n) does not total 57. For brevity/relevance, answer choices selected by fewer than 10 respondents are not shown.

DISADVANTAGES OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

- The biggest disadvantages of employee turnover are "Loss of knowledge and understanding of the client/brand" (61%), "Decrease in productivity due to learning curve for new employees" (54%), and "Low morale/disengagement" (47%) **(Figure 3)**

Figure 3: Potential Negative Effects of Employee Turnover[a]

	Respondents (n)
Loss of knowledge and understanding of the client/brand	37
Decrease in productivity (learning curve for new employees)	31
Low employee morale or disengagement	27
Client satisfaction issues (quality of work affected)	19
Difficulty recruiting and/or increased recruitment costs	14
Loss of relationships	13

HOW COMPANIES CAN MINIMIZE EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

- To avoid high turnover rates, respondents listed "Adequately staff teams and appropriately assign work" (79%), "Provide appropriate opportunities for career development and growth" (75%), and "Support employee well-being" (72%) as the top 3 areas for improvement **(Figure 4)**

Figure 4: Possible Ways to Improve Employee Retention[a]

		Respondents (n)
79%	Adequately staff teams and appropriately assign work	45
75%	Provide appropriate opportunities for career development and growth	43
72%	Support employee well-being (foster better work-life balance, more flexible hours, etc)	41
37%	Provide more employee perks, health benefits, and flexibility in work location	21
28%	Enhance employee recognition and appreciation	16

CONCLUSION

A survey of experienced medical communications professionals revealed that most have worked for multiple companies throughout their careers. Issues with employee well-being and inadequate leadership are the most common reasons for employee turnover. According to respondents, high turnover rates result in the downstream effects of knowledge gaps, reduced overall efficiency/productivity, and low morale. Thus, taking steps to improve employee retention can potentially improve work quality, productivity, and client satisfaction.

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