

Nurse Specialist as Career Coach

Shunta Fletcher MSN, RN, NE-BC, CVRN-BC
Center for Professional Excellence, Houston Methodist Hospital, Houston, TX 77030

Abstract

Nursing in the current healthcare climate requires empowerment to help meet the challenges of a growing profession in the development of our role as nurse leaders. We must grow nurses for forthcoming endeavors starting with developing leaders at the bedside. At present, we must consider the importance of ongoing professional development.

The Nursing Career Coaching and Professional Development Program was established to assist nurses in the pursuit of advanced education, growth and development. Nurse educators as career counselors provide a wide range of services. These include career assessment tools, programs available for continuing education, support in mapping out a professional development plan, providing guidance with financial planning and resources to fund their career advancement. Other services offered are researching schools that will work best for the individual to achieve advanced degree status. For nurses wanting to advance in the Clinical Career Path, coaching by qualified career counselors focuses on four broad categories: promotion to next level, obtaining certification, transitioning to a specialty area and work-life balance. Additionally, career counselors provide shadowing opportunities for those undecided about a path and who would like a glimpse at a specific area before making a decision about which journey they would like to pursue. Through this program, registered nurses have decided to pursue promotion on the clinical career path, certification, advanced nursing degrees and transition to various practice areas of greater interest. Ultimately, the career counselors aid the nurses in attaining true work-life balance.

Introduction

Nurses today face a number of crucial decisions regarding career advancement, as well as job satisfaction. These decisions may include obtaining an advanced degree, acquiring a specialty certification, transitioning to another unit or department, and pursuing advancement along a clinical career path. Nurse education specialists serving as career coaches provide a wide range of services that include utilizing strategies for career assessments, referring customers to programs available for continuing education, mapping out a professional development plan, providing guidance with financial planning and helping identify resources to fund their career advancement.

As a Magnet® designed hospital, Houston Methodist's Center for Professional Excellence developed the Nursing Career Coaching and Professional Development program in 2007, under the leadership of Alicia Hernandez, MSN, RN, RNBC, as part of a retention strategy to help registered nurses advance their degrees and obtain specialty certification. This program is aligned with the Structural Empowerment Domain and Magnet Force 14, Professional Development. Since that time, the program has grown and expanded to provide career coaching to all hospital employees.

A review of the literature shows that coaching can be "beneficial in helping people reach and succeed toward their career goals by partnering with clients in a creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential" (Thompson, Wolf and Sabatine, 2012). Characteristics of a career coach include: ability to listen intently, ask pertinent questions, focus on the needs of the client and customize a plan to meet the client's needs.

Theory

This program is currently based on Swanson's Caring Theory, a delicate blend of guiding while partnering to empower a person to achieve their goals. The nurturing nature of the theory consists of five important categories, Maintaining Belief, Knowing, Being With, Doing For, and Enabling (Jansson and Adolfsen, 2011). *Maintaining belief*, as a career coach, requires one to sustain belief in the individual that this individual can accomplish their goals. *Being with*, requires having self-awareness and being emotionally available to the individual for understanding and adjustments in their future. The career coach must also identify with the individual's fears and allow them to express themselves for growth and ultimately future professional development. *Doing for*, means assisting the individual by mapping out options and providing guidance based on the individual's needs. At times, it is important for the individual to see the vision from an educator perspective. Lastly, the career coach acts as a facilitator to enable the client to see the vision and actively participate in their pursuit of a career path. Various studies advocate that caring theories have the potential to produce positive outcomes in many aspects of nursing (Tonges and Ray, 2011).

Career Coaching Results



Career Coaching Feedback

Perseverance Pays Off

Berhanu "Bebe" Beyene, a patient care assistant I in the Emergency Department at Houston Methodist Hospital, thanks the career coaching he received for helping him achieve his current position.



In 2010, Beyene came to the United States from Ethiopia with hopes and dreams of working in health care. He was hired as a housekeeper in a hospital but realized he could work closer with patients if he took classes to become a certified nurse assistant (CNA).

After becoming a CNA, he heard about Houston Methodist and its wonderful reputation with patients and employees. He applied and was hired in 2013 to work in the Food and Nutrition Department.

Beyene yearned to use his CNA certification and work in patient care. Someone told him to go see the career coach for help.

Beyene met with a career coach, listening intently to learn a better path to success. He followed the advice and volunteered in the ED to learn the culture and the people. After seven months of volunteering and improving his English skills, Beyene was offered a job. Sharon Tatum, RN IV in the ED said, "I believe the patients enjoy seeing Beyene's face because he is smiling all the time."

Determining Next Career Steps

Jennifer Rose, BSN, CNOR, RN is a RN III and clinical educator in the Fondren Brown operating room.



How and why did you seek career coaching?

I sought career coaching to assist in deciding which master's degree program I would invest my time and money in. I have been toying with the idea of returning to school for years and in balancing a growing family the time has never been right. There are so many more options now that were not available before and it seemed overwhelming. I heard Alicia Hernandez (from CPE) discuss career coaching during a luncheon for the transition of new nurse residents and out-going nurse residents. Subsequently, I sent an email to her asking for guidance of where to begin. She placed me in contact with a career coach. We met two times and decided which path and school seemed to fit my needs. She shared her story with me and empowered me to make this next step.

How has career coaching been helpful to you?

This has enabled me to be comfortable in my decision to start graduate school and confident in the choice of school.

How would you sum up your career coaching experience?

The guidance career coaching has provided me is exactly what I needed to take the next step toward my future.

From Football to Nursing

Marcus White loves football and was a great football player in high school. He received a football scholarship to attend a college in Texas. At the time his career path was unknown. During his first year in college Marcus was injured in a football game and had to be hospitalized. During the course of his hospital stay, he was in the care of nurses. Marcus appreciated what the nurses did as professionals, as well as how well they took care of him. This experience made him decide to direct his career toward nursing. Marcus came to Houston Methodist Hospital as an undergraduate student with much promise. He kept his GPA at the level to become a Methodist Advanced Professional Practice (MAPP) student and was later hired as a nurse. Today, Marcus is an excellent Medical-Surgical nurse on MSNW where he is well liked and respected by his peers.

How and why did you seek career coaching?

During orientation the presenters explained to all new employees that career coaching was available. Once I was finished with orientation on my unit I felt like it was time for me to see exactly where I want my career to go.

How has career coaching been helpful to you?

Career coaching has been helpful to me in many different ways. One way has been learning the "ropes" of nursing versus what it's like in the NCLEX world. The biggest impact has been shadowing opportunities to help rule out things I don't like, and narrowing my list for returning to school to do something I have a passion for.

How would you sum up your career coaching experience?

"She uncomplicated the process in making changes and pushed me to begin."



Career Coaching Brochure



Future Plans

The Nursing Career Coaching and Professional Development Program at Houston Methodist Hospital will continue to assist nurses in the pursuit of advanced education, growth and development. The strategic goals of the Career Coaching Program are to continue preparing nurses and nursing leaders at all levels in the organization. Another goal is to shape and influence the nursing professions, as well as the health care community by fostering leadership development and exposure to comprehensive career development opportunities. This program has since expanded to all hospital employees to assist every employee to reach their individual goals and take responsibility for their achievements. "Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potentials" (Thompson, Wolf and Sabatine, 2012, p. 538). In the future, this program will be expanded to train and develop other Nurse Specialists to be career coaches to ensure professional development continues and achieve the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) request for nurse educators to make their contribution in educating nurses to fill the gap in nursing, nursing faculty, and nursing leadership (IOM, 2011).

References

- Institute of Medicine. (2010). The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. Retrieved from http://www.thefutureofnursing.org/sites/default/files/Future%20of%20Nursing%20Report_0.pdf
- Jansson, C., & Adolfsen, A. (2011). Application of "Swanson's Middle Range Caring Theory" in Sweden after Miscarriage. *International Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 2, 102-109. doi: 10.4236/ijcm.2011.22021
- Tonges, M., & Ray, J. (2011). Translating caring theory into practice: the Carolina Care Model. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 41(9), 374-381.
- Thompson, R., Wolf, D. M., & Sabatine, J. M. (2012). Mentoring and coaching: A model guiding professional nurses to executive success. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 42(11), 536-541.