

The Strategic Importance of Job Titling in Health Care Organizations



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In today's competitive labor market, job titles are much more than just labels on an organizational chart. As the cornerstone of an effective workforce strategy, clear and consistent job titles are powerful tools for attracting and retaining top talent, cultivating employee engagement, and supporting a well-developed career framework.

For health care professionals, HR managers, and recruiters, understanding the strategic importance of job titling is an essential but often overlooked component of an organization's talent management strategy.

This article offers insights into how health care organizations like yours can leverage an effective job titling framework to help:

- Drive consistency and communicate accountability
- Streamline organizational hierarchy and decision-making processes
- Support the overall recruitment, retention, and engagement strategy
- Align positions with the appropriate career progression pathways

Why Focus on Improving Your Organization's Job Titling Framework?

As health care operations grow increasingly complex, many hospitals and health systems are struggling to manage their workforce without a comprehensive job titling strategy. At its core, this will help to optimize your organization's job structure with a clear and consistent framework for defining career tracks, job levels, position titles, and job attributes. Beyond this, it lays the foundation for critical talent programs, goals, and initiatives to thrive.

The key benefits of improving your job titling structures include:

Job Clarity and Consistency

One of the primary functions of a job title is to provide clarity on an individual's role and responsibilities. However, many organizations still utilize outdated or inconsistent job titles across the enterprise. A job title should accurately and effectively communicate the position's expectations, required competencies, and authority level.

Clear and consistent job titles can ensure that employees and managers across the system are aligned on what each role entails – minimizing confusion and facilitating effective communication and decision-making. If employees have a clear understanding of their roles within the organization, it ultimately leads to improved efficiency and alignment with organization-wide goals.

Recruitment

Job titles play a critical role in attracting qualified talent to an organization. By offering a concise summary of each position and its required level of expertise, candidates can better understand if the position aligns with their skills and career aspirations.

When looking for jobs, candidates often use specific search terms related to their skills, role expectations, and level of expertise. Having clear and accurate job titles improves the visibility of job postings in search results and attracts applicants best suited for the role. Additionally, individuals are more likely to apply for positions that set clear

expectations and offer well-defined career paths.

While not all organizations will utilize level designations equally (e.g., the definition of a ‘Specialist’ may differ in meaning from one organization to another), it is a good starting point that assists candidates and recruiters in determining who may qualify for the job. Internally, using consistent leveling and titling helps employees identify where there might be opportunities for a lateral or promotional move.

Retention and Engagement

With the health care labor crisis in full swing, retaining top talent can be difficult. Having clear job titles helps manage expectations for the role and allows employees to see how their work contributes to the organization’s objectives. Employees who clearly understand their job roles can focus better on their assigned responsibilities and deliver high-quality work. This sense of purpose and delivery enhances engagement as employees feel their work is meaningful and valuable to the organization’s success.

Career Progression

Job titles that are supported by consistent leveling criteria and defined career paths provide employees with a transparent roadmap for advancement within the organization. When employees understand the progression pathway associated with their role, they are better equipped to take charge of their career development. This enables employees to identify opportunities for growth and development, keeps them engaged in their current roles, and motivates them to take the steps needed to advance their careers.

Organizational Structure

A comprehensive job titling strategy will also help to support an effective and well-organized organizational structure. Defining the hierarchy within your organization will improve overall workflow and decision-making – ensuring communications are directed to the right level. Additionally, it will help to pinpoint areas of potential job role overlap and enable more accurate analysis of managerial oversight and span of control.

Best Practices for Job Titling Structures in Health Care

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, SullivanCotter recommends that organizations develop and implement a clear set of guidelines for creating and maintaining titles.

Ideally, job titles will align with an established career framework that defines job families, functions, and levels. Market-dominant titles should be utilized at the system/enterprise level. If needed, modifiers can then be added to convey the functional role and geographic accountability. It is best practice to include the level at the beginning of each title to accurately reflect the organization’s hierarchy and support other related programs such as participation in incentive plans, prerequisites, or leadership team meetings.



Level

Conveys hierarchy



Function

Describes the role



Accountability

Identifies scope of influence of location

For example, a title combination could be:

- Manager, Finance - Southwest Market
- Senior Surgical Technician, XYZ Medical Center
- VP and Chief Clinical Officer

Titling symbols, connections, abbreviations, and capitalization should be consistent across all job levels and should also consider system-driven character limitations. For example, be mindful of using a slash, dash, comma, or ampersand used to connect two separate title modifiers. Similarly, capitalization and abbreviations should align for easy identification and sorting and to organize the job catalog by career path (e.g., use VP or Vice President; Manager or Mgr.).

Need Help Navigating These Challenges?

SullivanCotter specializes in job architecture solutions tailored specifically to health care organizations. Our consultants are longstanding industry experts who leverage data-driven methodologies and insights to help hospitals and health systems streamline key operational processes, achieve strategic objectives, and uphold their mission and values.

Our Job Architecture and Job Titling advisory services include:

- Pro forma job architecture models designed with the complexities and nuances of health care jobs in mind.
- Flexible and scalable frameworks customized to each organization's needs.
- Automated job mapping powered by AI and algorithms that are continuously updated and refined to improve accuracy.
- Custom job leveling and job titling guidelines.
- Headcount, distribution, and span of control benchmarking to a customized peer group from our proprietary workforce analytics database.

Looking for additional insight?

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