

Benetas

The sheer number of people required to meet workforce demands, combined with an aging workforce has led a Victorian aged care provider to create multiple pipelines to source future employees.

Benetas is a leading not-for-profit organisation with a mission to provide older Victorians, their families and carers with a full range of quality, community-based services, residential care homes and retirement communities.

The organisation has changed its model of attracting new people to work in the sector, successfully using traineeships as a supplementary source of new workers who are aligned to the values of the organisation.

“It’s quite a different model and a huge culture change to the business.”

Traineeships are not the only pipeline and Benetas continues to take student work placements, welcoming the ‘try before you buy’ opportunity they provide and the chance to make early decisions if the student is not suited to the job.

Benetas is currently considering how the learnings from its traineeship program could be applied to the organisation of its student work placements.

Partner selection

The traineeships operate as a centralised model. Currently TAFE is the partner of choice for Benetas’ traineeships.

For student work placements, Benetas has a decentralised approach where there are existing relationships with local RTOs. While local providers are important wherever possible, Benetas is developing a more strategic approach to supporting the establishment of these placement arrangements.

Cold calls from RTOs are referred to the central program for discussion about partnership expectations and arrangements.



Finding the right RTO is important to Benetas, regardless of whether they are public or private. All RTOs are assessed for quality and alignment, including whether the RTO understands Benetas’ business.

By adopting a more strategic approach to work placements, Benetas is looking to ensure it can replicate the benefits. Benetas also wants to know that the RTO has a high employment conversion rate for their graduates and seeks out longitudinal data.

Data collection and analysis

Benetas has found that most personal care workers want to work and learn within a 10-kilometre radius from home and they are in the process of developing a sophisticated IT infrastructure system to track work placements and student to employee conversion rates.

The system is tracking trainee progress and feedback that allows early intervention by managers.

It is also recording data on student numbers from RTOs, when placements are required, and the conversion rate of students to employment, to inform future strategic relationships with high performing RTOs.

Benefits

The appeal of traineeships was the ability for Benetas to recruit the people that are the right fit for the organisation and giving the employer greater control over the selection of students working in services.

Hence the employer selects trainees and then partners with the RTO to deliver courses that are structured to fit employer's needs for units of competency required for employment in dementia and palliative care.

Benetas finds the traineeship model provides them with the ability to work closely with their TAFE partner to influence student training. The traineeships also enable people to quickly make decisions about whether the job is right for them or not. Likewise, Benetas is able to make decisions quickly.

“We know what we are looking for – we believe if we get the values alignment, we can teach them the skills of aged care because they are much easier to learn than if someone has a poor attitude or the values alignment isn't there.”

All Benetas support staff are qualified, or in the process of a traineeship, with a minimum of a Certificate III in Individual Support.

Within the first two years of the traineeship model, Benetas has retained 84 per cent of trainees with most of the remainder relocating interstate.

The model is resourced with a 0.5 FTE role focused on traineeships.

Benetas foresees further scope with the potential for trainees to comprise up to 30 per cent of its future workforce.

Benetas will also continue to rely on students as a pipeline for its future workforce needs. By taking the lessons learned from the traineeship model and applying them to the student work placements, Benetas expects to realise similar benefits.

Preparation

Before starting work, traineeship candidates attend a site visit for a couple of hours to get to see the home firsthand and meet the manager, learn about the traineeship and how it works.

For Benetas, the most important thing at this point is understanding why someone wants to work in aged care.

Candidates are then offered three shifts of work experience, during which they partner with a buddy.

“We give them a front row ticket to the job.”

Benetas asks each candidate to learn the back story of one of the residents because this helps them immediately understand that the job is about bringing meaning and purpose to a person's life and the importance of their life story.

Through the work experience the candidate can judge if they want to continue with the role, and the buddy and manager can also evaluate the placement. Some considerations are how well the candidate engaged, their curiosity, the questions they asked and their willingness to learn.

During training

During the traineeship, the trainee is on the job with a buddy as a supernumerary for 14 weeks, comprising three shifts a week of on-the-job learning.

About half-way through this period, they commence their 12-month traineeship during which they will work many more than the mandatory work placement requirement of 120 hours.

They are placed on the roster when they are job ready and complete the traineeship within 9 to 12 months and then are offered work at the fully qualified rate.

One of the biggest barriers is finding staff who have the willingness and skill to buddy and mentor the trainees. Some of the best carers may not want to mentor, and there is no overt reward or incentive for the additional responsibility.



Continuous improvement

Both traineeships and student work placements only operate in Benetas' residential settings at this stage.

While Benetas has an instinctive understanding of how it could take on students for in-home placements, a pilot model is yet to be developed due to the complexities and challenges of the in-home care setting.

“Employers have a social responsibility to make work placements available, although they will always have an eye on recruitment benefits.”

